

Critical Aspects of the Tourism-Transport Relationship

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Contemporary Tourism Reviews

Series Editor: Chris Cooper

 Published by Goodfellow Publishers Limited,
Woodeaton, Oxford, OX3 9TJ

<http://www.goodfellowpublishers.com>

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Design and setting by P.K. McBride



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1. Introduction

The interconnectedness between transport and tourism remains perhaps one of the more important relationships within the wider tourism system. A fundamental fact is that people travel in varying distances by various means for a variety of reasons, and transport provision sits at the heart of that movement. Transport is important for tourism because it a) facilitates the movement of tourists between their place of origin and their destinations, and b) acts as the means of movement within a destination, thus allowing for wider dispersal of visitor movement and, as a result, maximum exposure of visitor flows to areas perhaps not otherwise possible (Page 2009).

Transport for the purposes of tourism can be expressed as a series of modes operating across vast networks consisting of points (or nodes) and routes (or vectors). Modes of transport can include air, water and land (road and rail), and various types of transport provision within these modes are possible. The networks through which modes of transport operate function as important economic conduits for many destinations (Duval 2007). Networks can, of course, be global, such that the movement of tourists (as passengers, for example, on an international airline) constitutes one of the more common means of international visitor arrivals. Networks can also function on a regional level, with the European Community offering an excellent example of removal of political and economic barriers to inter-State, regional travel. Finally, local networks, or those networks of transport that operate within a wider destination such as a country, are critical in ensuring that the economic benefits of tourism are not simply concentrated in one particular locality. Critically, it is important that local networks are integrated into regional and international networks in order to maximise visitor flows into a destination. As a result, transport can often be the single most important factor in determining the viability of a destination's tourism sector. This is especially the case when the destination happens to be geographically remote and thus highly dependent upon, for example, international air services. In these cases, governments in these destinations will naturally wish to ensure that access is maintained.

Duval (2007) argued that there is a natural 'blurriness' that features when examining the linkages between transport and tourism. First, it is apparent that transport can be both a mode of travel and a destination; large cruise ships are perhaps the most obvious example of this. Second, the segmentation of transport use into tourism and non-tourism is difficult, but not necessarily impossible, for transport planners. Airlines, for example, will only initiate (or expand) services between two points if at least one segment shows signs of robust growth. Finally, a more pertinent question becomes one akin to the classic question of the chicken and the egg: which arguably must come first – the provision for transport services to and from a destination or the quality, scale and scope of attractions and activities that appeal to certain tourist market segments? The answer to this question is elusive as there is a strong sense of co-dependence between the two sectors, which is to be expected. Transport relies on the viability and attractiveness of a destination, and a destination relies on transport for visitor access. The underlying strategic perspective of this relationship is manifested in determining whether either (or both) are responsible for ensuring tourist flows are maintained.

The two most critical facets that influence successful transport-tourism relationships are accessibility and connectivity (Duval 2007, Page 2009). Understanding the degree of accessibility and connectivity of a destination is important because it helps establish the role of both

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