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Temporality: the Destination Management Perspective

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Learning outcomes

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Recognise the multi-dimensional relationships that exist between space (destinations) and time.
 2. Analyse DMO interventions to attract visitors from a temporal perspective.
 3. Assess the factors which affect the structure, purpose and significance of DMOs.
 4. Evaluate the rationale for destination management planning.
 5. Recognise the changing priorities and operational approaches of DMOs.
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Introduction

This chapter considers temporality from the perspective of the Destination Management (or Destination Marketing) Organization, commonly known as the DMO. DMOs 'do' destination management, which "*essentially equates to management processes that aim to attract visitors*" (Laesser & Beritelli, 2013: 47). As such, DMO activity comprises interventions to develop the visitor economy of a specific place, relating mainly, but not limited to planning, lobbying, marketing and service co-ordination (Laesser & Beritelli, 2013).

Depending upon their individual contexts, DMOs have varying responsibilities but they share the one related to marketing. This issue is considered in more depth, later in the chapter.

Our discussion focuses on the relationships which exist between the DMO, time and space (in this case 'place'). Albert Einstein concluded that time and space represent dimensions within which we think rather than within which we live. Consequently, we are concerned with how and why DMOs operate within these two inter-related paradigms, and especially in their actions for, and reactions to, change. The work of DMOs is complex, fluid and multi-dimensional. Whilst this can be said of many organisations, it is especially significant in destination contexts given their composite nature. Destinations are the sum of many parts, notably including a wide and diverse range of public, private and voluntary stakeholders. Given its association with man-made blending of components, the use of the term 'amalgam' to describe destinations (e.g. Buhalis, 2000), is very appropriate.

An iceberg analogy is helpful to explain this chapter's authors' position further. We argue that the biggest challenge for DMOs is not due to the temporal changes of seasonality and visitor numbers (representing the visible tip of the iceberg, and relating to marketing) but rather the temporal changes in the priorities and agendas of their stakeholders (representing the larger and hidden part of the iceberg, and relating to the other activities mentioned in the opening paragraph). For this reason, the chapter is divided into two parts. The first part, entitled '*Bringing in the Business*', considers the relationships that exist between DMOs, space and time and refers to interventions to attract visitors. The content may be familiar to you already, but possibly not as seen through a temporal lens presented here.

The second part '*Through a glass, darkly*' explores the external and internal dynamics of DMOs, explaining how and why their agendas may change and the implications of these diversions. Its title is borrowed from St Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians (in the Christian Bible), acknowledging the need to look beyond the surface in order to understand what is really happening. This second perspective is timely given significant changes in the landscape of DMOs – especially at regional and local aggregate levels – which call into question not only their roles, responsibilities and structures but also their very existence. Importantly, the author of this section – herself an experienced practitioner as well as an academic – emphasises that these changes coincide with increased professionalisation in destination marketing activities.