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Level 4

Management of Visitor Attractions

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Using Your Study Guide

Welcome to the study guide designed to support those completing their **Level 4 Diploma in Tourism and Hospitality Management!**

This study guide follows the order of the syllabus, which is the **basis** for your studies. Each chapter starts by listing the syllabus learning outcomes covered and the assessment criteria.

Level 4 Units

Unit Reference	Mandatory Units	Level	TQT	Credits
J/617/5587	Sustainability in Tourism and Hospitality Management	4	300	30
L/617/5588	Operations Management in Tourism and Resort Operations	4	300	30
R/617/5589	Management of Visitor Attractions	4	300	30
J/617/5590	Employability and Development in the Hospitality Industry	4	300	30
Totals			**1200**	**120**

The study guide includes a number of features to enhance your studies:

'Over to you': activities for you to apply what you have learned (in the space provided).

Industry Insights: discover up-to-date trends, expert opinions, and examples from leading organisations in the travel and tourism industry to help you understand how theory applies in real-world practice.

Did you know? : highlights interesting facts or surprising information to help you deepen your understanding of travel and tourism topics.

Case studies: realistic business scenarios to reinforce and test your understanding of what you have read.

'Revision on the go': use your phone camera to capture these key pieces of learning, then save them on your phone to use as revision notes.

'Need to know': key pieces of information that are highlighted in the text.

Examples: illustrating points made in the text to show how it works in practice.

Tables, graphs and charts: to bring data to life.

Reading list: identifying resources for further study.

Source/quotation : information to cast further light on the subject from industry sources.

Highlighted Words : throughout denoting glossary terms located at the end of the study guide.

Note

Website addresses current as of November 2025.

CHAPTER ONE

The Importance of Visitor Attractions and the Impacts of Tourism

Introduction

This chapter looks at the importance of visitor attractions in the tourism industry.

You will learn about the scope of visitor attractions in relation to types of attractions.

You will also learn about the impacts – economic, socio-cultural, and environmental of tourism on visitor attractions.

On completion of this chapter, you will gain a broad understanding of the nature, development, and management of visitor attractions.

Learning Outcomes

On completing the chapter, you will be able to:

1. Understand the importance of visitor attractions and the impacts of tourism

Assessment Criteria

1.1 Assess the importance of different visitor attractions
1.2 Address the scope of visitor attractions in relation to types of attractions
1.3 Evaluate the impact of tourism on visitor attractions

1.1 Assess the importance of different visitor attractions

Tourism has become one of the **world's largest industries** as increasingly people travel in their own countries or travel to countries overseas. Visitor attractions make up one of the six sectors of the tourism industry **(see Figure 1)**.

- **Visitor attractions** – e.g., The Eiffel Tower (Paris), local museums
- **Accommodation** – e.g., Marriott International, IHG Hotels & Resorts, guesthouses
- **Transportation** – e.g, Etihad Airways, Springbok Atlas, and car rental companies
- **Travel organisers** – e.g., Intrepid Travel, Exodus Travels, Sombat Tours (Thailand)
- **Commercial and industrial** – e.g, local construction, textile companies
- **Support services** – e.,g. tourist guides, travel insurance, travel trade press.

Figure 1. The sectors of the travel and tourism industry

⚠️ **Need to know – The informal sector in the tourism industry**

Visitor attractions are key drivers of the tourism industry — they not only draw tourists to destinations but also support local businesses, create jobs, and help preserve cultural and natural heritage. Understanding their role is essential for managing and promoting sustainable tourism growth.

1.Visitor attractions

When tourists are attracted to a particular place, it is usually because the destination has attractions. **Visitor attractions** (or 'tourist attractions') draw people to a specific area, which is why they form the main part of the tourism industry.

Every year, thousands of international tourists flock to Thailand. What do you think attracts them? It could be the warm climate and beautiful beaches and islands, the nightlife in Bangkok, or the cultural heritage. Whatever the reason, tourists visit Thailand because something **attracts** them.

Throughout this chapter, the term 'visitor attractions' rather than 'tourist attractions' is used to reflect **tourism industry practice**; also, because many attractions are visited by as many of the local residents of an area as they are by tourists. Attractions probably play the **most important role** in creating a **successful** destination and are usually what stimulates the tourist to travel in the first place. As Fyall at al. point out:

"Without attractions, there would be no need for other tourism services. Indeed, tourism, as such, would not exist if it were not for attractions" (2022).

Such strong sentiments as to the place and importance of visitor attractions means that tourism managers need to **investigate** the subject to understand their importance, as well as the management issues pertaining to attractions.

Defining and categorising visitor attractions

In many cases, when people think of a destination, they think of an attraction. This usually forms the foundation of a destination marketing organisation's (DMO) branding and marketing campaign. Indeed, in cases where no clear image of an attraction comes to mind, marketers may have difficulty defining a reason for tourists to travel there.

Visitor attractions provide the **primary motivation** for tourists to visit a destination. Attractions are important <u>both at the destination as well as en route to the destination,</u> as they **entice** visitors to the region. Visitor attractions **need** <u>to have several characteristics</u> if they are to be successful in growing the brand and popularity of the destination, creating employment, and becoming part of the tourism hub at each destination.

<u>Fyall</u> at al. (2022) identified the following features common to visitor attractions:

- That they are managed specifically with the aim of attracting visitors, and may or may not charge entrance fees
- That they provide the necessary facilities to ensure that the needs and interests of visitors are catered to
- That they provide an environment in which people can spend their leisure time, and aim to provide a pleasurable experience for the visitor
- That they are specifically designed to achieve the above goals.

🖊 **Over to you**

Watch this YouTube video:

Title: Visitor Attractions
Duration: 15.39 mins

✧ **Did you know**

The Eiffel Tower, one of the world's most famous visitor attractions, was originally intended to be a temporary structure for the 1889 Paris Exposition — but it became so popular that it was never taken down and now attracts over 7 million visitors each year!

Figure 2. La tour Eiffel in Paris,
France

1.2 Address the scope of visitor attractions in relation to types of attractions

Categorising tourist attractions

The tourist attractions sector is categorised according to the type of attraction. There are four main types of attractions, as shown in Table 1 and listed below:

- Natural attractions
- Human-made attractions
- Cultural attractions
- Social attractions

Table 1. Categories of visitor attractions

Attraction category	Attraction types	Constituent attractions
Natural	Scenic Beauty	Beaches, mountains, rivers, waterfalls, fountains, lakes, forests, coastal areas, caves, flora, fauna
	Animal Attractions	Game reserves, zoos, rare-breed farms, aquaria, wildlife
	Parks, gardens, reserves Country parks Health National parks	Botanical gardens, public parks, national parks, gardens, nature reserves, marine reserves, country parks, reservoirs, marinas spas, hot mineral springs

Attraction category	Attraction types	Constituent attractions
Built	Leisure and theme parks	Outdoor parks, beach resorts, ski resorts, casinos, shopping centres, dams
	Workplaces	Mines, factories, docklands, farms, wineries, breweries
	Convention centres Transport	Steam railways, cruise liners, luxury train safaris
Cultural	Historical sites	Castles, historical houses, monuments, battlefields, memorials, statues
	Archaeological sites	Cave rock art, ruins
	Religious sites	Churches, temples, mosques and monasteries, ceremonies, rituals
	Museums and galleries	Art galleries, museums
	Tourist routes	Township tours, wine routes, whale routes, heritage routes, battlefield routes, slave routes, flower routes
	Rural life	Cultural villages, food
	City/town life	Architecture, cafés, markets, restaurants, theatres, shows
	Arts and crafts	Curios, handicrafts such as paintings, sculptures, and wood-carvings
	Events	Markets, sports events, cultural festivals, hallmark events
Social	Socialising	Socialise with local people, eat with them, drink in local bars and pubs, and experience life as they do. In some cases,
	Living arrangements	Visitors can live with a family and join them in their daily tasks and errands (for example, on farm stays).

One or more of the attractions listed in Table 1 may provide the reason for an individual to visit a destination, for example people may travel to **Majorca** (one of Spain's Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean) because they want to go to its beaches and get a tan, but once they are on the island they may find out about other attractions, such as limestone mountains, Roman and Moorish remains, and the 13th-century Santa María Cathedral.

We will now look at examples of **each type of tourist attraction.** As we do this, think about what type of tourist, domestic or international, would be interested in each attraction.

Natural Attractions

Natural attractions are all those features that make up the physical environment, for example the landscape, climate, wildlife, plants, and forests.

- **Scenic beauty** – for hiking, camping, wildlife viewing, rock climbing, and river rafting.
- **Climate**. Many international tourists, especially those from Western European countries such as Germany and the UK, are drawn to the Southern hemisphere, like Australia and South Africa, because of its warm weather combined with other natural attractions such as beaches and mountain areas.
- **National parks, nature reserves, and marine reserves**. The Ranthambore National Park in Rajasthan, India, is an example of a national park that is extremely popular with domestic and international tourists.
- **Spas** are natural attractions that have been developed for tourists. Spa towns and resorts.
- **Caves** are popular natural attractions with <u>international and domestic tourists.</u>

Human-Made Attractions

The second type of tourist attraction is a **human-made** (or 'built') attraction. What type of buildings do you think would attract tourists? Can you list some examples?

- **Waterfront developments** – e.g., Victoria Dockside in Hong Kong
- **Casinos** – Marina Bay Sands Casino – Singapore
- **Theme parks** – Everland in South Korea
- **Convention and exhibition centres** – Cape Town International Convention Centre
- **Recreation and sport facilities**

✷ **Did you know**

The Burj Khalifa in Dubai holds not one but several world records! Standing at a staggering 828 meters (2,717 feet) tall, it's not only the tallest building in the world but also has the highest observation deck and the longest elevator travel distance!

Cultural Attractions

Cultural attractions have become one of the <u>most popular types</u> of tourist attractions in recent years. Cultural attractions are places or things that are **reflective** of a particular community. Tourists who visit cultural attractions are interested in them because they are different from their own culture. We will now look at examples of the different types of cultural attractions.

- **Archaeological and historical places of interest**. Include national monuments and religious buildings (e.g., churches, cathedrals, temples, mosques, and monasteries).
- **Arts and crafts**. Tourists who are interested in arts and crafts are attracted to places where they can **experience** dance, music and drama, and to places where they can purchase handicrafts such as paintings, sculptures, and wood carvings. For example, some craftspeople sell their creations along the sides of roads.
- **Cultural festivals and events**. Country-fair events, For example, the Cappadocia International Hot Air Balloon Festival, Turkey.

✎ **Over to you**

Discuss what cultural events take place in your community? Who normally attends these types of events? Do you think international tourists would attend the events if they were informed about them? **Explain** your answers.

- **Cultural villages**. Tourists visit cultural villages to experience rural village life in a particular country. There are demonstrations on how huts are decorated and how food and beer are prepared. Visitors can also take part in traditional games, and they can buy souvenirs from curio shops.
- **Museums and galleries**. Museums educate tourists and locals about the history of an area, region, or country. For example, the Historic Centre of Macau (China), located within the Mount Fortres,s is also a World Heritage Site (WHS).

✏️ **Over to you**

Find out what a World Heritage Site (WHS) is, and if there are any World Heritage Sites situated in your community. Imagine you are a journalist for a historical journal called Those were the days, and you have been commissioned to write an article on the World Heritage Sites in your province. **Write** an article for a blog.

- **Tourist routes**. A tourist route refers to a route that has been developed to attract tourists to an area to view or experience something unique to that area. Wine route, whale route, heritage route, battlefield route, slave route, flower route.
- **Townships/slums/favelas** have become popular tourist attractions for international tourists. Visitors can take a guided tour with a tour operator around a township. A tour usually comprises visits to township facilities, such as a shebeen, which is the township version of a pub, a cultural centre, and a school.
- **Winelands**. Those who enjoy wine often travel to visit the various wine routes. Both international and domestic tourists visit various wine farms where they can taste the wine and buy the wines that they like.

🌐 **Industry Insight – The Angkor Wat Temple Complex, Cambodia**

The **Angkor Wat Temple Complex** in Siem Reap, Cambodia, is one of the most important cultural and heritage attractions in the developing world. As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Angkor Wat draws millions of international visitors each year and is a major contributor to Cambodia's economy.

Tourism at Angkor Wat provides significant economic benefits, such as employment in hospitality, guiding, transport, and local crafts. However, the site also faces challenges linked to overcrowding, environmental degradation, and pressure on cultural preservation.

To address these issues, Cambodian authorities and UNESCO have introduced visitor management plans, including limiting access to fragile temple areas, enforcing conservation rules, and promoting community-based tourism to spread the benefits to nearby villages.

This example highlights how developing countries can balance heritage preservation with economic opportunity, ensuring that visitor attractions are managed sustainably for both people and place.

✏️ **Over to you**

The following types of tourists are visiting your area as part of their holiday:

- A family consisting of two young children, aged four and six
- A retired couple
- A group of five international backpackers

For each group, **list three different local attractions** that you think they would want to visit, stating why you think they would find them interesting.

Unusual Tourist Attractions

·Examples include former prisons that are now hotels, farms that used to just breed ostriches have opened their doors to tourists who can now visit the farms and even ride the ostriches, a tour around a brewery or factory, and horseback riding combined with wine tasting.

✏️ **Over to you**

Can you think of anything in your community that might be turned into an unusual tourist attraction?

Table 2. Visitor attraction icons and their locations

Country	Visitor attraction icons
Australia	Sydney Harbour Bridge, Sydney Opera House, Mt Uluru, Great Barrier Reef
Brazil	Christ the Redeemer, Sugarloaf Mountain, Amazon Rainforest, Iguazu Falls
China	Great Wall of China, Terracotta Army, Forbidden City, Zhangjiajie National Park
Egypt	Pyramids of Giza, Nile River, Valley of the Kings, Abu Simbel
India	Taj Mahal, Red Fort, Jaipur Palaces, Kerala Backwaters
Japan	Mount Fuji, Tokyo Tower, Arashiyama Bamboo Forest, Kyoto Temples
France	Eiffel Tower, Champs Elysées, The Louvre
Italy	The Colosseum
Morocco	Jemaa el-Fnaa square, Hassan II Mosque in Casablanca, Sahara Desert, Erg Chebbi dunes

Country	Visitor attraction icons
Spain	Guggenheim Museum
South Africa	Table Mountain, Kruger National Park, The Garden Route, Soweto, Robben Island
UAE (Dubai)	Burj Khalifa, Palm Jumeirah, Dubai Mall, Dubai Marina
UK	Big Ben, Buckingham Palace, London Eye, Stone Henge
USA	Statue of Liberty, Golden Gate Bridge, Grand Canyon

🖊 **Over to you**

Copy Table 3 above into a workbook and add 3 countries' icon visitor attractions to the table.

⚠ **Need to know**

Tourism has become one of the world's largest industries as more people travel in their own countries or travel overseas.

✏️ **Over to you**

Watch this YouTube video:

Title: Types of Tourist Attractions: The 4 Major Types of Visitor Attractions Around the World
Duration: 16.09 mins

1.3 Evaluate the impact of tourism on visitor attractions

Tourism has a **powerful influence** on visitor attractions, shaping their development, management, and sustainability. Attractions are among the main reasons people travel, and their success is often closely linked to the volume and type of visitors they receive. However, while tourism can generate income and stimulate growth, it can also create challenges related to overcrowding, environmental pressure, and maintaining authenticity.

Tourism is both a driver and a challenge for visitor attractions. Understanding and managing its impacts is essential for ensuring that attractions remain sustainable, engaging, and beneficial to both visitors and local communities.

Did you know

Visitor attractions are one of the main reasons people choose to travel — in fact, they can account for up to 30% of total tourism spending in some destinations, showing just how vital they are to local economies and community development!

> **⚠ Need to know**
>
> Tourism can have **both positive and negative impacts** on visitor attractions. While it can generate income for conservation and maintenance, excessive visitor numbers can lead to overcrowding, environmental damage, and the loss of cultural authenticity — making sustainable management essential for long-term preservation.

1. Economic Impacts

Dubailand

There is no doubt that visitor attractions create an economic impact on the destination area. The economic impact may be in the form of providing jobs (both direct and indirect jobs), taxes for local and regional governments, and income to local businesses as service providers. Visitor attractions are also a **major source** of foreign currency for the host country. Visitor attractions can thus be manipulated to achieve some or all of these aims. Dubai in the UAE (United Arab Emirates), for example, is building the world's largest theme park, Dubailand. This attraction is likely to lure tourists from all over the world, and thus create income for the UAE that is not based on its primary natural resource, oil.

Some visitor attractions aim to do business in the quieter tourist season, to smooth the income and visitor arrival curve for the region.

Attractions may also be established to act as a drawcard to encourage visitors to explore an area they perhaps would not otherwise reach. The Midlands Meander in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, for example, encourages visitors to travel away from the metropolis and into relatively remote areas, where they can create an economic impact and support local farms and their produce. Local authorities have also set up traditional markets and trading stalls en route to attractions.

The Midlands Meander

The government may gain from visitor attractions both in terms of taxes paid and in terms of a revenue stream, as, in many cases, the visitor attraction may be owned by the government. Revenue raised by Robben Island Museum in Cape Town, for example, is used to cover the costs of maintaining it as a World Heritage Site (WHS).

> ⚠ **Need to know – economic impacts of visitor attractions**
>
> - Increased visitor numbers generate revenue through admission fees, merchandise, and services.
> - Provides employment opportunities for local residents.
> - Encourages investment and infrastructure improvements, such as better transport links and facilities.

> ⚠ **Need to know – tourism increase local employment and income**
>
> Tourist attractions such as pristine beaches, national parks, cultural and historic landmarks, etc. are often located in economically deprived regions, making tourism a good alternative to other industries (such as agriculture, fishing, forestry, etc.) to increase local employment and income.

Regional and urban regeneration

Governments, at both provincial and local levels, have recognised the potential of tourism as an economic development tool. Visitor attractions may be used as an urban (city-wide) or provincial tool to encourage regeneration. The aim is that major new visitor attractions can provide the hub for local spending patterns, and thus drive the regeneration process (Page, 2025).

Destination Development

- High-performing attractions can act as anchors (or 'hooks') for destination branding.
- They encourage the creation of other tourism products (hotels, restaurants, tours).

2. Social and Cultural Impacts

- Over-commercialisation may reduce the authenticity of cultural or heritage attractions.
- Local communities may feel excluded or displaced due to rising costs or restricted access.

Cultural and Educational Value

- Tourism promotes cultural exchange and appreciation of heritage.
- Funding from visitors helps preserve historical and cultural sites.
- Attractions often expand their interpretation and education programmes due to demand from tourists.

Management Challenges

- Attractions must balance visitor satisfaction with site conservation.
- Seasonal tourism can lead to unstable revenue streams and staff turnover.

2. Environmental Impacts

- Over-visitation can cause wear and tear (erosion') on natural or historic sites.
- Increased waste, pollution, and traffic congestion affect the surrounding environment.

·Sustainable Management Strategies

- Implementing visitor management systems (e.g., timed entry, ticket caps).
- Promoting off-peak or alternative attractions to spread demand.
- Using revenue from tourism to maintain and restore facilities.
- Educating visitors on responsible behaviour and conservation.
- Partnering with local communities to ensure shared benefits.

✏️ **Over to you**

What are the main positive and negative impacts of tourism on visitor attractions in your country?

Over to you

Research a **World Heritage Site** and create a short presentation explaining:

1. How tourism contributes to its preservation and to local communities.
2. What problems does the site face due to high tourist numbers.
3. How these challenges are being managed.

Over to you

If you were the manager of a visitor attraction, what steps would you take to maximise tourism's benefits while minimising its negative impacts?"

Industry Insight – UNESCO

The **UNESCO,** the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, is a specialized agency dedicated to strengthening our shared humanity through the promotion of education, science, culture, and communication.
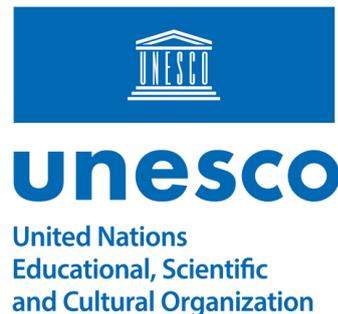
UNESCO set standards, produce tools and develop knowledge to create solutions to some of the greatest challenges of our time, and foster a world of greater equality and peace.

Protecting biodiversity, responding to artificial intelligence, advancing quality education, safeguarding heritage, and ensuring access to reliable information are some examples of the work that UNESCO does with its 194 Member States across the globe.

🌐 Industry Insight – Sterkfontein Caves

The world famous **Sterkfontein Caves** were declared a World Heritage Site (WHS) in 1999 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). The declaration seeks to encourage the identification, protection, and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. To maintain the status of a WHS, we must adhere to a number of regulations, one of which is to make sure that no undue pressure is placed on the site due to too many people visiting the caves.

As a result, Maropeng, a visitor interpretation centre, was created to alleviate this pressure. A mere 10 kilometres away from the caves, the Maropeng visitor centre presents the scientific evidence found in Sterkfontein and other fossil sites in a manner that is highly interactive and fun for the whole family. 'This does not impact on the environment of the caves and visitors can see, touch, feel, and hear in an environment where they do not feel as though they are intruding', states Anton Post, General Manager of Maropeng a Afrika.

"This does not impact on the environment of the caves and visitors can see, touch, feel, and hear in an environment where they do not feel as though they are intruding"

Revision on the Go

Positive Impacts

- Increased visitor numbers generate revenue through admission fees, merchandise, and services.
- Provides employment opportunities for local residents.
- Encourages investment and infrastructure improvements, such as better transport links and facilities.
- Tourism promotes cultural exchange and appreciation of heritage.
- Funding from visitors helps preserve historical and cultural sites.
- Attractions often expand their interpretation and education programmes due to demand from tourists.
- High-performing attractions can act as anchors for destination branding.
- They encourage the creation of other tourism products (hotels, restaurants, tours).

Negative Impacts

- Over-visitation can cause wear and tear on natural or historic sites.
- Increased waste, pollution, and traffic congestion affect the surrounding environment.
- Over-commercialisation may reduce the authenticity of cultural or heritage attractions.
- Local communities may feel excluded or displaced due to rising costs or restricted access. • Attractions must balance visitor satisfaction with site conservation.
- Seasonal tourism can lead to unstable revenue streams and staff turnover.

Over to you

1. **Discuss** the various ways of classifying visitor attractions.
2. How would you define a successful visitor attraction?
3. **Explain** why visitor attractions are an important component of the tourism system.

Case Study – Dharavi Slum Tours, Mumbai, India

Dharavi, located in Mumbai, India, is one of the largest and most densely populated slums in the world, home to over a million residents within just over two square kilometres. Despite its poverty, Dharavi is also a hub of productivity and resilience, housing more than **15,000** small-scale industries producing leather goods, textiles, pottery, and recycled materials.

Tourism in Dharavi forms part of the growing niche known as **slum tourism**, which offers visitors an authentic glimpse into the social and economic life of urban poor communities. Unlike dark tourism, which focuses on sites linked to death or tragedy, slum tourism explores poverty, resilience, and community enterprise.

Reality Tours & Travel (RTT), founded in 2006, is a pioneering company that conducts walking tours of Dharavi with the goal of challenging negative stereotypes about slum life and supporting local development. The tours provide an educational and respectful experience, showing visitors the industrious side of Dharavi—such as recycling workshops, pottery-making, embroidery, and food production.

A significant portion of RTT's profits is reinvested in community projects through its NGO arm, **Reality Gives**, which funds education, training, and social programmes for Dharavi residents. By 2023, RTT had guided thousands of international tourists annually, expanding its tours to other parts of Mumbai and Delhi.

The Dharavi example demonstrates how ethical visitor attraction management can **balance tourism growth with social responsibility,** offering meaningful experiences while empowering local communities.

📖🔍 Case Study – Dharavi Slum Tours, Mumbai, India

Case study questions:

1. What makes Dharavi an example of responsible and sustainable visitor attraction management?
2. List the economic benefits of slum tours on the local economy.
3. What are some of the potential criticisms or challenges of slum tourism, and how can they be?

📋 Revision on the Go - Visitor Attractions and Tourism Impacts

- Visitor attractions are at the **heart of the tourism industry** – they are the main reason people choose to visit destinations. Attractions can be natural (e.g. mountains, beaches, national parks), cultural (e.g. museums, heritage sites, festivals), or purpose-built (e.g. theme parks, resorts, entertainment venues).
- The scope of visitor attractions is broad, ranging from small local heritage sites to major international landmarks like the Eiffel Tower or Table Mountain. Together, they contribute to economic growth, employment, and destination image.
- Tourism impacts visitor attractions in three key ways:

    1. **Economic**: Tourism generates income, creates jobs, and supports local businesses.
    2. **Socio-cultural:** It can promote cultural exchange and preserve traditions but may also cause overcrowding and cultural dilution.
    3. **Environmental:** Tourism can fund conservation but also risks overuse, pollution, and habitat damage if not managed sustainably.

- Effective planning and management of attractions are essential to balance the benefits and reduce negative impacts. Sustainable practices ensure that attractions remain enjoyable, educational, and viable for future generations.

Visitor attractions are vital to tourism's success – understanding their types, value, and the impact of tourism is key to managing destinations responsibly and sustainably.

> ### Reading List
>
> - Attractions Management magazine: www.attractions.co.uk
> - Fyall, A., Garrod, B., Leask, A., & Wanhill, S. (Eds.). (2022). Managing Visitor Attractions. 3rd edn. London: Routledge.
> - International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA): www.iaapa.org
> - Page, S. (2025). Tourism Management. 7th edn. New York: Routledge.
> - Turpin, A. (2025). Introduction to Hospitality and Tourism Management: A Contemporary Approach. London: Kogan Page.
> - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): https://unescobmw.org/
> - World Heritage Sites: https://www.unesco.org/en

Summary

This chapter you looked at the importance of visitor attractions in the tourism industry.

You learnt about the the scope of visitor attractions in relation to types of attractions (natural attractions, human-made attractions, cultural attractions, and social attractions).

You also learnt about the impact of tourism on visitor attractions.

To summarise, you gained a broad understanding of the nature, development and management of visitor attractions.

Understand tourist motivation theories and the needs of different types of visitors

Introduction

In this chapter you will learn about tourist motivation theories in relation to the needs of different types of travelers.

You will look at the needs and motivations of different types of visitors.

Learning Outcomes

On completing the chapter, you will be able to:

2. Understand tourist motivation theories and the needs of different types of visitors

Assessment Criteria

2.1 Explain the different tourist motivation theories and how they relate to different types of visitors
2.2 Assess the needs and motivations of different types of visitors

2.1 Explain the different tourist motivation theories and how they relate to different types of visitors

Understanding why consumers choose particular visitor attractions and destinations is complex. Motivation is a state of arousal of a drive or need that impels people to activity in pursuit of goals.

There is a wide range of factors that motivate consumers to buy tourism offerings (or visit tourist attractions). One of the reasons for a lack of understanding of tourism motivation is that it can be difficult for consumers to recall and articulate what motivated their recognition of the need for travel. The theory behind this definition is that once a person's goals have been achieved, his or her needs subside and the individual returns to a state of normality before new needs arise.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a widely used theory for understanding human motivation. In tourism, it helps explain why people visit attractions and what they expect from their experience. Maslow argued that human needs are arranged in a hierarchy, with basic needs at the bottom and higher-level needs at the top. As each level is satisfied, individuals seek to meet the next level of need.

Tourism professionals can use this model to better understand visitor expectations and design services that appeal to different motivations (see Figure 4).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Figure 4. Maslow's (1954) hierarchy model

Source: Adapted from Maslow, A.H. (1954). Motivation and Personality. New York: Harper and Row.

1. Physiological Needs

These are the most basic human needs—food, water, rest, and comfort.
Application in visitor attractions:
- Providing clean restrooms, seating areas, shade and shelter
- Offering food and beverage outlets
- Ensuring visitors can rest during long visits

Example:
A family visiting a zoo expects café areas and comfortable places to sit throughout the attraction.

2. Safety Needs

Once basic needs are met, visitors seek safety, security, and protection.
Application in attractions:
- Clear signage and crowd management
- Safe pathways, lighting, and emergency procedures
- Secure parking and well-managed access points
- Safe equipment for adventure activities

Example:
Visitors to a theme park rely on well-maintained rides and visible safety instructions.

3. Social (Belonging) Needs

People need connection, belonging, and shared experiences. Many tourists visit attractions to spend time with others.
Application in attractions:
- Opportunities for group activities, family-friendly events
- Interactive learning spaces and tours
- Welcoming staff and friendly service

Example:
 A heritage museum offering guided group tours helps visitors connect socially while learning

4. Esteem Needs

Visitors may seek recognition, achievement, or a sense of status.
Application in attractions:
- Premium experiences (VIP tours, exclusive access)
- Photo opportunities at iconic attractions
- Challenging activities that provide a sense of accomplishment

Example:
 Climbing a mountain viewpoint or completing a zipline course can give visitors a sense of pride and accomplishment.

5. Self-Actualisation

At the top of Maslow's hierarchy is the desire for personal growth, fulfilment, and meaningful experiences.
Application in attractions:
- Educational programmes, cultural immersion, conservation activities
- Workshops, craft activities, or volunteer opportunities
- Authentic experiences that allow visitors to learn and reflect

Example:
 An eco-attraction offering conservation volunteering or a cultural village offering craft workshops helps visitors achieve personal enrichment.

Maslow's Hierarchy and Visitor Attraction Management

Understanding Maslow's model helps attraction managers to:
- **Identify** what different visitors value and expect
- **Create** experiences that appeal to deeper motivations
- **Improve** satisfaction by meeting basic needs before offering higher-level experiences
- **Design** segmented products for families, adventure tourists, cultural visitors, and others
- **Ensure** safety and comfort—key conditions for enjoyable visits

It also explains why some visitors are satisfied by simple leisure activities, while others seek educational, adventurous, or transformative experiences.

Examples of Maslow in Practice at Attractions	
Level	**Attraction Example**
Pysiological	Food outlets, rest areas, shaded seating
Safety	Safety briefings, secure parking. first-aid stations
Social	Group tours, family zones, interactive exhibits
Esteem	Certificates for completing activities. VIP passes
Self-Actualisation	Cultural workshops, conservative projects, educational tours

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provides a useful framework for understanding visitor behaviour at tourist attractions. By recognising that visitors have different needs— ranging from basic comfort to personal fulfilment—tourism providers can create more engaging, satisfying, and meaningful visitor experiences. This supports effective attraction management and contributes to higher visitor satisfaction, loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth.

Push–Pull Motivation Theory

The Push–Pull Motivation Theory is one of the most widely used frameworks for understanding why people visit tourist attractions. It explains that visitors are influenced by **two types of motivations:** internal "push" factors that encourage them to travel, and external "pull" factors that draw them to a specific attraction. Understanding these motivations helps attraction managers design experiences that match visitor expectations and encourage repeat visits.
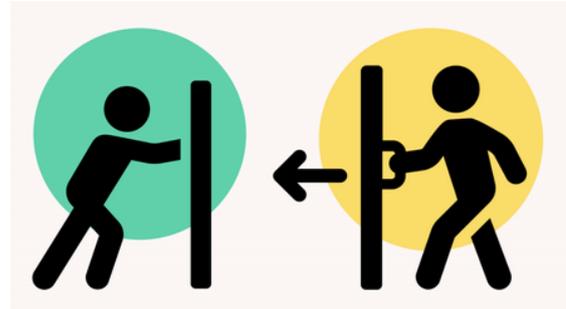
Push Factors: Internal Reasons for Visiting Attractions

Push factors come from within the visitor. They are emotional, psychological, or personal motivations that create the desire to go out, explore, or experience something new—even before choosing a specific attraction.

Common push motivations include:
- **Escape**: wanting a break from routine or stress
- **Relaxation**: seeking rest or comfort
- **Learning**: desire for knowledge, curiosity, cultural enrichment
- **Adventure**: wanting excitement, challenge, or new experiences
- **Social interaction**: spending time with family or friends
- **Status or prestige:** wanting to visit famous or iconic attractions
- **Personal fulfilment**: self-improvement or personal growth

Pull Factors: Features That Attract Visitors to an Attraction

Pull factors are external characteristics of a destination or attraction that appeal to visitors. They influence where visitors choose to go once the internal push motivation already exists.

Common pull factors found in tourist attractions include:
- **Unique features**: wildlife, architecture, historical significance
- **Activities**: guided tours, exhibits, rides, cultural experiences
- **Scenery or atmosphere**: natural beauty, peaceful settings, exciting environments
- **Facilities and amenities**: cafés, accessibility, parking, rest areas
- I**nterpretation and learning opportunities**: exhibitions, signage, audio guides
- **Marketing and reputation:** branding, online reviews, iconic status
- **Special events**: festivals, performances, seasonal experiences

Push–Pull Motivation at Tourist Attractions: How They Work Together

Push and pull factors often work together to shape visitor behaviour. A visitor may be:
- Pushed by the desire to learn and pulled to a museum with interactive exhibits.
- Pushed by the need for excitement and pulled to a theme park with high-adrenaline rides.
- Pushed by wanting social time with family and pulled to a zoo with family-friendly facilities.
- Pushed by environmental values and pulled to an eco-attraction with strong sustainability practices.

Effective attraction management recognises both sides of motivation.

Why Push–Pull Theory Matters for Visitor Attractions

Understanding push–pull motivations helps attraction managers to:
- Design products that match visitor expectations
- Develop targeted marketing messages based on visitor needs
- Improve services and facilities to appeal to specific motivations
- Identify the most attractive features for different visitor types
- Create experiences that encourage longer visits and repeat visits
- Segment the market (e.g., families, adventure seekers, cultural visitors)

Push-Pull Theory and Different Visitor Types at Attraction		
Visitor Type	**Push Motivation**	**Pull Motivation**
Families	Social time, bonding	Child-friendly activities, safe environment
Adventure Tourists	Challenge. thrill	High-adrenaline activities. adventure trails
Cultural Tourists	Learning, curiosity	Museums, heritage sites, guided tours
Eco-Tourists	Environmental values	Nature reserves, sustainable facilities
Leisure Visitors	Relaxation, escape	Scenic gardens, quiet environments
VFR Tourists	Social connection	Local attractions recommended by hosts

The Push–Pull Motivation Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding why visitors choose specific attractions. By identifying what internally motivates tourists (push factors) and what externally draws them to an attraction (pull factors), tourism providers can create meaningful, enjoyable, and well-targeted visitor experiences. This understanding supports better planning, marketing, and management of tourist attractions and helps meet the diverse needs of different visitor groups.

Plog's Psychographic Model
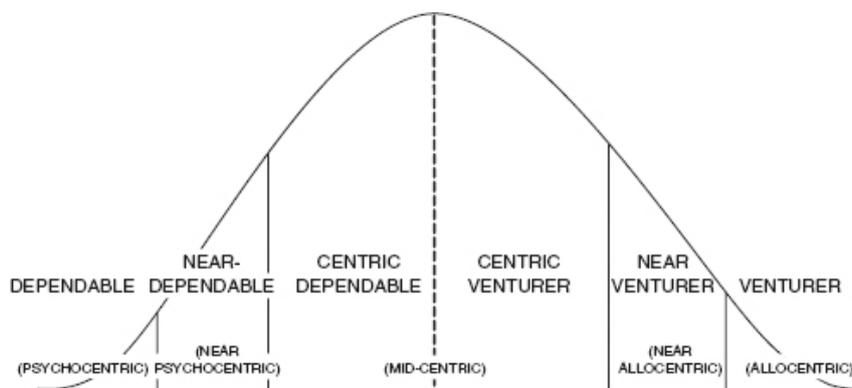
Plog (1984) linked personality traits to tourist behaviour. His work involved research on behalf of seventeen airline companies in the USA to find out if an understanding of travel motivation could help them expand their businesses. Plog (2002) categorised tourists into two opposite types: Venturers and dependables.

Venturers

Venturers are adventurous and outgoing. Their inquisitive personalities and their interest in travel and adventure mean that they prefer exotic destinations and unstructured holidays rather than packaged tours, and more involvement with local cultures. For example, travelling around South and Central American countries Peru and Bolivia. Allocentrics are synonymous with Cohen's (1972) explorer and drifter type ('non-institutionalised') tourists.

Dependables

Dependables are inward-looking, inhibited, less adventurous travelers who prefer familiar, "more touristy" holiday destinations. They are more aligned with Cohen's 'institutionalised tourists'. For example, British tourists holidaying in popular European destinations the Algarve, Ibiza, and the Canary Islands.

Plog's midcentrics are tourists who do not fall into either category but share some elements of both venturers and dependables. Midcentrics, according to Plog, make up most of the population. They go to known destinations, but do not go for adventure or exploration tourism.

Venturers	Dependables
Use their own judgement	Look for the opinions others
Travel more	Travel less
Adventurous	Non-adventurous
Seek off-the-beaten-track destinations	Visit well-known tourist spots
Prefer less-developed locations	Like well-organised travel itineraries
Stay for longer periods	Stay for shorter periods
Travel more frequently	Travel less frequently
Prefer local guesthouses and restaurants	Like branded tried-and-trusted accommodation and conventional meals
Buy locally made arts and crafts	Like buying souvenirs and trinkets
Avoid crowds	Enjoy crowds

Source: Plog, S.C. (1995). Vacation places rated. Redondo Beach, California: Fielding Worldwide.

2.2 Assess the needs and motivations of different types of visitors

What attracts tourists?

Many tourists base their decision to travel to a particular destination on image that they have of the place. These images are created through marketing information and the tourists' experiences of the place. Therefore, tourist destinations need to have the following attributes:

They need to…
- **appeal** to the tourist;
- be well **marketed** so that people know about them;
- to be **accessible**. Tourists need to be able to get to and from them; and
- to have something **special** that distinguishes them from local or regional attractions.

🖉 **Over to you**

Think about what attracts tourists and make a list of tourist attractions in your town or state/province/county.

1. How do you think your community would benefit from a tourist attraction
2. **Explain** why you think tourists would be attracted to them.

Needs and Motivations of Different Types of Visitors

Visitor attractions serve a wide variety of audiences, each with their own needs, expectations, and motivations. Understanding these differences is vital for effective visitor attraction management, as it helps organisations design experiences that satisfy their guests and encourage repeat visits.

Visitors may be motivated by leisure, education, culture, adventure, relaxation, or social connection. For example, families often seek fun, safe, and interactive experiences that appeal to both adults and children: such as theme parks, zoos, and family-friendly museums. Cultural tourists are often motivated by curiosity and learning; they may visit heritage sites, art galleries, or festivals to gain insight into local traditions and history.

> ! **Need to know – Motivations of Different Types of Visitors**
>
> - **Leisure and enjoyment** – Visitors seek fun, relaxation, or entertainment.
> - **Education and learning** – Some tourists are motivated by curiosity and want to gain new knowledge or cultural insights.
> - **Adventure and challenge** – Adventure seekers are drawn to excitement, physical activity, and risk-taking.
> - **Social interaction** – Many visitors enjoy spending time with family, friends, or like-minded groups.
> - **Spiritual or emotional fulfilment** – Some attractions, like heritage sites or natural landmarks, provide peace, inspiration, or connection.
> - **Status and self-esteem** – Certain tourists are motivated by exclusivity or the prestige associated with visiting iconic places.
> - **Sustainability and responsibility** – Increasingly, visitors seek eco-friendly experiences that support local communities and protect the environment.
>
> Effective management means recognising these motivations and ensuring that attractions offer facilities, services, and experiences that meet diverse visitor expectations.

Tourists who travel for leisure purposes can be divided into the following groups:

- **Holiday tourists** usually want sun, sand and sea. For example, a week's holiday staying at hotel on the Greek island of Corfu.
- **Shopping tourists** go on holiday to shop. For example, people travel to Morocco for furniture and brassware, and Indonesia for fabric.
- **Cultural tourists** visit places for things such as wine, music and to meet different people.
- **Health and wellness tourists** visit spas and go on holiday for medical treatment or to get fit.
- **Sports tourists** participate in sports events like soccer, rugby and athletics tournaments. For example, the FIFA World Cup or Wimbledon Tennis Championships, London.
- **Education tourists** travel to attend a school, college or university to learn a language or a new skill.
- **Eco tourists** enjoy experiencing and learning about the natural environment. For example, visiting Komodo National Park, Indonesia.
- **Religious tourists** attend pilgrimages, such as Muslims who travel to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, and religious festivals, such as the Kumbh Mela in India (which attracts millions of pilgrims).
- **Special interest tourists (SIT)** travel to a place for specific reasons, for example to go on special walks, or to watch birds or whales.

Adventure and nature tourists seek excitement, challenge, or escape from everyday life. Their needs often include outdoor activities such as hiking, wildlife safaris, or water sports, as well as access to sustainable and eco-friendly experiences. Meanwhile, **educational visitors**, such as school or university groups, are driven by the desire to learn through structured programmes, guided tours, or hands-on exhibits.

Visitors with special needs or mobility challenges require accessible facilities, signage, and inclusive services. Similarly, international visitors might need multilingual information, currency exchange, and cultural sensitivity to ensure a positive experience.

Ultimately, the success of visitor attraction management lies in recognising and meeting these diverse motivations — ensuring that attractions deliver memorable, meaningful, and inclusive experiences for everyone.

Tourist Motivation Theories and the Needs of Different Types of Visitors

Understanding why people travel and what they need during their visit is essential for tourism and hospitality professionals. Visitors make decisions based on a mixture of internal motivations, personal circumstances, and external influences. By analysing these factors, tourism providers can design products, experiences, and services that meet visitor expectations and enhance satisfaction.

Assessing Visitor Needs and Motivations

Visitors differ widely in what they want from a tourism experience. To accurately assess visitor needs, several key dimensions should be considered:

1. Demographics

Characteristics such as age, income, gender, education level, and family status influence what travellers expect from a destination or attraction.
- **Example:** families may need child-friendly facilities, while older travellers may require accessibility features.

2. Psychographics

This includes personality, interests, lifestyle choices, and attitudes. Psychographic information helps explain why visitors prefer certain types of activities or environments.
- **Example:** an adventurous personality may seek high-risk activities like rock climbing or white-water rafting.

3. Purpose of Travel

Visitors may travel for leisure, business, education, health, cultural experiences, or social connection (such as Visiting Friends and Relatives – VFR).
- Understanding the purpose helps providers tailor services, such as offering conference facilities for business travellers or guided tours for cultural visitors.

4. Expectations

These relate to the level of comfort, safety, cultural familiarity, and service quality visitors require. Expectations also involve risk tolerance and openness to new experiences.
- **Example:** some tourists expect premium accommodation, while others prioritise authentic local experiences.

5. Constraints

Visitors may face **limitations** such as:
- Budget (affects accommodation and activity choices)
- Time (duration of visit)
- Mobility or accessibility needs
- Special requirements (dietary needs, language support, equipment)
- Understanding constraints enables tourism managers to design inclusive and accessible visitor experiences.

Internal Influences on Tourism Behaviour

Tourism behaviour is shaped by a complex mix of internal factors that influence what visitors choose, how they behave, and what they expect from a visit. These influences can be grouped into four categories:

1. Personal Factors

These include age, occupation, lifestyle, economic situation, and personal interests.
- **Example:** a young professional with disposable income may prioritise short, luxury weekend breaks, while a student traveller may look for low-cost cultural trips.

2. Psychological Factors

Psychological influences include motivation, perception, learning, beliefs, and attitudes. Motivation itself is central in explaining why individuals decide to travel—whether for relaxation, prestige, education, escape, or adventure.
- **Example:** a visitor motivated by self-actualisation may seek meaningful cultural or volunteer experiences.

3. Cultural Factors

Culture shapes values, beliefs, behaviour, and consumer preferences. Factors such as nationality, religion, traditions, and upbringing affect travel choices.
- **Example:** cultural norms may influence food choices, preferred destinations, or how visitors interact with local people.

4. Social Factors

Visitors are also influenced by family, friends, social groups, social class, and reference groups. These social connections play a role in deciding where to go, what to do, and how to behave when travelling.

- **Example:** peer groups may encourage adventure travel, while families may favour safe, convenient destinations.

Understanding motivations is therefore a fundamental skill for anyone working in tourism and hospitality, enabling organisations to meet visitor needs effectively while creating memorable and meaningful experiences.

Over to you

1. **Research** another major visitor attraction (e.g., the Everland in South Korea, Disneyland Paris, or Table Mountain Aerial Cableway, Cape Town).
2. **Identify** at least three different visitor types that the attraction caters for.
3. For each visitor type, describe:
   - Their main motivation for visiting.
   - How the attraction meets their needs (e.g., facilities, programmes, accessibility).
   - One improvement that could further enhance their experience.

Tip: Use online reviews (such as TripAdvisor) or the attraction's official website to support your findings.

Over to you

1. **Choose** two types of visitors (e.g., families, cultural tourists, adventure tourists, educational groups, or international visitors).
2. For each type, list:
   - Their main motivation for visiting attractions.
   - The facilities or services they might need.
   - One way an attraction could improve their experience.
3. **Discuss** how meeting these needs can lead to positive visitor satisfaction and repeat business.

Revision on the Go

1. Key Tourist Motivation Theories

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Visitors are motivated based on progressing needs:
Physiological → Safety → Social → Esteem → Self-Actualisation
- **Example:** A tourist may seek safety and comfort in accommodation (safety), then choose cultural tours to gain personal fulfilment (self-actualisation).

Push-Pull Motivation Theory

- **Push factors:** internal motivations that encourage a person to travel (escape, relaxation, status, curiosity, adventure).
- **Pull factors:** external attributes of the destination that attract tourists (climate, beaches, natural beauty, heritage, events).

Plog's Psychographic Model

- Classifies travellers by personality:
- Allocentric (adventurous) vs Psychocentric (risk-averse)
- Helps explain why some tourists prefer remote, unusual destinations while others choose familiar, structured environments.

2. Types of Visitors & Their Needs

Leisure Tourists

- **Motivations:** relaxation, escape, fun, novelty, family time.
- **Needs:** comfort, entertainment, accessibility, good service.

Business Travellers

- **Motivations:** work commitments, meetings, networking.
- **Needs:** reliable transport, communication facilities, efficiency, comfortable workspace.

Adventure Tourists

- **Motivations:** thrill, challenge, personal achievement.
- **Needs:** safety measures, trained guides, specialist equipment

Revision on the Go

Cultural & Heritage Visitors

- **Motivations:** education, cultural interest, authenticity.
- **Needs:** expert interpretation, accessible information, respectful cultural experiences.

Eco-Tourists

- **Motivations:** nature appreciation, sustainability, low-impact travel.
- **Needs:** eco-friendly facilities, conservation-based activities, ethical practices.

VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives)

- **Motivations:** social connection, family events.
- **Needs:** flexible itineraries, local support, affordable travel.

3. Assessing Needs & Motivations

To assess visitor needs, consider:
- **Demographics:** age, income, family status
- **Psychographics:** personality, interests, lifestyle
- **Purpose of travel:** leisure, business, education, social connection
- **Expectations:** comfort level, risk tolerance, cultural preferences
- **Constraints:** budget, time, mobility, special requirements

Case Study – The Eden Project, Cornwall, UK

The **Eden Project** is an excellent example of how a visitor attraction can meet the diverse needs and motivations of different types of visitors. Opened in 2001, it is one of the UK's leading eco-attractions, featuring giant biomes that recreate rainforest and Mediterranean environments.

📖🔍 **Case Study – The Eden Project, Cornwall, UK**

- **Families** are drawn to the Eden Project for its fun and educational experiences. The site offers child-friendly trails, interactive exhibits, and seasonal events that engage younger audiences while teaching about sustainability and biodiversity.

- **Cultural and educational visitors** appreciate the Eden Project's focus on environmental education and global awareness. The attraction regularly hosts workshops, lectures, and art installations that highlight issues like climate change and conservation.

- **Adventure and nature tourists** are motivated by the attraction's unique landscape and eco-activities, such as the SkyWire – England's longest zip line – and outdoor gardens designed for exploration.

- **Sustainability-minded travellers** are motivated by the Eden Project's environmental mission, including its renewable energy systems, recycling initiatives, and locally sourced food options.

- **Visitors with accessibility needs** benefit from thoughtful design, including accessible pathways, mobility scooter hire, and multilingual visitor guides.

📖🔍 Case Study – The Eden Project, Cornwall, UK

The Eden Project demonstrates that successful visitor attraction management involves understanding and catering to multiple motivations simultaneously — offering education, enjoyment, inspiration, and accessibility to all visitors.

Case study questions

1. Explain how the Eden Project meets the needs and motivations of at least three different types of visitors.
2. Why is it important for visitor attractions to cater to diverse visitor groups?
3. Discuss how the Eden Project promotes sustainability through its facilities and visitor experiences.

💡 Tip: Use examples from the case study and your own knowledge of visitor attraction management to support your answers.

📋 Reading List

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CHAPTER THREE

Evaluate the techniques used to manage visitor attractions and their impact on sustainability

Introduction

In this chapter you will explore the techniques used to manage visitor attractions and how they can be used to achieve sustainability.

You will learn about carrying capacity, visitor and traffic management, environmental impact assessments (EIAs), and the product lifecycle model – effective and widely-used tools in relation to helping with the planning and management of environmental impacts.

Learning Outcomes

On completing the chapter, you will be able to:

3. Evaluate the techniques used to manage visitor attractions and their impact on sustainability

Assessment Criteria

3.1 Discuss the processes involved in the development of visitor attractions and the potential issues which could arise
3.2 Analyse the techniques used to manage different visitor attractions
3.3 Evaluate management techniques in context of sustainability

3.1 Discuss the processes involved in the development of visitor attractions and the potential issues which could arise

Management of Visitor Attractions

Traditional marketing practice states that the product-offering must match the benefits sought by the consumer. This is also true of visitor attractions. One problem that attraction managers encounter is that the attraction may mean many things to different people, and thus that visitors do not all have the same expectation as to what they should experience on site.

🌐 **Industry Insight – IHG Hotels & Resorts**

This vast wilderness area needs to accommodate visitors with very different needs. There are 4x4 enthusiasts who wish to explore the area and test their 4x4 skills.

IHG®
HOTELS & RESORTS

There are international and local visitors who would like a comfortable experience with air conditioners, good food, and wine available even in the remotest camps. There are visitors who wish to have a simple, unspoilt experience camping in the rest-camps, while some visitors prefer to camp and provide everything themselves – and be alone in the vast wilderness.

As with other business entities, the attractions manager will need to be successful at managing various business functions if the site is to be a well-known and popular visitor attraction. Commentators have listed several areas that managers should focus on, from ethical challenges to strategic partnerships.

Management functions can be divided into five main areas: marketing, revenue and financial management, human resource, visitor management, and operations management. These will be explored further below.

3.2 Analyse the techniques used to manage different visitor attractions

Vatican City

Carrying capacity, visitor and traffic management, environmental impact assessments (EIAs), and the product lifecycle model are the most effective and widely used tools in relation to help with the planning and management of environmental impacts.

Carrying Capacity

Carrying capacity is the maximum number of people who can use a site without an unacceptable alteration in the physical environment and an unacceptable decline in the quality of the experience gained by visitors. It refers to the maximum use of any site without causing negative impacts on the resources, reducing visitor satisfaction, or exerting negative impacts upon the destination. The concept of carrying capacity is important for determining and understanding the impacts of tourism. O'Reilly (1986) identified four types of carrying capacity:

- **Physical carrying capacity** refers to physical space and the number of people (or the number of vehicles).
- **Environmental carrying capacity** is the extent and degree of tourism impacts upon the physical environment.
- **Psychological carrying capacity:** this is the level of crowding that a visitor is willing to tolerate before he/she decides a particular site is too full and goes elsewhere.
- **Social carrying capacity:** the reaction of the local community to tourism.

All four carrying capacities are **not** independent of each other, but it may be possible to exceed the threshold limit of one capacity for a limited amount of time without there necessarily being a harmful effect upon another type of capacity. For example, it is possible that an increase in the number of hikers in a mountain area could lead to increased levels of destruction of flora from trampling, while the satisfaction of the visitors is not diminished.

Visitor and Traffic Management

Visitor management techniques are used to mitigate the negative environmental impacts of tourism. There are two types of visitor management technique:

- **Hard measures.** Aim to limit access and usage by controlling tourist numbers, using high-regulatory techniques such as charging higher entry prices at peak times, adjusting opening times, managing queueing ,and reducing the number of car park spaces
- **Soft measures.** Designed to inform or educate, such as information centres; interpretation, and codes of conduct. Essentially, these low-regulatory methods influence visitor behaviour, alter visitor attitudes, and spread the distribution of visits (see Example box).

It should be noted that these techniques tend to be more reactive responses to managing environmental problems, rather than proactive.

Traffic management initiatives include:
- park-and-ride services
- improved public transport
- improved road systems

Environmental impact assessments (EIAs)

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a process used to identify, predict, and evaluate the potential environmental effects of a proposed development or project before it begins. In the tourism and hospitality industry, an EIA helps planners and developers understand how a new attraction, hotel, or resort might affect the local environment, including wildlife, water, air, and cultural heritage. The goal is to ensure that any negative impacts are minimised and that sustainable practices are built into the project from the start.

EIAs not only evaluate the overall effect that the development (of a visitor attraction) will have on the environment but also identify ways in which negative impacts could be minimised.

Some of the issues that a developer will consider include:

- the costs of the development (during and after construction)
- all the possible benefits, and who will benefit specifically
- those who may be adversely affected by the development
- whether there is a different way of developing the initiative that would have fewer negative impacts
- how the negative impacts may be minimised.

Sustainable tourism development

The three approaches discussed above focus on visitors or the physical environment. Sustainable tourism development aims to address the needs of all role-players in the destination community – locals, the environment, the tourism industry, as well as visitors. This approach aims to maximise the benefits of tourism and minimise the impacts of development on the environment.

The Product Life-cycle model
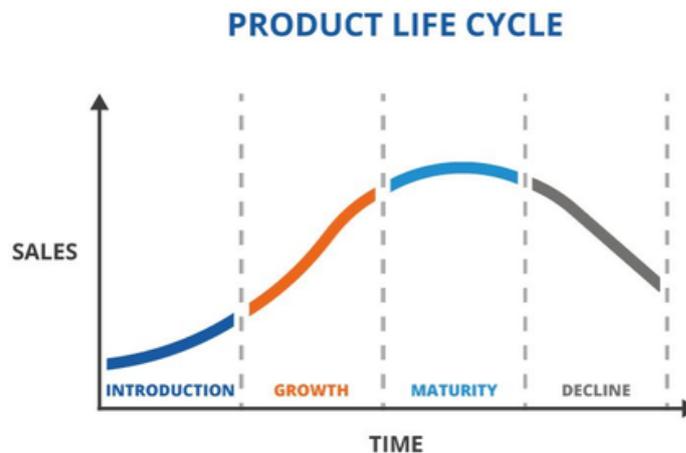
Figure 5. The Product Lifecycle Model

The product life-cycle (PLC) concept has long been accepted in marketing as a model of how product-offerings evolve through different stages during their lifetime. The model implies that offerings have a limited life; that profits increase and decrease as the product moves through different stages, and that each stage in the life-cycle offers different challenges and rewards for management to deal with. Ultimately, it implies that different management strategies are required at different stages of the product life-cycle (see Figure 5).

Introduction Stage

At this stage, the visitor attraction is new to the market. There is often a <u>hype and buzz</u> around the new offering, as media and marketing initiatives create awareness. The introduction stage often enjoys a large buy-in from locals, who flock to see what the new attraction in their area has to offer.

One caution at this stage is that some attractions may open before they are completed, as managers wish to gain entrance fees as soon as possible. This may result in negative feedback, as visitors do not get the full experience offered.

This early stage of the new attraction is important, as it often creates word-of-mouth (WoM) and electronic word-of-mouth (eWoM) advertising among locals – the effects of which linger on long after the introduction stage is over. Few attractions fail at the introductory stage, as in-depth feasibility studies have usually ensured that there is enough demand, at least at the introduction stage.

Growth Stage

Figure 6. The Burj Khalifa in Dubai - still at growth stage of the PLC

This is the stage that sees a steady increase in growth, and usually also profit. The PLC indicates that it is at this stage that competitors may enter the market. This may be slightly different for the international iconic attractions, as it is difficult to identify the competition. For example, is the main competitor to the Eiffel Tower the Sydney Harbour Bridge, or the <u>Burj Khalifa Dubai</u>? However, competition exists in the marketplace in terms of the visitor's time and their discretionary spend. As the destination gains more attractions, so the visitor must make choices as to where and when they spend their money and time.

Maturity Stage

Disneyland "It's A Small World" Ride under maintenance

Profits and visitor numbers may plateau and slow down. This is likely to be the longest stage in the life-cycle, often lasting for many years (George, 2025). The attraction's manager may find that there is an increase in running costs, and thus a decrease in profits. Maintenance costs increase as the attraction ages and needs renovating, or there may be a need for the replacement of exhibits and rides (for example).

Furthermore, marketing costs increase as the attraction competes with others for attention and it becomes harder to get media coverage with no new product developments attracting media attention.

The quality of the attraction's offering becomes an issue (Page, 2025). As fashions change, so attractions need to keep up with new trends and ensure that quality standards are always high. **Amenities** such as restaurants and shops may need to be upgraded, and the attraction needs to ensure that the experience offered remains relevant, up-to-date, and in line with consumer trends. **Pricing** also becomes an issue, as locals may already have visited the attraction and may need discounting to encourage return (see Example box below).

Research into consumer perceptions and re-invention of the visitor attraction may be necessary to prevent the attraction from moving into the next stage – the decline (George, 2025).

Visitor attractions may remain at the maturity stage for a very long time. The **Eiffel Tower in Paris,** for example, was built in 1889 and still attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. It was initially seen as a **white elephant** and, in fact, was almost torn down in 1909 at the end of its 20-year lease; but it is now a French icon and continues to enthral thousands of visitors to Paris every day. Some attractions re-invent themselves with re-launches and innovations.

Table Mountain Aerial Cableway Company (see chapter Case Study) for example, re-launched itself during the maturity stage by building a new and improved cableway with rotating floors. The media coverage coupled with the improved technology resulted in a vast increase in visitor numbers after the 1997 upgrade.

Table Mountain Aerial
Cableway Company

New exhibits allow for increased media coverage and encourage visitors to revisit the Aquarium. This strategy of renewing exhibits is a common strategy amongst museums, aquariums and even theme parks (such as Disney World which recently added Harry Potter themed areas to their parks).

Decline Stage

Although decline is not inevitable without intervention, many attractions may reach the stage of low sales and, consequently, low profits. Visitor attractions can linger in this decline stage for a long time, until they are either closed, or upgraded and re-launched. A museum, for example, may have a steady decline in visitor numbers until, finally, the doors are simply closed as having staff on duty at the admissions kiosk is no longer justified. Some visitor attractions may not be expected to show a profit due to their historical or social value and may remain in the decline stage for a long time.

> ⚠️ **Need to know – Motivations of Different Types of Visitors**
>
> ## Key Concepts
>
> - **Carrying Capacity:** The maximum number of visitors an attraction can handle without causing environmental damage or reducing visitor satisfaction. Includes physical, ecological, social, and psychological limits.
> - **Visitor & Traffic Management:** Methods to control flow and behaviour of visitors. Tools include:
>   - Timed ticketing
>   - Zoning and one-way routes
>   - Shuttle buses and parking restrictions
>   - Signage, interpretation, and digital guides
>
> - **Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs):** A structured process to predict and minimise environmental harm before development happens. Ensures responsible planning, regulatory compliance, and long-term conservation.
> - **Product Lifecycle Model (PLC):** Attractions move through: Introduction → Growth → Maturity → Decline. Managers use the PLC to maintain appeal, plan updates, and manage impacts as the attraction evolves.

3.3 Evaluate management techniques in context of sustainability

Figure 7. Techniques for managing visitor attractions sustainably

Effective management is vital to ensure visitor attractions remain enjoyable, safe, and sustainable. Attractions must balance three key goals: meeting visitor expectations, protecting the environment, and supporting the local economy. To achieve this balance, attraction managers use a range of visitor management and sustainability techniques that help control visitor numbers, reduce negative impacts, and enhance the overall experience (see Figure 7).

1. Visitor Flow and Capacity Management

One of the most common techniques is controlling how many people visit an attraction and how they move through it. For example, timed entry tickets, online booking systems, and clearly marked pathways help reduce overcrowding and protect fragile environments. At natural attractions, boardwalks and fencing prevent visitors from damaging vegetation and wildlife habitats. These measures improve visitor satisfaction while ensuring the attraction remains sustainable in the long term.

2. Education and Interpretation

Providing educational information encourages visitors to behave responsibly. Many attractions use signage, guided tours, apps, and interpretation centres to inform visitors about environmental protection and cultural respect. For example, a national park may use information boards explaining how visitors can protect local ecosystems by staying on paths and disposing of waste properly. This not only supports sustainability but also deepens visitor understanding and appreciation.

3. Waste, Energy, and Water Management

Sustainable attractions implement measures to reduce resource use. Examples include recycling bins, energy-efficient lighting, solar power, and low-flow water systems. Attractions like eco-parks and heritage sites often monitor their carbon footprint and work towards becoming carbon neutral. These actions help minimise pollution, lower operational costs, and demonstrate environmental responsibility.

4. Supporting Local Communities

Social sustainability is another key aspect of visitor attraction management. Attractions may employ local people, buy goods from local suppliers, or promote nearby businesses to ensure tourism benefits the community. This strengthens the local economy and builds positive relationships between the attraction and residents.

5. Monitoring and Feedback

Regular evaluation helps managers identify areas for improvement. Visitor surveys, feedback forms, and environmental audits are used to assess whether sustainability goals are being met. By tracking visitor satisfaction and environmental impact, attractions can adapt their strategies and maintain high-quality, sustainable operations.

Evaluation

While these techniques contribute to sustainable management, they must be implemented carefully. For example, strict visitor limits may protect the environment but could reduce revenue. Similarly, eco-friendly upgrades can be expensive to install but may save money over time. The best-managed attractions strike a balance between visitor enjoyment, environmental protection, and financial viability. When done well, sustainable management not only protects attractions for the future but also enhances their reputation and competitiveness in the tourism market.

Industry Insight – The Valley of the Kings, Egypt

The **Valley of the Kings,** located near Luxor, is one of Egypt's most famous and historically significant visitor attractions. As the burial site of pharaohs such as Tutankhamun and Ramses II, it attracts over one million visitors each year. Managing such a fragile archaeological site requires strict sustainability techniques.

The Valley of the Kings

To protect the tombs from damage caused by heat, humidity, and carbon dioxide from tourists' breath, visitor numbers are <u>carefully controlled,</u> and <u>rotational access systems are used</u>—meaning not all tombs are open at once. **Replica tombs** have been created to reduce pressure on the originals, allowing visitors to experience ancient Egyptian art without risking deterioration of the real sites. Educational signage and guided tours help raise awareness about conservation, while revenue from entry fees supports preservation projects and local employment.

This example shows how thoughtful visitor management can protect priceless heritage while still providing an engaging and educational visitor experience.

Over to you

Visit a local visitor attraction (or research one online).
1. **Identify** at least three techniques the attraction uses to manage visitors.
2. **Explain** how each technique supports environmental, social, or economic sustainability.
3. **Evaluate** which technique you think is most effective and why.

📖🔍 **Case Study – Table Mountain Aerial Cableway Company (TMACC)**

Table Mountain Aerial Cableway Company (TMACC)

Table Mountain, one of the New 7 Wonders of Nature, is South Africa's most iconic landmark and one of Cape Town's top visitor attractions. Operated by the Table Mountain Aerial Cableway Company (TMACC), the site welcomes around 800,000 visitors each year, transporting them to the summit to experience the mountain's breathtaking views. Located within a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Table Mountain is home to unique flora and fauna, making sustainable management essential.

Environmental Management:

To protect this fragile environment, TMACC developed a formal Environmental Management System (EMS) to reduce the impact of high visitor numbers and ensure sustainable operations. The system was benchmarked and reported to stakeholders, reinforcing TMACC's commitment to environmental best practice.

Visitor Management:

TMACC has implemented a range of visitor management tools to balance visitor enjoyment with environmental protection:

- A 2 km circular pathway system directs visitor flow, reducing congestion and protecting sensitive vegetation.
- Boardwalks and viewing decks are built from natural materials to blend into the landscape and protect drainage areas.
- Low-impact fencing prevents visitors from trampling plants.
- Educational signage and information leaflets encourage responsible behaviour, supported by cabin masters' onboard talks during the cableway ascent.
- Free guided walks run daily with local volunteers, enhancing the visitor experience through education and engagement.

Case Study – Table Mountain Aerial Cableway Company (TMACC)

Operational Sustainability Measures:

TMACC has also introduced a range of practical environmental actions, including:

- Water-saving measures such as low-flush toilets, waterless urinals, and cleaning policies using minimal water.
- Strict waste management — including recycling of cans, glass, and oil, banning leafleting, and eliminating single-use plastics like straws.
- Air quality controls by reducing idling times for tour buses.
- Dedicated smoking areas with ashtrays to prevent fire risk and litter.

By carefully managing visitor flow, waste, and water use, the Table Mountain Aerial Cableway demonstrates how effective visitor attraction management can deliver a high-quality tourist experience while protecting a fragile natural environment. The attraction is a model of how sustainability, education, and visitor satisfaction can successfully coexist.

Case study questions

1. **Explain** how the Table Mountain Aerial Cableway Company (TMACC) manages large visitor numbers while protecting the natural environment. What visitor management tools have been introduced, and how do they enhance both sustainability and visitor experience?
2. **Identify** two operational sustainability measures implemented by TMACC (e.g., waste, water, or air management).
3. **Suggest** one additional strategy TMACC could introduce to further reduce the environmental impact of tourism on Table Mountain. Explain how it could improve sustainability without reducing visitor satisfaction.

Revision on the Go

1. Key Management Tools

Carrying Capacity

- The limit on visitor numbers an attraction can sustain without environmental harm or reduced visitor experience.
- Includes physical, environmental, social, and psychological capacities.
- Helps prevent overcrowding and resource depletion

Visitor & Traffic Management

- Controls how visitors access and move through attractions.
- **Methods:** timed entry, queuing systems, zoning, one-way routes, shuttle buses, parking controls, signage, digital guides.
- Reduces congestion, protects sensitive areas, and improves visitor satisfaction.

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs)

- Predict and analyse environmental effects before developing or expanding an attraction.
- Ensures informed decision-making, risk mitigation, and compliance with regulation.
- Supports long-term conservation and responsible development.

Product Lifecycle Model (PLC)

- **Stages:** Introduction → Growth → Maturity → Decline.
- Helps managers plan interventions to extend the attraction's lifespan, maintain relevance, and manage changing impacts over time.

2. Development Processes & Issues

When creating or expanding attractions, managers consider:

- Site selection, feasibility, market demand, environmental sensitivity.
- Regulatory permissions and community consultation.
- Common issues: environmental degradation, overcrowding, infrastructure strain, community conflict, financial overreach.

3. Managing Different Attractions

Management approaches differ based on attraction type (natural, cultural, theme parks, heritage sites).
Examples:

- **Natural sites:** zoning, boardwalks, habitat protection.
- **Heritage sites:** controlled access, preservation standards.
- **Theme parks:** crowd flow management, safety systems.

4. Evaluating Sustainability Impact

Effective management must balance:

- **Environmental sustainability:** reducing pollution, protecting ecosystems, responsible resource use.
- **Social sustainability:** respecting communities, cultural preservation, reducing visitor stress and overcrowding.
- **Economic sustainability:** steady revenue, cost control, avoiding decline through innovation and planning.

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Glossary

Word/Term	Explanation
Accommodation	A place at which tourist stay overnight, for example a guesthouse or hotel.
Attraction	A place, event, building or area which makes tourists want to go and visit it.
Business Tourism	The provision of facilities and services to the millions of delegates who attend or participate in meetings, congresses, exhibitions, business events, incentive travel, and corporate hospitality.
Carrying Capacity	The maximum number of people who can use a site without an unacceptable alteration in the physical environment and an unacceptable decline in the quality of the experience gained by visitors.
Community Development	The process of economic and social progress involving local community members.
Cultural Heritage	Refers to past customs and traditions.
Cultural Tourism	tourism that involves interacting with local host communities and their culture, for example, visiting cultural villages and observing the manufacture of arts and crafts.
Culture	People's customs, clothing, food, houses, language, dancing, music, drama, literature and religion.
Destination	A place, including a physical or perceived location, consisting of primary and secondary attractions and supporting amenities that entice people to visit it.
Destination Marketing Organisation	A government organisation responsible for marketing a destination area.
Digital Technology	Electronic tools, systems, and devices that generate, store, or process data, such as computers, smartphones, websites, and apps.

Word/Term	Explanation
Domestic Tourism	A type of tourism that involves people taking holidays, short breaks, and business trips in their own country.
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	A process used to identify, predict, and evaluate the potential environmental effects of a proposed development or project before it begins.
Eco-Tourism	A form of tourism that focuses on environmental and cultural preservation.
Economic Impact	The effect that tourism has on a destination's economy, including the income generated, jobs created, and overall contribution to local and national growth.
Economy	The wealth of resources of a community The economy is the wealth of resources of a community.
Foreign Currency	Money from another country that tourists exchange or spend when travelling abroad, bringing income to the destination's economy.
Gross Domestic Product (GDP)	A measure of the size and value of a nation's economy, normally expressed as the total value of all goods and services produced during a specified time period, usually one year.
Heritage	Anything that has a link with some past event or person.
Hospitality	Those commercial activities that offer consumers accommodation, meals, and drinks while they are away from home.
Product Life Cycle	A marketing concept that describes the stages a product goes through from its creation to its removal from the market, typically including development, introduction, growth, maturity, and decline.
Sustainable Development	In principle, development that meets the needs of present generations, while ensuring that future generations are able to meet their own needs.
Sustainable Tourism	Tourism activities and development that do not endanger the economic, social, cultural, or environmental assets of a destination.
Tourism	The activities of persons travelling to, and staying in, places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited.
Tourism Industry	Made up of various businesses and organisations that provide facilities and services that tourists can use. The industry also develops tourism products such as tour packages.

Word/Term	Explanation
Tourist	A visitor whose visit is for at least one night and whose visit may be for leisure, business or other purposes.
Tours	Any holidays organised by touroperators
Tour operators	Tour operator An organisation or individual that organises and provides a range of domestic, inbound and outbound packages (or 'inclusive tours').
Township Tourism	Township tourism is centred on witnessing life in the former black and coloured racially segregated townships established under apartheid.
Travel	The movement of people from one place to another by some means of transport, typically across geographic or political boundaries.
TripAdvisor	The world's largest travel site. The site has millions of reviews, opinions, and photographs of hotels, restaurants and visitor attractions, all submitted by travellers.
United Nations Tourism	An agency for tourism policy, representing public sector tourism organisations from many countries worldwide.
Heritage	Anything that has a link with some past event or person.
Visitor attraction	A designated attraction that is controlled and managed for the enjoyment, amusement, entertainment, and education of the travelling public.

Self-Assessment Tests

True/False Questions

Answer True or False to the following statements. Justify your answers.

1. Built attractions are also referred to as human-made attractions.

2. There are five stages in the product life cycle.

3. In many cases, other stakeholders also market a visitor attraction.

4. Visitor attractions are not affected by seasonality.

5. Operations management refers to the day-to-day running of a visitor attraction site.

Multiple Choice Questions

1. Which of the following is **NOT** a way of classifying visitor attractions?

   (a) Built

   (b) Natural

   (c) Economic

   (d) Social

   (e) All of the above

2. Which of the following are **NOT** features of visitor attractions?

   (a) Managed specifically with the aim of attracting visitors

   (b) Provide an environment in which people can spend their leisure time

   (c) Provide the necessary facilities to ensure the needs of visitors are catered for

   (d) Specifically designed to achieve the above goals

   (e) All of the above

Self-Assessment Tests

3. _____ attractions are places or things reflective of a particular community.

   (a) Built

   (b) Natural

   (c) Unusual

   (d) Social

   (e) Cultural

4. Which of the following is **NOT** a World Heritage Site?

   (a) Great Barrier Reef, Australia

   (b) Machu Picchu, Peru

   (c) Pyramids of Giza, Egypt

   (d) Eiffel Tower, France

   (e) All of the above

5. The resources, facilities and services at a destination that draw tourist to a region is called the _____

   (a) Marketing mix

   (b) Destination mix

   (c) Destination Life Cycle

   (d) Promotional Mix

   (e) Attractions Mix

Self-Assessment Tests

6. A/n _____ attraction is well-known and closely associated with a particular destination.

   (a) Iconic

   (b) Symbolic

   (c) Idiotic

   (d) Idyllic

   (e) Nodal

7. Which of the following are considered challenges for the marketing manager of a visitor attraction?

   (a) The definition of the attraction

   (b) The variety of visitors which the attraction may appeal to

   (c) Little control over the marketing of the attraction by other stakeholders

   (d) The intangible nature of the attraction

   (e) All of the above

8. _____ costs are the costs of running the attraction that remain unchanged, regardless of how many visitors it attracts.

   (a) Fixed

   (b) Variable

   (c) Flat

   (d) Stable

   (e) None of the above

Self-Assessment Tests

9. The management function which involves the day-to-day running of a visitor attraction site is called ————

    (a) Human resource management

    (b) Visitor management

    (c) Revenue and financial management

    (d) Operations management

    (e) Marketing management

10. 4.The promotional tool which involves inviting influential tourism role-players such as tour operators, tourist guides and teachers to visit and experience an attraction is called:

    (a) Strategic partnerships

    (b) Educational

    (c) Exhibitions

    (d) Sales Promotions

    (e) Networking

Answers

Answers to True/False Questions

1. **True**. Built attractions are also referred to as human-made (or man-made) attractions.

2. **False**. There are four stages in the product life cycle.

3. **True**. In many cases, other stakeholders also market a visitor attraction.

4. **False**. Visitor attractions are affected by seasonality. Seasonality has a great influence on attractions. Most attractions have about 20 'peak' days per year. Attractions need to encourage visits for the remainder of the year, and in particular during the quietest periods.

5. **True**. Operations management refers to the day-to-day running of a visitor attraction site.

Answers to Multiple-Choice Questions

1. **(c)** Economic is not a way of classifying visitor attractions.

2. **(e)** All of these are features of visitor attractions.

3. **(e)** Cultural attractions are places or things reflective of a particular community.

4. **(d)** The Eiffel Tower (The Eiffel Tower is not a UNESCO World Heritage Site — Paris has World Heritage–listed areas, but the tower itself is not individually listed.)

5. **(b)** The resources, facilities and services at a destination that draw tourist to a region are called the destination mix.

6. **(a)** An iconic attraction is well-known and closely associated with a particular destination.

7. **(e)** All of these are considered challenges for the marketing manager of a visitor attraction.

8. **(a)** Fixed costs are the costs of running the attraction that remain unchanged, regardless of how many visitors it attracts.

Answers

9. **(d)** The management function which involves the day-to-day running of a visitor attraction site is called operations management.

10. **(c)** The promotional tools which involve inviting influential tourism role-players such as tour operators, tourist guides and teachers to visit and experience an attraction is called educationals.