UNIT 21 REGIONS, CITIES AND LEISURE SPOTS

Structure

21.0 OBJECTIVES

After leading this Unit you will be able to:

- understand this issues involved in the marketing of regions, cities and leisure spots,

- know why and how they are marketed as tourism products,

- point out the limitations in this marketing process, and

- look at some alternate models that can be adopted in marketing them.

21.1 INTRODUCTION

In Block-3 while discussing the developmental role of marketing, you were familiarised with the roles of the national tourist organisation and local bodies in tourism marketing. The NTO is responsible for marketing a country as a destination, the state level organisations perform the same tasks for their respective regions and so on. This is inspite of the fact that most of these organisations are not the actual producers of tourism services or products. In the words of Burkart and Medlik they act "on behalf of all interests in tourism and on behalf of the whole destination." The destination as well as the individual producers of tourism services benefit out of their efforts.

This Unit deals with certain aspects related to destination marketing be it a region, city or a leisure spot. It discusses the key issues involved in this area and offers a critique of some of the existing marketing methods. Further, it suggests some alternatives that can be tried, while marketing regions (e.g. Kerela), cities (e.g. Trivendrum) or leisure spots (e.g. Kovalam beach).

21.2 ISSUES

Every country, region, city and leisure spot competes within the tourism generating markets to have a larger share. But why? Well tourism has been identified as an important avenue for employment and income generation, foreign exchange earnings and at the same time having a multiplier effect on the economy. The expenditure of the tourist circulates at all the three levels of economy:

- domestic,

- regional, and

- local.

This means that if the tourist expenditure circulates locally and the leakages are low (see Unit-33 of TS-1) a significant improvement can be made in the income and living standards of the people of the region or locality. However, a developed region can often divert the

benefits towards itself at the cost of the underdeveloped neighbouring regions. Such situations have been experienced in both international as well as domestic tourism. Further, intense competition can be there within a country between different regions, destinations or leisure spots, and among the various suppliers of services. As tourism becomes established as an economic activity marketing strategies concentrate on increasing the volume of tourists. This, at times, creates a host of unforeseen consequences. Thus, it is necessary that the objectives of tourism development in relation to a region, city or leisure spot be clearly stated. In fact, the developmental role of marketing has to be kept in mind while marketing regions, cities or leisure spots. This developmental role is to be further strengthened by socially responsible marketing (see Unit-11). The onus of destination marketing in the international markets has primarily been on the Department of Tourism of the Government of India (see Unit-26 of TS-2) and this includes a variety of aspects say from information gathering to planning, image building, etc. Of late the state tourism departments have been performing the same tasks (see Unit-27 of TS- 2). However, when it comes to cities and leisure spots - particularly in the rural areas, marketing becomes a major problem. This is because the local bodies are either not aware about the developmental role of tourism or are constrained by their own politics or lack of funds. Before we go further in dealing with these aspects it must be noted that in the marketing of a destination (region, city or leisure spots) you should consider the following aspects:

- Attractions,
- Infrastructure (accommodation, cuisine, etc.),
- Accessibility (roads, means of transportation),
- Carrying capacity of the destination,
- Environmental issues (Pollution, Eco-fragility, etc.)
- safety, law and order situation (for both the local population as well as tourists), etc.

In India we find different destinations in the different stages of what is termed as the product life cycle. For example, a region like Goa, a city like Shimla or a leisure spot like the Badkal lake have reached a maturity level. They no more require promotion and have exhausted their carrying capacity (infrastructural, environmental or social impacts). Their problem on the contrary is of retaining their image, checking the decline and doing away with the negative impacts of tourism. In marketing jargon what they require is internal marketing, product improvement, checking the decline, proper maintenance, etc. On the contrary look at a region like Kumaun which is struggling hard to promote its attractions in different cities (other than Nainital) and rural areas and develop its tourism products. If proper questions are not posed and answered, the planners and developers blindly imitate outside concepts and models of development without taking into consideration the local needs, attitudes and constraints. In such a situation the destination may not take off at all or the entire developmental investment may go waste. The questions to be answered and the issues to be resolved would be many but we take a few here for consideration:

1) What type of attractions (nature, adventure or cultural etc.) within the region have to be developed into tourism packages?

2) Whether these attractions have to be packaged and promoted as a mix or as separate attractions?

3) Do we have a market for them?

4) What type of infrastructure is to be created?

5) Is the local population receptive to tourism?

6) If the destination is highly seasonal, should huge investments be made in constructing five star hotels or one should develop alternate and subsidiary accommodation?

7) How to ensure that the ecology and environment at the destination are not damaged by tourism?

8) What type of tourists are to be attracted? etc.

Definite answers to such questions determine the product characteristics and could help in determining the type of tourism to be encouraged and promoted for the destination. The

answers have to be very carefully thought of instead of imitating other regions. For example, many destination developers recommend hang gliding, golf and construction of five star hotels in eco-fragile regions where even the nature of tourism is highly seasonal. They make such recommendations without any market research by blindly following the development elsewhere. There may be no takers for hang gliding or golf; developing golf course in an area which faces acute water shortage may lead to hostility between the local population and the developer etc. In such situations, as stated earlier the destination may even not take off and all investments made will result in losses besides having negative impacts on the environment and the host population. In fact, **ignorance often becomes a management problem any time if the developer looks for a model outside of the destination's historical and cultural context.**

As tourism becomes established as an economic activity, the destination no longer attracts tourists only because of its natural phenomena or cyclic celebrations. This is because the tourists tend to seek more at the destination. This has added another aspect to destination marketing by introducing festivals and events as tourism products. In fact, festivals and events are becoming the backbone of tourism promotion as most planners and travel trade experts believe that such events create a positive image and offer more attractions in a highly competitive market. For example, in India, we now have a calendar of festivities both cultural and touristic which are being promoted to bring the required number of tourists, particularly foreign tourists, to the identified destination in season. A number of factors have been responsible for the growth of such event-based promotion of a destination:

1) The governments of different countries have been using tourism as a means of economic development. For example, in India, the Central and State Governments play an important role in tourism development as well as in the promotion of India as a tourist destination abroad. Governments, through the Department of Tourism, sponsor such events through grants for sports, art, and culture. Governments also provide all infrastructural support like generation of electricity, water and transport, etc.

2) The desire of communities and cities to promote themselves leads to the creation or promotion of the existing celebrations in order to attain civic pride and derive benefits for the destination. The influence of one community or region which has been successful in promoting itself as a destination leads to the others following suit. For example, Rajasthan has been able to establish itself as a cultural destination by promoting Jaipur as the Pink City, Jodhpur as the Blue City and Udaipur as the City of the Lake Palace. It was able to locate Maarwar as the basis of regional, cultural and folk festivals and also created the desert festival of Jaisalmer as a premier tourist attraction. Many other states in India like Gujarat, Maharashtra and Orissa started imitating the Rajasthan model to promote their own cities, regions or festivals etc. as tourist attractions.

3) Increasing segmentation and specialisation of tourist groups and individuals, which reflect the changing nature of leisure activity, particularly amongst the elites in society leads to event based promotion.

Of late, it has been observed that the image of agriculture themes or old-fashioned entertainment does not encourage the tourists to make repeat visits. The shift today is therefore towards quaint small towns and heritage oriented events. We now see the prominence given to the Havelis of the Shekhawati region and to the heritage hotels, which span a period from the early Mughal days to the British Raj. Monuments have been turned into hotels and the activities at these hotels are reminiscent of the period they eulogise or try to recreate in interior decor, dress and uniform and menus offered to the tourist. Local scenery and culture add to the activity span of the tourist. This roots kind of tourism emerges from the multi-culturalism that exists in a large country like India. Here we speak many languages, have regional cuisines and dress and of course a diverse mix of religion and ritual. Today domestic tourists are also attracted by the nostalgia of event based tourism. This is because many in the cities have lost their links with the traditions and culture of their forefathers.

Many destinations (regions, cities and leisure spots) which use events as promotions do it sometimes as a response to other political and social needs. For example, the Pragati Maidan Complex emerged as the showcase of modern Indian science and industry whilst including in its ambit the history of artisanship. The traditional and modern go hand in hand as year after year and from month to month exhibitions and fairs bring to the resident and visitor of Delhi the best that is available in the field of interest. Many European and American cities, in response to the growing violence in inner cities used street festivals to revive a quarter or

an area or a community by organising city sponsored events that have now become a part of the summer activity for residents and visitors alike.

Musical events are also an interesting way of bringing alive a region, a city or a leisure spot. Many areas in the world are famous for the yearly musical events, both popular and classical that they have hosted. Social drama and ritual can also be the basis for an anniversary as was the **Kala Chakra Ceremony** in Tabo monastery, a once in a thousand year celebration, which was to have brought the curious to the roof of the world (Himachal Pradesh). Similarly, the **Kumbh Melas** at Haridwar, Nasik and Ujjain have become importance management issues as tourists and pilgrims mingle with each other to find whatever they are seeking.

Sports events, particularly the Olympic games, as well as the yearly calendar of fixtures for tennis, golf and cricket have brought multitudes from the far corners of the world to share in the spirit of the game.

Another important issue in destination marketing for a big country like India is that whether the country should be marketed as a single destination or different regions, cities and leisure spots should be marketed as individual destinations. Such an issue emerges from the following scenario. A foreign tourist wants to visit India but the information which he has sought mentions it as a vast country which will require at least a two- month's holiday to cover its major attractions. The tourist has only 10 days to take a holiday and hence he opts for another destination thinking that whenever he will have a two-month's holiday, he will make a trip to India, and such a holiday never comes. However, in case the image of India is positioned in a way that though it is a large country, it has many attractions and various destinations and the tourist could pick up a destination as per his interest and cover it in 10 days time, the country would not have lost a tourist.

There is a considerable debate among the marketing experts over this issue. Some suggest marketing India as a whole whereas others recommend marketing specific regions or destinations. The arguments given by the former revolve around the fact that after great efforts and hard labour of many years an image has been built for India as a destination and if individual regions are promoted separately, this image is bound to suffer. The critics of this view point out that in such a marketing strategy besides the time factor, disturbances in one corner of the country affect the inflow of tourists to all the other regions. The so-called plague epidemic can be cited here as an example. Though only few parts of the country were affected by this, the inflow of tourists witnessed a decline in all the regions. They point out that had India been promoted in a way where specific regions had been marketed, the results would not have been that bad.

Another view which is gaining ground talks of intra- regional cooperation in terms of destination promotion in the international markets. For example, tour operators from Kerala feel that by packaging their tours in collaboration with the tour operators from Male, Lakshadweep and Singapore, they will be able to get a larger share of business in comparision to tying up with the golden triangle in the north. In fact, each one of these viewpoints has its own strengths and limitations and a consensus is emerging in the form of promoting India and under that broad umbrella marketing different destinations within India. No doubt, India is a multi destination country.

Similar issues might arise in the case of regions that are vast. Various state tourism departments in India, for example, should come together in promoting regional tourism which cuts across states' boundaries in order to derive mutual benefits. In fact the golden triangle Delhi-Agra-Jaipur itself is the best example in this regard.

Certain other aspects related to the marketing of regions, cities and leisure spots will be dealt with later in this Unit after discussing the critique and alternatives.

Check Your Progress-1

1) What type of questions would you ask before developing a tourism attraction?

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2) Mention the arguments for and against marketing India as a triangle destination.

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21.3 CRITIQUE

The World Tourism Organisation defines cultural tourism as the movement of persons for essentially cultural motivations such as study tours, performing arts and cultural tours, travel to festivals and cultural events, visits to sites and monuments, travel to study centre, folklore or art, and pilgrimages. Such a definition covers a variety of destinations and the mix of activity is such that any destination can look into its own history of daily life and recreate an event that can then be established on the tourist calendar. Such events clearly indicate that the organisers of the festival or event are marginally involved with the material they present. Although Arts and Heritage tourism is classified as experiential tourism, in the sense that the tourist is supposed to seek an encounter with the history of a place and its culture, it is also an attempt by the tourists to improve their social status and self-image, by recounting their presence and participation at the event to their peers and opinion leaders.

All cultures respond to event based tourism although the scale and the complexity may differ and the cultural idiom used may be different. Within a culture such celebrations involve a sharing of the symbolic meaning of social practices, whereas for the outsider, it is an opportunity to view the social organisation of a particular culture in its public domain. Unfortunately tourists are detached spectators who often view the celebration as a cultural performance and often do not see the difference between a carnival, a religious ritual, a sports event or a spectacle. This is because the manner of celebrating all events has become formalised and therefore the transformation that the participants and spectators hope for in their knowledge and their way of thinking often does not take place. The organisational needs of the viewers often become more important than the celebration and the ritual.

The Pushkar Mela is another example of marketing a destination as an event for tourists. The traditional cattle fair has been transformed into a tourist festival with animal contests, bazaars and a royal tented camp. Here the integrity of the festival for the people of Pushkar has been modified to include a touristic experience that includes a balloon ride to view the panorama of the festival location at a price. This is inauthentic marketing, following the form suggested by other case studies rather than an enrichment of the content of the original fair.

In Marketing tourism, there is an assumption that there is greater demand for cultural and heritage events because the nature of mass tourism has transformed away from the formula of the beach holiday with increased mobility, affluence and higher levels of education. Partly this assumption is the response to the growing resistance to mass beach tourism at the destination as well as at the point of origin. Trend setters are beginning to be sensitive to the critique of tourism as a form of consumerism. However, commercialisation is not a sensitive process. In response to the critique the commercial arm of tourism development has reoriented itself towards the promotion and consumption of cultural goods. The justification is that the seasoned tourist desires a deeper involvement with society and culture at the destination.

We can perhaps look at another aspect of marketing. Adventure sports are promoted to the alternative tourist, who wants to risk something for a quality experience. Such a tourist also would like to go off the beaten track. Yet the consumer in such tourists also wants to have the creature comforts of the time available to ensure a quality experience. In India we are promoting the Himalayan region as an arena for adventure. Any unique geographical region in India is similarly being developed for adventure. A part of the adventure is to promote the region in question through the visibility of its people and their lifestyle. This is a far cry from the hippie involvement in the daily life of the destinations that they appropriated. Tourists of

the new type are still appropriating the destination, although now they are doing it with the help of policy makers, tourism developers and experts.

21.4 ALTERNATIVES

The critique has also offered an alternative to the established marketing concepts and methodologies. It is felt that the marketing theory has lifted a basic philosophy from the industry sector and applied it to tourism since in many circles tourism is accorded the status of an industry. If we look at tourism from the perspective of multi-cultural interaction then the whole approach to marketing will have to undergo a change.

Firstly, we have to change the classification that the marketing ideology builds upon. When a promotion campaign identifies a region, a city or a leisure spot, it assumes a homogeneous character as well as an identity of interest amongst the different sections that inhabit the destination. This is because tourists form an international and domestic elite, whilst the resident population is stratified in many ways reflecting both the economic and cultural differences that make for diversity. The image that tourism develops and identifies is that of the local elite, who will not only control but also enrich itself by developing tourism. For example, in India, there are many interesting **Dalit** pilgrimages and cultural rituals which have not been identified for tourism circuits since the control of such planning remains with non-**Dalits**. People who become organisers of tourism events promote their own aesthetics.

In marketing a region we therefore often see an arbitrary inclusion or exclusion of sites and events as tourism moves the materials of folk culture away from the creators of the culture, to society in the larger national and international dimension. Who then is to determine such event celebration ? This is the issue that creates tension in many tourism projects that have not been creatively thought out.

To resolve this issue we may look at the classification evolved by Wilson and Udall:

Festival Type	**Characteristics**
Indigenous	Celebrations that grow from and are a part of particular cultures. The event is directed towards the culture at large and controlled by members of that culture.
Evolving indigenous	Grow from the culture depicted, are moni-cultural, directed and controlled by members of the group and appeal to an audience within the culture. In adapting the culture there may be a conscious decision to seek a wider audience or commercialisation.
Commercialised	Promotion of folk celebrations so that the event moves into popular culture and yet retains the support of folk culture.
Non-community mono-cultural	Festivals organised from outside the culture to be represented, having no support base in the cultural group represented, with no attempt to involve the cultural group either as organisers or as the audience.
Multi-cultural	Festivals representing cultural material of many cultures with an audience that does not represent any of the represented cultures. Organisers tend to be eclectic or academic fans of multi-cultural materials.

The alternative approach should demonstrate significant values to the audience to ensure that in multi-cultural nations like India cultural identities are not suppressed within the dominant culture. Surviving and enduring social differences in content are as important as the form of such events. For example, all festivals of tourism begin with a parade in local costume often mounted on local animals, like Camels in Rajasthan or Elephants in Kerala. Such parades are neither ethnic, meaningful nor symbolic. They are following the model of tourist parades in other cultures, and many viewers feel that such assimilation leads to a loss of identity.

India has used 'tribal folk dances' in parades in a way that has not helped such diverse cultures to find their place as equals in the mainstream nor helped the cultural community so presented to reaffirm its identity. In such a situation, it is only natural that the commercial organiser feels justified in creating a cultural spectacle that can be easily viewed and photographed.

21.5 LINKAGES

Whether it is the marketing approach, its critique or an alternative model, certain issues will always have to be considered for tourism promotion. These include:

- promoting destination awareness,
- image building,
- checking negative image and adverse publicity,
- product differenciation and destination positioning,
- minimising the negative impacts on the destination (host population, environment, economy, culture, etc.),
- government policies and efforts, and
- role of local bodies, etc.

In order to put these considerations into action, various types of linkages have to be established amongst all the players of tourism. These linkages are necessary for both maximising benefits as well as minimising the negative impacts. For example, a leisure spot's image will be closely linked with the nearby city or the region where it is located. If the region has an image of insecurity to the visitors, howsoever good the attractions may be in a city or leisure spot, it will not pick up as a destination.

Establishing business relationships amongst the various tourism services providers at the local level and those who package and market them in the tourist generating markets is a must for doing business in this sector. The local tourism industry and the outside tourism industry have a lot of interdependence in terms of marketing, product design and the providing of services. For example, a tour operator based in Delhi promotes a leisure spot in Madhya Pradesh in the international markets and on the other hand uses the services of the local service providers at the destination in his package. You will read more about the linkages in Unit 28 of this course.

| Check Your Progress-2 |

1) Discuss the points made under the critique of culture.

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2) Why are linkages necessary?

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21.6 LET US SUM UP

This Unit gave you a broad idea of the issues related to the marketing of regions, cities and leisure spots along with a critique and an alternative approach. At the same time, it must be noted that each destination has its own specific problems, strengths and weaknesses which have to be accounted for if one has to take up a marketing exercise in the real sense. Marketing of regions, cities and leisure spots should not be done keeping in view only the commercial angle of revenue generation. The developmental role of marketing and socially responsible marketing must be given equal weightage and they should be incorporated at the initial stages of tourism development. Carrying capacity of the destination and environmental issues must be taken note of. A destination with strong attractions be it a region, city or a leisure spot can impose its own conditions on tourists' intake. The immediate economic gains may not be much in such a situation. However, this may enhance the destination life cycle and help in maintaining its exclusiveness and authenticity.

21.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

1) Types of attractions to be developed, Ecology and Environment, etc. See Sec. 21.2 for your answer.

2) Read Page no. 8 for your answer.

Check Your Progress-2

1) Read Sec. 21.3 for your answer.

2) Base your answer on Sec. 21.5.