

Part 2 - How Tourism Works

The first part of the book set the stage, by describing what tourism is and how the tourism sector is organised. The opportunity exists now to focus on understanding how tourism works as both a social and commercial activity. It is important to appreciate the key factors that drive tourism and influence the intersection between supply and demand.

Chapter 4 discusses the role of attractions or demand generators, without which the pull of the destination may not exist. Traditionally, attractions have been thought of in fairly narrow supply side terms. Recently, though, the UNWTO and others have started to think of them from a demand perspective, meaning that almost anything a tourist does in a destination could be considered as an attraction. Yet, the epistemological discussion of attractions, activities and products has been narrow traditionally. This chapter introduces the idea that attractions can be considered as existing on one of a number of tiers in a taxonomic structure from the very broad to the very specific.

Chapter 5 considers the key element of access, for without good access, the ability of a destination to compete in the global marketplace is limited. The chapter begins with a discussion of time and how varying perspectives of the use of time influence tourist behaviour. It then proceeds to examine distance decay, the first law of geography, and its related concept of market access. The chapter concludes with a review of various itinerary models.

Chapter 6 examines some of the political issues that affect international tourism flows. It must be appreciated that nowhere in international law does anyone have the right to enter a country. Instead, it is a privilege granted by both the departing and receiving nation or territory. This means, of course, that access to international travel is a fundamentally political act that is also fundamentally unequal. Bilateral air service agreements are introduced next, for without understanding them, one cannot understand international tourism. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the role that the World Trade Organisation's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) has on tourism.

Chapter 7 focuses on the political economics of tourism and examines different approaches to forecasting. This chapter explores how political economy and economic organisation affect both people's desire to travel and the ability of the economy to supply suitable experiences.

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Attractions

By the end of this chapter the reader will be able to:

- Conceptualise an attraction
- Critique the tourism attraction system and identify and apply markers
- Understand the hierarchy of attractions and the same attraction can play different roles for different market segments
- Analyse a taxonomy of attractions
- Apply the tourism attractions taxonomy in real world situations.

Introduction

Tourism is driven by attractions and access. Attractions explain why people come to a destination, while access influences the volume of visitors. The two are inter-related for strong attractions create demand to enhance access, while weak access effectively limits demand and thus the size and scale of attractions. The opposite is also true. Weak attractions create little necessity to improve access, while strong access creates the opportunity to enhance the breadth of attraction offerings.

Tourism attractions play a fundamental role in the successful development of any destination. They serve as demand generators that give the customer a reason to visit. Moreover, consumption of attractions is often considered to be the central theme of the tourism experience being offered. Goeldner and Ritchie (2012) argue that attractions drive people to travel and represent the main motivations for travel. More importantly, they note that without attractions there would be little need for all other tourism services and goods. Thirty years ago, Gee, Makens and

Choy (1989) stated that both the quality and quantity of attractions affect travel decisions. Mill and Morrison (2012) illustrate that attractions at a primary destination have to have sufficient breadth and depth of appeal to encourage visitors to stay in a single destination for many days. Holloway and Humphries (2016: 16) also note destinations must have adequate attractions to appeal to a large number of tourists and add further, the more attractions a destination has the easier it becomes to market.

Their features should be of a quality experiential character, unique, exciting, and offer one of a kind experiences that appeal to the target market (EPGC, 1995). Bull (1991) feels that attractions play one of three roles in tourism. They can be:

- an intrinsic part of the trip, in which the demand for the attraction is established before the trip commences;
- a major motivator for a trip or for selecting a destination;
- an optional, discretionary activity engaged in at a destination.

However, like most things in tourism, attractions are quite misunderstood, with Leask (2010) noting that even arriving at a universally accepted definition is a challenge and is a reflection of the vast array of issues influencing management. Issues such as classification, inclusive or exclusive definitions, size, aesthetic appeal, management regime and the target market all come into play. It is for this reason that some prefer the use of the term 'visitor attraction' instead of 'tourist attraction' and why in this book, we are using the term 'product.'

A bigger issue, though, is that the term has been misused, with the concept of what constitutes varying levels of attractions and activities conflated and therefore confused. Holloway and Humphries (2016) observe even the term 'destination' is used synonymously with attraction. This chapter sifts through many of the issues relating to the conceptualisation of attractions and how they work. It begins by trying to define what an attraction is and how the tourism attractions' system works. Then it examines how the term has been abused, so that its use encompasses far more than the original meaning. This discussion then leads to the need for some type of structured, taxonomic system to classify the various concepts of an attraction that encompasses its breadth. Finally, we look at the role attractions in the broadest sense play in drawing visitors to a destination.

Conceptualising attractions

The idea of what constitutes an attraction was discussed in our literature some 30 years ago or more but has received relatively little attention since. Scholars agree in general that an attraction consists of a single entity bounded by time or space that is visited by tourists. There have been many attempts to categorise