TOURISM LANDSCAPE
CHAPTER - IV
TOURISM LANDSCAPE

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Landscapes are natural regions modified and modeled by man in carrying out the necessary landuse. Geographers are concerned with activities in the landscape - the interaction of man and environment. (Kaur, 1985). Tourism has been described as a landscape industry since the tourism resource is a complex of attractions (Ferrario 1979). Landscape in the context of recreation geography can be either active or passive (Smith, 1983). The combination of environmental factors, the entrepreneurial activities of the host population, the existing infrastructure, transport, etc produce the tourism landscape.

The geographical tourism landscape is viewed in terms of tourism demand and supply of tourism products. Chau (1977) described tourists as the demand, the travel industry as the supply and attractions as the tourist product and summarized the interrelated processes as the subject, means, and object of tourism. The tourism demand refers to the tourists who visit the destination. The supply of tourism refers to the components of the tourist industry that cater to the tourists. The tourist industry consists of a wide variety of commercial activities producing goods and services wholly or mainly consumed by the tourists. (UNCTAD 1971). The tourist product consists of the basic attractions and facilities at the tourist centre. This includes both natural and man made attractions, and the infrastructural facilities like transport, water supply etc. These three elements comprise the tourist landscape of any place. The attractions induce tourists to visit the area, transport services enable him to do so, the accommodation and supporting facilities (shops, restaurants etc) cater for his well being there, and the infrastructure ensures the successful functioning of all these.

The tourism landscape of Ooty is described in this chapter in terms of the tourist product, tourist supply and demand.

4.2. The Tourist Product (Attractions & facilities)

Tourism has grown in areas which are able to offer distinct and attractive environmental characteristics. Tourism activity in a destination area is generated through
the existence of unique attractions. The attractions of tourism are to a very large extent geographical in their character (Robinson 1976). Much of the appeal of the tourist destination is found in their geographic qualities. The natural environment includes the features like the natural landscape, climate, water features, vegetation etc. These features of the natural environment, is the most fundamental ingredient of the tourist product, which provides the basic initial attraction of the sites or destinations for tourists. The elements of the natural environment like the climate and scenic beauty together with the cultural features are the major attractions of Ooty.

4.2.1. Climate

Climate is a resource of great importance to tourism. Climatic comfort is the major pull factor for tourism in the hill stations. The hill stations of India were originally developed because of their salubrious climate. The British introduced mountain recreation in the form of climatism in the hill stations (Singh, 1982, Grotzbach 1996). Hill resorts in India are resorts\(^1\) for climatism. Ooty is a hill resort with a very pleasant climate in summer and during the inter monsoon months. Summers are cool with maximum temperatures averaging 21°C and minimum temperatures averaging 10°C. This is in contrast to the summer high averages of 36°C that occur in the surrounding plains. The hill station was initially developed to provide relief to the European from the scorching heat of the plains. Since its inception, climate has been the major factor attracting visitors from the surrounding plains. In winter, the temperature in Ooty is less severe than in North India. So a stream of tourists spend their holidays in Ooty during winter rather than in the hill stations in North India. Except for the months of July and August, when the monsoon is active a steady stream of tourists is noticed in Ooty town.

4.2.2. Scenic Beauty

Hill areas by virtue of their scenic endowments are tourist attractions. The scenic beauty refers to the beautiful natural scenery or the features of the natural landscape. This natural landscape is a compound of landforms, water and the vegetation. Together with the

\(^1\) Resorts are towns with specialist functions that attract tourists (Robinson, 1976)
Plate 4.1. View of Ooty town from Dodabetta peak.
climate, the scenic beauty of Ooty is its forte. Ooty town is situated in a valley and is surrounded by picturesque hills. The outstanding scenic spots of Ooty are described below.

Towards the east of Ooty, 10 Kms from the heart of the town is Dodabetta peak (Plate No.4.1). Dodabetta, is the highest peak in the Nilgiris (2592m ). From the peak, one can have panoramic view of the ranges of the Nilgiris and the plains below. On a clear day it is possible to see the various mountain ranges that make up the Nilgiris, the Mysore plateaus and Coimbatore plains. There is a telescope house at the peak maintained by the Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation. On the lower lap of the Dodabetta peak is the picturesque spot of Tiger Hill where one of the towns drinking water reservoirs is located. A cave close by is associated with religious legends. West of Ooty is Wenlock downs, the endless grasslands covering a vast area. Named after Lord Wenlock, a former governor of Madras, the downs are popular film shooting locations, which have drawn large number of tourists. Once the sacred pasture of the Todas2 today it has excellent spots for picnics and walks. Ooty golf links is located here.

To the south west of Ooty is Cairn Hill, one of the few surviving original walks of the town. The entire road circling the hill is flanked by dense cypress trees and is an excellent picnic spot. To the south of town is Elk Hill, 150 mts above the town, from where one catches a lovely glimpse of the town.

From Ooty, there are a large number of excursion trips being made to various nearly picnic spots especially to the west and south west of Ooty town. Prominent picnic spots are Avalanche (28 Kms). Western catchment (40 Kms) Mukurthi peak (40 Kms) Kalhatty (13), Pykara dam (21 kms) Ketti valley view, Mudhumalai wildlife sanctuary (36 kms) and numerous picnic spots in the nearly towns of Coonoor and Kotagiri. All these spots are easily accessible from Ooty town. Fig.4.1 shows the location of these picnic spots.

4.2.3. Gardens

The cool temperate climate of Ooty has resulted in a natural vegetation of sholas in the folds of the hills and grass lands in the hill tops. Besides the natural vegetation, the

---

2 Todas are a pastoral tribe unique to the Nilgiris.
PLACES OF TOURIST INTEREST IN AND AROUND OOTY TOWN

TOURIST PLACES WITHIN TOWN

1. Doddabetta
2. Tiger Hill
3. Wenlock Downs
4. ELK Hill
5. Botanical Garden
6. Vijayanagar Rose Garden
7. Boat House
8. Race Course
9. St. Stephen's Church
10. Golf Links
11. Nilgiri Library

TOURIST PLACES OUTSIDE TOWN

Coonoor
Ketti Valley view
Kotagiri
Mukurthi Peak
Mudumalai
Kollur
Pykara
Gudalur
Kolattum
Avalanche
Kudrool

PLACES OF TOURIST INTEREST IN AND AROUND OOTY TOWN

NOT TO SCALE

FIG. 4.1
favourable climate facilitated the setting up of a beautiful vast garden in the northern end of Ooty town. The Botanical garden established in 1845 is the most popular tourist spot in Ooty. The garden had its inception as a kitchen garden in 1845. By 1847, a horticultural society was formed and funds raised by donations and subscriptions to start a public garden under the skilled supervision of Mc.Ivor. The garden is spread over 50 acres of land. The upper portion of the garden was initially a wilderness covered with sholas, shrubs and swamps and the lower part was a swamp traversed by deep ravines. The steep slopes were converted into walks, terraces and lawns and the lower part turned into a sprawling undulating lawn. The garden has more than 2000 species of plants representing 117 natural orders. Ponds, rockeries, green houses, bowers and a conservatory are part of this informally laid garden. In the centre of the garden is a 20 million old fossil tree trunk.

The annual flower show conducted by the department of Horticulture is held on the lawns of this garden. The first flower show was held in 1896 in the Botanical gardens under the Nilgiri Agri-Horticulture Society. This society organised the flower show until 1979. Since 1980, the horticulture department of the Tamil Nadu government has been organizing the flower show. This flower show is the highlight of the summer tourist season. Earlier the flower show was organised for two days. Since 1994, it is a week long event drawing thousands of tourists from far and near. The Rose garden at Vijayanagaram, 0.75 km from Charring Cross, was established in 1996 to commemorate the centenary flower show. This garden covers 10-15 acres of land and has nearly 2000 varieties of roses.

4.2.4. Other Attractions

Besides the natural attractions, the other important attractions of Ooty are listed below.

The boat house at Ooty lake is a major tourist attraction. Ooty lake is an artificial lake and is a focal point of attraction for the large number of domestic tourists. Row boats,
pedal boats and motor boats are provided for boating. The boat house is managed by the TTDC which also runs a mini train for kids and a snack bar adjoining the boat house.

The Wilson fish farm on the south eastern corner of the lake, pony rides, the children's mini garden and the deer park are the other places of interest near the lake.

The upper portion of the lake, which was heavily silted was filled and leveled and turfed to form Hobart's park. Around this park the race course with a lap of 2 Kms was developed. Races are held in summer during the peak tourist season.

The golf course and the Ooty Gymkhana club founded in 1896, is an important centre for the elite tourists. The golf links of the Gymkhana club is on Wenlock Downs in the west of the town. The golf links is at an attitude of 2280 mts with a par of 70 over 5675 mts. The 18 hole course is laid on an expanse of 195 acres. 9 of the 18 holes on the course are blind in that you cannot see the green from the tee, because of the undulating landscape. Guideposts on intervening ridges direct the players.

The Todas, the ethnic pastoral tribe of the Nilgiris are an object of tourist curiosity. A Toda village above the Botanical garden is a centre of tourist curiosity. The annual dog show held at Anandagiri by the South of India Kennel club is another tourist attraction.

4.2.5. Tourist office

Tourist attraction is a unique blend of resources and facilities. The infrastructural facilities of Ooty town have been outlined in the earlier chapter. The facilities of tourist information and guidance also form part of the tourism product.

When the Government of Tamil Nadu created a full fledged department of tourism in 1971, Ooty was one of the four state tourism offices. Ooty was chosen since it was a popular tourist destination. The Ooty office is in charge of promotion of tourism in the districts of Nilgiris, Coimbatore and Salem. The primary work of this office is to promote tourism in these districts and to make suggestions to the government for improvement of tourism and amenities at tourist spots.
The tourist office at Ooty is set up in the supermarket building at Charring Cross. The office has a tourist officer assisted by four staff members. The tourist officer recommends the necessary infrastructure at various tourist centres. Since 1976, the tourist office has directed funds from the Hill Area Development Programme (HADP) for various improvement schemes for tourism in Ooty. Improvements to Ooty lake and the adjoining lake garden, the children's park, parking facilities at the lake etc are the major programmes funded by HADP for tourism. According to the Tourist Office, about two and half crores of rupees have been spent on various tourism schemes since 1976.

To promote tourism in the Nilgiri district, a Tourist Traffic Advisory Committee (TTAC) was set up to guide tourism development. The chairman of the TTAC is the collector and the Tourist Officer the Secretary. The other sixteen members include officials from the Police, Municipality, Forest departments etc and also two members of the community. This committee is no longer functional. The tourist office makes available various promotional materials and information to tourists. The tourist office is located in commercial road near the Charring Cross junction, but requires a fair amount of searching before one can locate it. There is an absence of information, besides oral directions, on locating the tourist office. Although the tourist office has conducted guide training courses, there are hardly any officially appointed guides. In the absence of them, self appointed guides often force themselves on the tourists. Occasionally, during the peak tourist season, an information counter exists in an obscure part of the bus stand. Bill boards have been put up by the Tourist office at the bus stand, Botanical garden, Dodabetta peak, lake and the bus stand. These boards though are in desperate need of a facelift.

The Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation (TTDC) the commercial wing of the Tourism department began its inception in 1971. The TTDC took over administrative control of Ooty lake from the fisheries department in 1972, with the fisheries department retaining their rights over fishing. The commercial ventures of the TTDC at Ooty include a hotel in Mt. Steward Hill, restaurants at boathouse and Dodabetta peak and the running of the boathouse and lake mini garden.
4.3. Tourist supply

The supply of tourism refers to the tourist industry. Tourism as an industry occurs at destination areas. The demand for tourism is fueled by the image makers – the hoteliers, the restaurateurs and others, who effectively lure tourists to places of the natural attractions. Natural tourist attractions by themselves are insufficient to satisfy tourist and must be accompanied by tourist infrastructure. The important segments of the tourist industry whose presence is very visible are the accommodation sector, restaurants and tour operators.

4.3.1. Accommodation

Accommodation is at the core of the tourist industry. Accommodation choices for tourists include privately owned establishment, state owned establishments, stay with friends and relatives, paying guest accommodation in summer, resorts, hotels, personal vacation homes etc. Hotels or lodging houses are the most common form of accommodation facility. The term hotel refers to a commercial establishment offering lodging to transients and often having restaurants, public rooms, entertainment etc. Hotels are essential because without them, despite climatic and cultural virtues, a good volume of tourists cannot be sustained. A wide range of lodging facilities are available in Ooty.

At the upper end are the old converted palaces and old hotels currently run by corporate chains. Table 4.1. shows a sample of hotels in Ooty with their rooms, tariff, etc.

Table 4.1. Ooty town - Hotels of different ranges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>No. of rooms*</th>
<th>Tariff per day**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Savoy</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Rs. 2300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday Inn Gem Park</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>Rs. 1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regency Villa</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Rs. 600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake View</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>Rs. 450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dasaparakash</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Rs. 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Rs. 350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Hills</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Rs. 300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahalakshmi</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Rs. 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nandhi</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Rs. 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delight</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Rs. 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krishnaprabha</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rs. 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes all types of rooms.
** Tariff for a standard Double Room
Besides the standard double rooms available in all hotels, other types of rooms are also available in the hotels catering to the affluent. These include the super double rooms, delux double rooms, super delux rooms, suites, etc. The lower range of hotels offer only a standard double room. Some hotels also have cottages.

Since Ooty town is not only the centre of interest of the domestic tourists, but also the hosting town from where tourists visit surrounding areas all the hotels are located in Ooty town. The majority of the hotels are budget hotels, which are privately owned.

4.3.1.1. Growth of Hotels

Some of the hotels in Ooty are of considerable vintage. Savoy hotel has been a hotel since 1841 when it was called the Union hotel and later called Sylk's hotel. It is the oldest continuously used hotel in Ooty. The Fernhill palace, formerly the Mysore palace, has been used as a hotel for a considerable length of time. Other hotels of longstanding include the Anadagri YWCA, Woodlands, Dasaprakash etc.

Hotels have seen a remarkable growth especially during the past decade. In 1995, Ooty had a total bed strength of about 4000, as per the statistics compiled by the tourist office. The hotel industry has registered a phenomenal growth in recent years. In the absence of well documented information on the growth of the hotel industry, a variety of sources have been used to estimate the growth of the industry.


\(^4\) This list includes only those hotels whose turnover exceeds Rupees 2 lakhs per annum.
Hotel construction activity has been active in the past decade. A perusal of the municipal building licenses shows that 15 licenses were issued for lodges between 1975-1980. Between 1981 to 1991, 68 licenses were issued for the construction of hotels. Besides new constructions, considerable licenses have been granted for conversion into lodging units. The 1980's seem to be the beginning of the boom period for tourist related construction activities. The construction boom which began in the late 1980's is continuing today despite checks imposed by the master plan in 1993.

The late 1980's saw a spurt in the development of hotels of all types in Ooty. Numerous reasons are attributed to this. The early 1980s saw a boom in tea prices, when prices shot up by more than five times. Some of the enormous profits of the tea industry
LOCATION OF HOTELS

REFERENCE

- Town boundary
- State Highway
- Other Roads
- Railway line

SOME IMPORTANT HOTELS
1 Hotel Preeti Palace
2 Anondagiri (YWCA)
3 Woodlands
4 Fernhill Palace
5 Savoy Hotel
6 Madhuvana Inn
7 Sunshine Inn

Fig. 4.4
were channeled into the building of hotels in Ooty. In 1982, the planning Commission recognized Tourism as an industry and by 1992, Tourism was declared an industry by the Tamil Nadu government and numerous subsidies\(^5\) were introduced encouraging private sector participation. Simultaneously the mid 1980s saw a boom in domestic tourism in India. The increasing income levels of the middle class, a large number of double income families, the heightened awareness of travel and holidaying through the media, leave travel schemes, holiday packages and incentive travel packages offered by corporations and business houses led to an increase in domestic tourism.

The increasing number of tourist arrivals was matched by a dramatic expansion of facilities, as local entrepreneurs responded overwhelmingly to the new opportunities. Simultaneously with these factors, the volatile political situation in Kashmir valley and Punjab in North India, led to the diversion of tourists from the Western and Eastern States of India into Ooty. The glamourisation of Ooty in Cinema also contributed to its growing popularity. With the development of tourist amenities, the place was transformed with heavy commercial constructions.

4.3.1.2. Location of Hotels

Almost all the hotels in Ooty town are located within the catchment area of the lake (Fig.4.3). Most of the hotels are aligned along transport routes in the core of the town with distinct pockets of concentration, and a tendency for hotels of similar tariffs to cluster together. There are distinct zones of hotel development. Figure 4.4 shows the location of hotels in Ooty town.

At the entrance to Ooty, on the Coonoor road is a ribbon development of hotels on either side of this state highway. Almost all the hotels here are new developments that sprang up in the early 1990s. Further north, Charring Cross is a hive of tourist related activities. Westward from Charring Cross post office, is Ettines roads. This road has seen a drastic transformation over the past 10 yrs, especially near its eastern end close to the Charring Cross junction. The number of hotels is high at this end of Ettines road. The

\(^5\) Subsidies include capital subsidy, sales tax rebate, 50% concession on luxury tax, electricity concession etc for new tourism projects.
development on this stretch began with the sale of the property of the Raja of Boblie in the vicinity of the present Preethi hotel.

Another cluster of hotels is noticed at the south western end of Ettines road. The old large hotels like Anandagiri YWCA, Woodlands and Dasaprakash are located here. Almost all the hotels overlook the race course. Around Charring Cross, at the trijunction of commercial road, Coonoor road and Kotagiri road is another cluster of hotels. All these hotels cater to the middle class tourists. A small cluster of low budget hotels is found near the bus stand near the railway station and also along the bazar road. The Fernhill area in the South West is a zone of old palaces converted into hotels. In the north, on Mysore and Havelock roads, are the large hotels that have developed lately.

4.3.1.3. Time Shares

Lately a large number of time shares have been locating in Ooty town. Timesharers have been promoting Ooty as a resort area. Resorts are places to which people go frequently for rest, pleasure etc. Resorts are usually located in areas of scenic beauty providing entertainment opportunities. Ooty is a resort town, with natural beauty and great accessibility. Real estate developers and the advent of time share concept has triggered a spurt of resort activities.

Time sharing is a concept that developed in France nearly three decades ago and it has gained popularity in India in the past few years. In time sharing, a furnished and serviced holiday home is owned by several different persons, each of whom has the right to use it during a specified period. Time share companies with their restaurants, packaged tours, fun rangers looking after group entertainment, bonfires etc have stretched beyond expectations, the limits of holiday entertainment of the Indian domestic tourists. Time sharing caught the eye of the holiday starved Indian domestic consumer. Beating inflation is the biggest pull of time shares for the middle class.

Presently there are numerous time share resort complexes in Ooty. Sterling, Iggi and Toshali the big timeshare companies who have a nation wide presence, are located in Ooty. The Sterling group, the time share leader in South India, began construction of their
FIG. 4.5

OOTY TOWN

LOCATION OF TIMESHARES

REFERENCE
- Town boundary
- State Highway
- Other Roads
- Railway line
- Location of Timeshares

FIG. 4.5
unit at Elk hill in Ooty town in 1988. Today the group has one more time share accommodation at Fernhill in Ooty and is looking to expand further. Besides the time share units, the group also has a separate hotel in Ooty. Besides the three large time share companies, there are a number of smaller, locally based time shares.

Most of these time share accommodation are situated away from the budget hotel concentrations in the heart of town. Figure 4.5 shows the location of timeshares in Ooty town. Most of them are found in the south west of the town in Fernhill.

4.3.1.4. Other Accommodation Units

Besides hotels and timeshares, there are a large number of company guest houses, etc. A large number of banks and public sector corporations and large private companies have guest houses in Ooty. The tourists office lists 35 guest houses including 5 government guest houses with a total bed strength of 450. Besides these there are numerous smaller guest houses or holiday homes. Some companies take on lease a portion of a house or a few rooms in a hotel, as a holiday facility for their company employees. Statistics on the number of such facilities was not available. Some companies are also buying time shares as holiday facilities for their employees, as time sharing is easier and cheaper than buying a property and maintaining it. A large number of houses are let out to tourists during the holiday season. Landlords prefer to let out houses for two to three months since the revenue is much more than if it is rented out year round.

A large number of second homes exist in Ooty town. These second\textsuperscript{6} homes range from palatial houses with large lawns and gardens to small compact units. Real estate developers are also developing a number of resorts which are sold as second homes for investor from the plains.

Most of these miscellaneous accommodation units have a scattered location. Currently resort development has begun in the lower slopes of Dodabetta hill. These resorts are drifting away from the core of the town into the outlying areas.

\textsuperscript{6} Second homes are individual houses owned by non residents of Ooty. They are used by the owners only during the holidays and remain locked up for most of the year. Second homes are usually owned by city dwellers.
4.3.2. Restaurants

Restaurants are places where meals or snacks are served to customers. The term restaurant and hotels are often used interchangeably, by the local people to mean eating houses. But in his study only the term restaurant will refer to eating houses. Ooty has a large number of restaurants. Most of the hotels or lodging units have their own restaurants. Besides these there are a large number of independent restaurants of all sizes, and numerous small snack bars.

4.3.2.1. Growth and location of Restaurants

Ooty town has also witnessed a spurt in the growth of restaurants of all sizes. Almost 70 per cent of the lodging units have a restaurant. The restaurant growth has also registered a large growth. Statistics were not available for the number of restaurants existing in the 1980s. Figure 4.6 shows the growth of restaurants in Ooty town. The Tourist Traffic Advisory Committee of 1977 listed 3 restaurants besides the 15 that formed part of the hotels. In 1992, the Directorate of Municipal Administration listed
74 buildings housing restaurants. The annual D&O\textsuperscript{7} list of the Ooty Municipality lists 89 hotels in 1994. In 1995, the Ooty Restaurants Association had 70 registered members. The A-Z directory of the Nilgiris lists 80 restaurants. Conservative estimates of the number of restaurants of all sizes is around 200.

Like the hotels, the restaurants also show distinct zonation. Since a number of the restaurants form part of the hotels the spatial pattern of their distribution is identical. The tourist oriented restaurants are found in Charring cross junction in Ettinnes road, Commercial road and garden road. Besides these major areas, pockets of concentration are found near the bus stand and railway station, along Club road on the Mysore highway and lower bazar road. The restaurants catering to the local population of office goers etc. are located along commercial road and upper bazar road.

4.3.3. Tour Operators

Another important sector of the tourism industry is the tour operators. There are a large number of tour operators in Ooty, organizing tours to the surrounding scenic excursion spots. These tour operators cater to the domestic tourists who arrive at Ooty by buses or by other means of transport. They take these tourists to the numerous excursion spots surrounding Ooty and to the towns of Coonoor, Kotagiri and go as far as Mudhumalai wildlife sanctuary located 36 kms North West of Ooty. They usually take the tourists around 9.30 a.m and return by 6 p.m. A few tour operators provide drop services\textsuperscript{8} to Mysore, Bangalore etc. Besides the locally based tour operators, operators at Coonoor, Mysore and Bangalore also operate tours to Ooty. These tour operators organise and sells tours. Since these are primarily excursion trips, accommodation arrangements do not form part of the package. Most of these tour operators are small and function with hired vehicles. Some of them have tie ups with hotels and operate on a commission basis.

There are only a few Travel Agents in Ooty. Travel agents are distinguished from tour operators. Travel agents undertake booking tickets and transport undertakings,

\textsuperscript{7} Dangerous and offensive practices list of the health section of Ooty Municipal Council.
\textsuperscript{8} Drop services are delivery to another tourist spot from where the tourist makes his own transport arrangements.
booking hotels, provision of ancillary services like travelers cheques etc. There are only two International Air Travellers Association (IATA) recognized travel agents in Ooty. The travel agents primarily do transport bookings. Although almost of them call themselves travel agents, they are primarily local tour operators, handling excursion tours.

4.3.3.1. Growth and Location of Tour Operators

The presence of a large number of tour operators is a recent phenomena. Figure 4.7 shows the growth of tour operators in Ooty.

In 1977, the Tourist Traffic Advisory Committee booklet listed only one travel agent. Details of their presence in the 1980 is not available. In 1993, the Tamil Nadu Tourism Department listed 37 travel agencies. The Regional Transport office lists only 18 licensed travel agents in 1996. The A-Z directory lists 55 travel agents in 1996. The Ooty travel agents association had only 31 members during the same period. There are an estimated 90 tour operators in Ooty town alone.
FIG. 4.8

OOPTY TOWN

LOCATION OF TOUR OPERATORS

REFERENCE

- Town boundary
- State Highway
- Other Roads
- Railway line

- Location of Tour Operators

SOME IMPORTANT TOUR OPERATORS

1. Nitin Travels
2. Sapphire Travels
3. Achy Travels
4. Songeetha Travels

ENLARGED PORTION

FIG. 4.8
Like the hotels and restaurants, the tour operators also show pockets of concentration. Since much of their business is casual, they concentrate in areas with high traffic density and benefit from proximity of similar establishments. Most of them are located near the hotels in the heart of the town. Figure 4.8 shows the location of tour operators. A concentration of tour operators are found at the junction at Charring Cross. A second major concentration is at the western side of town near the bus stand and railway station. These are the two major areas of concentration. A number of small operators are also found along the lower bazar road in close proximity to the hotels there.

4.3.4. Profiles of Hotels and Restaurants

The last decade has witnessed the growth of a large number of hotels and restaurants in Ooty. The proliferation of hotels and restaurants within a short period of time definitely impacts the environment negatively. Table 4.2 shows the recent origin of the majority of the sampled hotels and restaurants.

Table 4.2. Year of establishment of Hotels and Restaurants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Establishment</th>
<th>Percentage to total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of sampled Hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1975</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975 - 1985</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985 - 1996</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the hotels and restaurants are of recent vintage. 32% of the hotels had some kind of renovation or expansion since its inception. 94% of the hotels belong to the private sector and all the restaurants are run by private entrepreneurs.

The earlier land use of the site on which the hotel or restaurant currently exists was considered to study the displacement of other land uses by hotels and restaurants. Where hotels and restaurants have replaced similar earlier structures, impact is minimal because the pattern of land use and facilities is likely to remain the same.
Where shops have been replaced, there are more demands on infrastructural facilities. Where houses have been replaced the intensity of land use is more. The greatest impact is where there has been displacement of agricultural lands and open areas.

Table 4.3 shows the earlier land use of the site on which the hotel or restaurant currently exists.

**Table 4.3. Earlier land use of present hotel/restaurant site**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Earlier land use</th>
<th>Percentage to total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural &amp; vacant lands</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houses</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shops</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earlier Hotels/Restaurants</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 shows that both hotels and restaurants have displaced agricultural lands, with hotels accounting for a larger share of the displacement. Similarly hotels have displaced more houses. Since hotels usually occupy larger areas than restaurants, they have not replaced shops. A quarter of the restaurants were pre-existing ones currently renovated and handled by new owners. Hotels have thus caused more displacement as compared to restaurants.

The intensity of land use is also more in the case of hotels. 65% of the hotels are high rise buildings. Only 9% of the hotels were single storied structures. The ratio of built up area to total area is high in 44% of the cases indicating the absence of open areas. Only 12% of the hotels have a low ratio of built up area. Most of the restaurants have no open spaces around them.

A significant positive correlation (.577) was observed between the age of the hotel and number of floors. Since age has been weighed in the reverse direction, this shows that the newer hotels have more number of floors. A significant relationship (.523) exists between the age of the hotel and the ratio of built up area to total area. Similarly a
significant positive relationship (.539) exists between the number of floors and built up area. Since the newer hotels are high rise buildings, their intensity of land use is high. Table 4.4 shows the positive correlation between age of hotels and intensity of land use.

Table 4.4 Correlation between age of hotels and intensity of land use.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age of Hotels and Number of floors</td>
<td>.577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of Hotels and Built up area</td>
<td>.523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of floors &amp; Built up area</td>
<td>.539</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The intensity of land use is more in the case of the recent hotels. Since 65% of the hotels are new, their impact in terms of intensity of land use is high.

4.3.4.1. Customers – Seasonal variation

The number of customers vary, with large numbers during the peak tourist season. The average duration of stay of guests in hotels is two days. 56% of the hotels cater to domestic tourists from within the state and the adjoining states, 24% cater to tourists from North India and the remaining have a mixed clientele.

Table 4.5 shows the occupancy rates in hotels during the peak tourist season and the lean tourist season.

Table 4.5. Hotel occupancy in peak and lean tourist seasons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupancy % of rooms</th>
<th>Peak season</th>
<th>Off season</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 50</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is seen from table 4.5 that 62% of the hotels have surplus rooms even during the peak season. Hoteliers attribute this to the competition from other hotels and to the increasing number of day trippers among the tourists. Because of the surplus hotels, competition is intense and local brokers play an important role in directing room occupancy
in different hotels. Simultaneously the tour operators are also being blamed for the short duration stay of the guests. Only two hotels (6%) from the sample reported a steady occupancy of 75% or more year round. These two hotels primarily catered to the film crews whose presence is increasing in Ooty as Ooty is a popular film shooting locale for movies.

Significant correlations are noticed between the number of rooms and room occupancy. There is no significant variation between old and new hotels in the number of rooms. A high positive correlation (.960) was observed between the number of rooms and room occupancy during the peak season. Table 4.6 shows the correlation between number of rooms and occupancy.

Table 4.6. Correlation between number of rooms & Occupancy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlation Type</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of rooms and peak season occupancy</td>
<td>.960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of rooms and non-peak season occupancy</td>
<td>.562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peak season and non-peak season occupancy</td>
<td>.559</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is seen that a significant positive relationship is also noticed between the number of rooms and room occupancy in the non-peak season. This indicates that larger hotels tend to have more occupancy. A significant correlation (.559) also exists between peak season and non peak season occupancy. Thus it is seen that larger hotels have more occupancy in both the peak and non-peak tourist season.

Restaurant customers vary with large numbers during the peak season. 13% of the restaurants cater mainly to the local population of office goers, business men etc., and hence have a steady number of customers. For the rest of the restaurants, in the non-peak season, customers are considerably less.

4.3.5. Profile of Tour operators

Like the other providers of tourism services, the growth of travel agents is also a recent phenomena. Table 4.7 shows the recent origin of the majority of the sampled travel agents.
Table 4.7. Travel agents - Year of establishment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Establishment</th>
<th>Percentage of Travel Agents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960 – 1975</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975 – 1985</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 1985</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is seen that 80% of the travel agents were established in the last decade. Only 50% of the travel agents were licensed by the Regional Transport office.

The majority of the travel agents (55%) arranged for sightseeing trips to places in Ooty town and the excursion spots outside Ooty. The excursion spots outside Ooty included Coonoor, Kotagiri, Pykara, Western catchment area, Avalanche and Mudhumalai Wildlife Sanctuary. 5% of the travel agents took tourists only to places within Ooty town. The places in Ooty town included the boat house, garden, Dodabetta peak and Wenlock downs. Some travel agents (35%) in addition to these tours provided drop services upto Mysore and Bangalore. They usually pick up tourists from these places and bring them to Ooty. 5% of them have packaged tours, primarily in buses to Kodaikanal and Bangalore.

Both day trippers as well as hotel guests formed the clientele of the majority (76%) of the travel agents. 15% of the travel agents catered exclusively to the day trippers and 9% exclusively to the hotel guests.

4.4. Tourist Demand

The demand for tourism is the total number of persons or tourists who travel to use tourist facilities and services, at places away from their normal places of work and residence. The tourist demand refers to the tourists who visit the destination.

---

9 Since 1990, the Regional Transport Office issues licenses to authorised canvassers of contract carriages under the Tamil Nadu Motor Vehicle Rule (TNMV) sub rule 5 of Rule 234. 1989.
A tourist is defined as a person visiting a country other than that in which he has his usual place of residence, for any reason other than following an occupation remunerated from within the country visited (WTO, 1981). In the case of domestic tourist, the country is replaced by place. Figure 4.9 shows the classification of travellers as outlined by the World Tourism Organisation. The term tourists includes two distinct types of travelers - the tourist and the same day visitors or excursionists. Tourists are those staying at least 24 hours in the country or place visited, while excursionists are temporary visitors staying less than 24 hours in the destination visited and not staying overnight.

The purpose of visit to a place by the tourist or excursionists may include leisure, recreational sport, family visits, business etc. Although the definition may exclude business trips, it is logical to include business visits under visitors because the facilities and services used by these non-holiday travelers are in many cases the same facilities and services used by the holiday tourists. These visitors also frequently visit the tourist attractions or engage in recreational facilities and services.

4.4.1. Pattern of Visitation

Ooty is a popular tourist centre for domestic tourists. Foreign tourists comprise barely 0.007 percent of the tourists to Ooty. The salubrious climate of Ooty makes it an all season resort, and the town has visitors year round with two distinct seasons. Hartman (1986) notes that seasonality may be natural or institutionalised. The tourist season in Ooty has elements of both. The natural seasonability is based on the climate. Ooty has a very pleasant climate during the months of April and May, when the plains are scorching under the summer sun. The cool climate is the major pull factor of the summer season. The institutionalized seasonality follows the summer vacation of schools.

A second season of visitors, though not as large as the summer tourists, is visible in October. This second season draws tourists from North India during the Puja Holidays. Dusserah Puja is a festival of great importance in North India which is celebrated in October. School term end holidays coincide with the Dusserah Puja holidays.
Fig. 4.9. CLASSIFICATION OF TRAVELLERS

TRAVELLERS

VISITORS
(Included in tourism statistics)

TOURISTS
(Overnight visitors)

RESIDENTS

LEISURE/RECREATION

COMMUTERS

MIGRANTS

NOMADS

TRANSIT PASSENGERS

REFUGEES

DIPLOMATS/REPRESENTATION OF CONCULATES

MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES

DAILY ROUTINE TRIPS

NON RESIDENTS

BUSINESS/PROFESSIONAL

OTHER

LEISURE/RECREATION

NON RESIDENTS

BUSINESS/PROFESSIONAL

OTHER

SAME DAY VISITORS

RESIDENTS
Figure 4.10 shows the pattern of tourist arrivals in Ooty monthwise at five year intervals since 1981.

It is seen that the pattern of tourist arrivals is similar, with the largest number of tourists in May and the minimum in September. Although the number of tourists visiting Ooty has been increasing, the increase is especially steep in the month of May in 1996. The graph of 1981 and 1986 show almost identical pattern with 1986 having larger number of visitors. 1991 shows slight variations. A drop in tourist numbers in March may be attributed to the reasons of school exams. The peak in May is distinct. Until 1993, the flower show at the Botanic garden was held for two days. Since 1994, it is of longer duration extending from 4 days to a week. This accounts for the very large increase in tourists in May 1996, as compared to the rest of the years. There is a rapid drop in tourists visiting Ooty in July coinciding with the rains. It is seen that tourist arrivals at Ooty has been steadily increasing.
Summer has the maximum visitors and the town is crowded. Crowding in the context of recreational travel refers to the concentration of arrivals at a destination within a short period of time (Smith, 1983). The simplest measure of the temporal concentration of users is the ratio between the number of arrivals in a given period of time to the total number of arrivals. The ratio of tourist arrivals in May as compared to the rest of the months is as follows.

Table 4.8. Ooty Town - Tourist concentration ratios - May

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
<th>Percentage of tourists to annual total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 1981</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1986</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1991</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1996</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8 shows that while the crowding was less in 1986 and 1991, crowding of tourist is very great in 1996. The longer duration of the flower show is responsible for this crowding.

A similar ratio for the second season in October shows the following trend.

Table 4.9. Ooty town - Tourist concentration ratios - October

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
<th>Percentage of tourists to annual total tourists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.9 shows the lower crowding in the second season as compared to the first peak season of summer.
The declining ratio in October 1996 shows a much larger concentration in the summer season. Hence crowding is very high in the summer. This creates enormous seasonal strains.

Summer visitors are larger (41% of total) since they are primarily short distance excursionists and tourists from Tamil Nadu and the adjoining states of Kerala and Karnataka. The cool climate, the flower show in Ooty, horse racing and the long summer school vacations account for these tourists. The large number of tourists from North India prefer to avoid the long travel during the hot summer and usually visit Ooty during the Pooja Holidays in October. For most of the visitors in October, Bangalore, the capital city of the adjoining state of Karnataka is the staging point. Tourists from the states of Northern India visiting the temple town of Tirupathi in Andra Pradesh disembark at Bangalore. After their pilgrimage, tour operators at Bangalore bring them to Ooty. These tour operators are sometimes blamed by local business for the brief visit of these tourists. Some long distance tourists also arrive by tourist buses.

Besides these two seasons, Ooty has a considerable number of visitors year round. While the resident tourist ratios are 1 to 14 during the month of May. It drops to 1 to .9 in November. The minimum number of visitors is in July when the monsoon is active over Ooty. The few foreigners who visit Ooty prefer to visit during winter. Though cold, the climate is mild compared to winters in North India. A large number of honeymooners also visit Ooty in the last quarter of the year.

4.4.2. Growth of Tourists

Ooty Town recorded a steady growth in tourist numbers over the years. In the absence of statistics, the record of sale of tickets at the government Botanic garden has been used to estimate tourist numbers. Since the gardens are a popular tourist attraction, it is presumed that at least 90 per cent of the tourists will visit this garden. Since 1992, ticket sales at the garden during the flower show days has been given to private parties for entry collection on tender. Since 1994, flower show has been extended from the earlier two days to a week. From earlier figures, a rough estimate of numbers for the flower show week has been added.
Figure 4.11 shows the growth of tourists in Ooty town.

It is seen that since the mid 1980s, there has been a large increase in the total number of tourists visiting Ooty. In the 5 year period since 1981 to 1986, the number of tourists has almost doubled. Since then the growth has been steady. The rising incomes and greater awareness of travel opportunities has led to an increase in tourism. The exposure of Ooty through the media of cinema has also been a major contributing factor for the increasing number of domestic tourists from far and near.

The increase in tourists has been very large between 1981 and 1986 (111%). But since then although tourists are increasing, the rate of increase is slow. The rate of growth between 1986-1991 was 18% and between 1991-1996 it was 24%. Although the growth rate is large for every 5 yrs, there is a declining growth rate annually.

Since 1990, the annual rate of growth of tourists into Ooty is as shown in Table 4.10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Annual % Change in Tourists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990-1991</td>
<td>-5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-1992</td>
<td>+20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-1993</td>
<td>+15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-1994</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1995</td>
<td>+2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-1996</td>
<td>-9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fig. 4.12. Ooty Town Monthwise tourist arrivals 1991-'96
Since 1993 the total number of tourists has shown a decline. During 1993 - 94 there was a 3% decrease in the total number of tourists. 1994 - 95 saw an improvement in numbers. But again a steep decline of 9% was noticed in the year 1995-96.

In all these years, the month April and May has been registering a steady increase but fluctuations occur in all other months. Figure 4.12 shows the monthwise tourist arrivals in Ooty in the last five years. It is seen that although the pattern of visitation is the same tourists are declining with much lower numbers in 1996.

4.5. Summary

The geographic tourism landscape in Ooty is characterised by the features of the natural environment and a rapid growth of the travel industry and tourists. The elements of the natural environment like the climate and scenic beauty are the major attractions of Ooty. The 1980s has been the boom period for the development of tourism related infrastructure in Ooty. Ooty town has witnessed a rapid growth of hotels, restaurants, time shares, second homes and tour operators with major concentrations in the core of the town. The early 1980's witnessed a dramatic increase in tourists, whose numbers have since been increasing although at a decreasing rate. The tourist season in Ooty is both natural and institutionalised. Consequently tourist concentrations are high especially in the month of May with a quarter of the total annual tourists to Ooty. Tourist resident ratios are high, with higher ratios during the summer holiday season. Ooty has a tourism office, whose primary work is tourism promotion.