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Geographical Resources for Tourism

Introduction

Chapters 1 and 2 made brief reference to a number of potential geographical resources for tourism. Some of these resources are located within the physical environment, such as landscapes, and include coastal area, moorlands and mountains. Others are part of the human environment, including towns and cities and historic monuments – in summary this is usually known as the built environment. These physical resources and human resources are not necessarily located separately but are often found together. For example, a coastal tourism destination has a physical environment which may be made up of a beach, a shoreline, the sea and it could be backed by cliffs. This will be coupled with a human environment of, for example, hotels, restaurants and bars and possibly, a harbour or marina. This chapter considers the physical and human resources for tourism.

Key perspectives

Just over 50 years ago, Peters (1969) provided an attempt to classify tourist attractions. His classification, which was made in relation to international tourism, had five categories, which are as follows:

- **Cultural:** (e.g. sites of archaeological interest, historical buildings and museums, political institutions)
- **Traditions:** (e.g. festivals, music, folklore, arts and handicrafts)
- **Scenic:** (e.g. National Parks, wildlife, flora and fauna, beach resorts, mountain resorts)
- **Entertainment:** (e.g. zoos and aquaria night life, cinema, theatre, theme parks)
- **Other attractions:** (e.g. climate, health resorts, spas, unique attractions not available elsewhere)

(source: Peters, 1969)

Not long after Peters put forward his fivefold classification, Robinson (1976) argued that very many tourism attractions are, in fact, geographical and suggested that there

are seven geographical aspects of tourism. These aspects are shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Geographical components of tourism (after Robinson, 1976)

Accessibility and location
Space
Scenery – landforms (e.g. mountains), water (e.g. rivers) vegetation (e.g. forests)
Climate – sunshine, cloud, temperature conditions, rain, snow
Animal life – wildlife (e.g. birds) hunting and fishing
Settlement features – towns and cities, historical remains, monuments , archaeological sites
Culture – ways of life, traditions, folklore and arts and crafts

There is some similarity between the aspects indicated by Robinson (1976) and those suggested by Peters (1969). However, there is more detail on physical geographical elements such as landforms and landscape features, including plants and animals, in Robinson's categorisation. Study of both Peters (1969) classification and that by Robinson in Table 3.1 may appear to suggest that almost all of the physical and human landscapes have the potential to be tourism attractions. However, it is important to be aware that not all resources of the physical environment and not all parts of the human environment are actual tourist attractions. Nevertheless, there is a very large range of attractions and many resources that are currently tourist attractions and yet others that have been attractions in the past.

Although not all geographical features are necessarily tourist attractions, Robinson (1976) suggested there are certain geographical factors that encourage tourism, or as he put it:

There are ... principal elements or ingredients which predispose towards tourism development (Robinson, 1976:42)

Robinson argued that there are six such elements, and these are outlined below:

- Good weather
- Scenery
- Amenities
- Historical and cultural features
- Accessibility
- Accommodation

Boniface and Cooper (2001) used a somewhat similar approach to both Peters (1969) and Robinson (1976) and subdivided geographical resources for tourism under two broad headings: physical resources and cultural resources. Although, in many ways their headings mirror the classification points made by both Peters (1969) and Robinson (1976), Boniface and Cooper (2001:25) stated that there are three main characteristics of the resources for tourism, and suggested that: