
UNIT 23 SHOPPING, EDUCATION, CULTURE

Structure

- 23.0 Objectives
- 23.1 Introduction
- 23.2 Shopping
- 23.3 Education
- 23.4 Culture
- 23.5 Alternative Approach
- 23.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 23.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

23.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- appreciate the role of shopping, education and culture as tourist attractions,
- know how they are marketed,
- point out the drawbacks in the marketing approach, and
- learn about an alternative approach in this regard.

23.1 INTRODUCTION

Tourism is spreading to all corners of the world. Every destination seeks to create products that will attract tourists, particularly international tourists. Governments, particularly in third world countries, are desperately looking for avenues to earn foreign exchange to defray the cost of development. As they open up the economy to foreign investment, tourism products are also being created for the tourist to consume and bring in foreign exchange. Marketing strategies and tactics have the tendency to universalise the experiences of specific destinations and cultures and then promote such an ideology as a management success. In India, we are not critical enough of this approach which uses the case studies methodology. Most of the cases are taken from the developed countries, which have very little relevance to the Indian situation. This is particularly the case in tourism development. In this Unit we discuss how shopping, education and culture have been appropriated by tourism marketing and developed as tourism products in the recent past. The Unit also takes into account the negative consequences for the practitioners at the destination and looks at the feasibility of an alternative approach.

23.2 SHOPPING

Shopping has always been a part of tourist attractions at a destination. A large percentage of tourist expenditure is spent on shopping. Shopping finds a place in every tourist itinerary and schedule. Tourism brochures list what to shop and where, to attract tourists. However, in the present context shopping is just not an ancillary activity for the tourists. In many cases the tourism industry packages shopping tours of varied types. Out bound shopping tours from India to Singapore, Hong Kong, Bangkok and Dubai, etc. come under this category. Certain generalities related to tourism and shopping have already been discussed in Unit-11 of TS-1. Hence, in this Unit we discuss the shopping trends and packages as being promoted by the tourism industry.

In the United States, where bargain hunting is an obsession, **shopping tours** of factories producing whatever a retail or department store has to offer, and selling at a discount, has become a popular holiday activity for the low and middle income groups. Coach tours take them to wholesalers and dealers in seconds or rejected goods, which include products which

did not find an export market. In countries where repair and recycling of goods is not favoured and consumerism is encouraged, such tours can promote the same sense of well being that the beach or adventure tourist gets from lying in the sun or finding an unknown trail to the top.

Another aspect of shopping is the **free port or city**, like Hong Kong. At these free ports prices are low because no duties are added on to the price of goods. Goods from all parts of the world, both branded and spurious, are available and the shopper has to be very selective or has to be guided to pick the correct goods. Similarly, airports do big business with their **duty free shopping arcades**. In Europe there is a big debate between the managements of airports and governments whether to do away with customs and tariffs after the European Union, just as they have abolished Visa requirements. Airport authorities earn 50% of their revenues from duty free shopping. In India, the private sector has been angling for the duty free shops run by ITDC, which are a source of profitability.

A third approach to shopping is the festival or mela/fair concept which has evolved in countries which have a rich resource in its artisans and handicrafts persons. This type of shopping opportunity is the result of the tourist gaze which sees the status value of a souvenir and transforms a useful item into one which has a visual value. In the process of this transformation the nature of the tradition is also changed. This is because as modernisation introduces mass production techniques, designs and materials are now oriented to the visual quality of the souvenir rather than its use. Thus the Suraj Kund Mela becomes the showcase for the ethnic chic crowd and the artisans and handloom weavers who are invited to such events are usually in the prize winning category. Others cannot afford the investment such melas involve, nor do they have the kind of sales that are necessary to make up the cost of undertaking the journey. An alternative approach adopted recently in this regard is the emergence of centres like the Dilli Haat (see Unit of TS- and Unit of TS-6) which is aimed at empowering the artisans and craftsmen.

We can also have the kind of shopping festival that Dubai organises to exhibit the products of designers and other up market brands for the elite from all over the world. Dubai is a favourite shopping halt for the Indian elite who can then feel at home with the products that imported fashion and decor magazines promote on glossy art pages. The shopping Malls are an attraction for those who like the look of glass and gilt and counters full of their favourite imported magic. Such festivals always have food specialties and cultural side shows as part of the tourist mix.

All the above mentioned approaches are practised by the tourism industry.

23.3 EDUCATION

There was a time, particularly during the heyday of the Grand Tour in Europe, when scholars and their pupils travelled to various destinations in search of knowledge and experience. Today however, the approach to promoting education has transformed. Universities from all over the world are targeting students who have the means, as a lucrative segment to enroll for higher education. American, British and Australian schools hold regular education fairs in the metro cities in India, since all universities abroad charge overseas students a higher fee. The motivation for these fairs is the same as that of destinations, to raise funds since universities all over the world are facing a resource crunch. Private schools are also being set up for those who do not meet the requirements of the state funded schools. They are able to net those segments who do not qualify for the established schools as well as those who are able to pay capitation fee for admission and tuition at the established schools.

There is also the trend to school in the creative arts, dance and music. Many foreign students are now entering music and dance faculties at Indian universities, apart from those who are attending the mainstream courses. Tourism education also attracts a large number of students from third world countries, many of whom are on scholarship from the Govt. of India. There are also several researchers on traditional schools of Indian medicine who are being attracted to study here.

The movement to encourage internationalism in education is however limited to raising funds for cash strapped public education. Many students feel disappointed at the quality of education and a lack of access to the local lifestyle and culture, since no effort is made to help a foreign student integrate with the society at large. In India students, who are lured by the

low fee structure, scholarships and the general promotion of educational standards, are bewildered by the lack of friendliness, accommodation facilities and language problems, which they did not think they would encounter in a third world country.

The approach to promoting education tours could be imaginative. It could involve:

- on campus education,
- having orientation lecture on the cultural and social norms of the destination, the culture and language of the people, and important cultural sites which have a meaning for local communities.

Some tour operators bring special interest tours to India where the tourists are interested in social and topical issues, like the status of women, art education, etc.

More and more tour operators should package educational tours. They, in fact can be used as an opportunity to explain to the tourist that often India has a negative image because of misunderstandings created by foreign travel writers and the travel trade. Where the organised trade is not interested, educational tours can and should be promoted by the state sector. Some tour operators package education (could be learning English, history, culture, flora, fauna, architecture, etc.) with other attractions like nature, adventure, etc. to offer comprehensive packages. These include leisure and education.

Check Your Progress-1

1) Discuss various types of shopping tours.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2) How can education be used in tourism marketing?

.....

.....

.....

.....

23.4 CULTURE

Cultures are and can be a strong motivation for tourism. Every country, region or destination uses its culture as an attraction in tourist generating markets. In its brochures, films and advertisements, etc. (i.e. all types of promotion) the producers of tourism services and destinations boast of:

- exotic culture,
- authentic culture,
- unique culture, or
- exclusive culture, etc.

Show casing culture is a common exercise in developing and marketing the tourism product. Destinations are promoted for having diverse cultures or as multi-cultural destinations (like India). Cultural tourism has emerged as a special form and the more recent specialised form is that of ethnic tourism which provides the visitor an opportunity to experience the culture of the host community. Thus culture, on the one hand is offered (on a price) as a tourist attraction for viewing and observing where as on the other hand it is offered as an experience to be shared. Besides, being local or community based or centered in an ethnic group, culture is also mythologised in India.

The tourist centered approach ensures that several factors are positioned in the foreground. These are:

- A cultural heritage that transcends time, or is timeless.
- India is a spiritual country, a land of religions.
- India has an ancient civilisation, an unchanging social and ethical system.
- India is the largest democracy.
- India has modern means of transport and accommodation, and is a destination for all people throughout the year.
- India is a land of fairs and festivals.
- India is a shoppers paradise.
- India has the grandest temples, the largest mosques, the oldest churches, and a plentitude of historical monuments in the Asian region.
- Indian culture displays a unity in its diversity, and
- Indian food is a gourmets delight, etc.

In this listing, we see the term India repeated as a motif. However, the critics of such an approach feel that what is India and who is an Indian is more difficult to establish. Further, they also ask that why we should have a circuit centered development of tourism and an intensive approach to destinations but a universal approach to culture as a part of the kind of invention of culture that we are engaged in. Animals, Gods, Artisans, Jewellery, Textiles, Folk song and dance form the kernal of a culture we now define as Indian. Whose folk tradition and why folk terminology is never seriously questioned by our tourism experts. It is the tourist who has coined the term folk as a part of the orientalist discourse, and having defined ourselves as the other, we have picked up the distinction between the classical, as determined by the British and the non-classical, popular or folk, that is, belonging to a lower order of culture. The ordering of a culture is a part of the business of those who keep the stratification of different levels of society intact, (for two thousand years perhaps), but does not fit in the scheme of a democratic society.

There is another problem with the use of culture for tourism. The visual and dramatic is selected and even created, as can be seen in the mix of rural tradition and popular film presentation created by troupe of 'folk singers. The only 'folk they represent are the tourists and their ilk at home, the urban elite. One feels the same about the use of forts and palaces, or Mughal gardens and lakes as the backdrop of cultural festivals which are so patently inauthentic that tourists view these events as entertainment and not as culture.

Culture as a living, breathing, struggling and centering tradition cannot be staged or relocated if it is to inspire the respect of the viewer, be it a tourist from within the nations boundary or a foreigner. Nowhere in this invention of tradition is the performer/participant seen as a stake holder, a determinant of the form and the content of an event in which the participants belong to another culture, even an antagonistic culture. Unless such stake holders become decision makers the image of culture in touristic presentations will continue to falsify and trivialise the meaningful culture of a region, a people or a community.

23.5 ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

The basis of any approach that we use to redefine the terms that planners and policy makers have adopted from the world of business to define the world of leisure must first of all maintain the distinction between work and leisure. The hysteria of a shopping tour, which resembles a 12 hour working day has to be changed. An education that perpetuates the same absence

of values from which a scholar seeks to escape is bound to be disappointing. A cultural product that does not distinguish between the authentic and the inauthentic will not arouse the dead conscience of the tourist who is seeking value for money rather than the value of understanding that which is good and bad in our world .

How do we distinguish between work and leisure across cultures?

This would depend on an understanding of the aspirations of the people or the culture we are entering, not merely viewing, abstracting and universalising, according to a system of classification that is centered in our own social system or status. We have to make the tourism promotion within an environment that generates this empathy before it transforms living culture into the exotic, the primitive and the oriental/occidental. We have to accept that we live across language and time zones, across developmental and income divides, that we originate in different ethnic groups and have different civilisational values. The critical aspect is the term different not hierarchical. We have been conditioned to think of mother civilisations, be they black or white, as long as they are in the hoary past, we must see how both work and leisure have evolved through practice. It is this practice that we need to promote and not the product. Once the practitioner becomes the spokesperson the tourist becomes the listener and the learner.

Tourism is a temporary phenomenon. The tourist is a temporary visitor. Yet the subsidy or sponsorship that tourism events can generate and the acceptability that tourists have is far more than that which is given to our normal cycle of activities. This privileging of the tourist products is an alienating process which in its most ugly form appropriated the essence of the product from the local people to whom the product belongs and by whom it is created to fill the spaces they have created to distinguish work from leisure. The professionalisation of culture, even at the grass roots level has been the reason why there is a debate today on what is authentic and what is inauthentic. Several approaches can determine the approach to this debate:

- anthropology,
- sociology,
- cultural theory,
- critical theory,
- management theory.

Each of these represents a point of view, and why a particular destination adopts a particular approach would depend on how it seeks to legitimise tourism development.

Check Your Progress-2

1) Discuss the role of Culture in tourism promotion.

.....
.....
.....
.....

2) Discuss the views mentioned in the section on Alternative Approach.

.....
.....
.....
.....

23.6 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we discussed about shopping, education and culture in relation to tourism marketing. Each one of them is being used as an attraction to get a larger share of the tourist market. The tourism industry has appropriated them to cater to the customers demands. However, the critics point out that such a tourist centric approach not only affects the authenticity but has a negative impact on the product life cycle. Pre-assessment of negative impacts, creativity and innovativeness are some of the features that should be kept in mind while packaging education and culture as attractions.

23.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) Base your answer on Sec. 23.2.
- 2) Read Sec. 23.3.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) Read Sec. 23.4.
- 2) Read Sec. 23.5.