

# 11

## How Tourists Consume a Destination

### By the end of this chapter, the reader will:

- Be able to define a destination and its morphology
- Analyse the impact of seasons on tourist behaviour
- Discuss and critique the different roles a destination plays and how that affects behaviour
- Understand how being a first time or repeat visitor influences consumption
- Explain how motive affects in-destination behaviour
- Discuss the impact of accommodation choice on consumption patterns.

### Introduction

While tourism activity occurs in a local destination, relatively little research has been undertaken understanding the factors that influence how tourists consume destinations. This chapter examines that issue. It begins by defining a destination and its geomorphology. A range of issues explaining how and why tourists behave the way they do follows. This examination explores such issues as the impact of seasons on product and experience availability, the role of destinations as the main or secondary goal of a trip and how that affects behaviour, the impact of prior visitation history and some insights into the role of accommodation choice as a core factor that influences behaviour. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of how emergent technologies may fundamentally transform behaviour.

## Defining a local destination

The UN World Tourism Organization identifies local destinations as the key to tourism, for they are the locus of where tourism activity occurs and where impacts are felt directly. A local destination is defined as:

*“a physical space with or without administrative and/or analytical boundaries in which a visitor can spend an overnight. It is the cluster (co-location) of products and services, and of activities and experiences along the tourism value chain and a basic unit of analysis of tourism. A destination incorporates various stakeholders and can network to form larger destination areas. It is also intangible with its image and identity which may influence its market competitiveness”* (UNWTO n.d.).

This definition clarifies the scope of a destination by setting its upper and lower limits. A ‘destination’, like much in tourism, is a conflated term that is used by different stakeholders to suit their own needs. National or state tourism organisations refer to countries, states or regions as ‘destinations’, while individual attractions including airports also use the term. Such imprecision is understandable because the mandate of marketing bodies varies by the geographic scale. But it does little to help us understand how and where tourism is consumed.

Defining a destination as a local area with or without administrative boundaries clarifies this term and sets a framework for further analysis. In doing so, it excludes most individual attractions as destinations in their own right, and instead recognises them as critical components of a local destination. Likewise, states, provinces and countries are not discrete destinations, but consist of many individual destinations.

Two other key issues must be recognised. The first is that a destination’s scope may extend beyond the administrative boundaries of a community and potentially include multiple communities. This feature adopts a pragmatic approach to destinations by recognising tourist behaviour and/or tourism development are not necessarily constrained by artificial administrative boundaries. The second is the ability of local destinations to network with other local destinations to create larger destination regions, further recognising the need for collaboration to create appealing experiences for mobile visitors.

## Geomorphology of destinations

Destinations are complex socio-geomorphic entities that consist of three types of place: tourism place, shared place and non-tourism place (McKercher et al., 2015). Their structure is shown in Figure 11.1.

**Tourism place** is designated for the primary use of tourists. It is something that is either constructed or signified for and by tourists as a medium through which the tourist experience is negotiated (Crouch et al., 2001). Wall (1996), suggests tourism