
UNIT 12 TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

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12.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit the learners will be able to:

- understand the concept of tourism resources
- comprehend the concept and meaning of tourism products and services,
- learn about the difference between tourism products and other consumer products,
- know how tourism resources are converted into tourism products.
- learn about the various types of tourism products and their characteristics

12.1 INTRODUCTION

In the past, some destinations emerged over the years and due to their peculiar characteristics they became tourist attractions. The tourists of those times travelled to these destinations according to their interests like ancient

cities, pilgrimage sites or hill stations etc. These destinations were not particularly developed for tourism purposes. However in recent years, keeping in view the developments in the field of tourism, various new destinations which include beaches, hill stations, townships and pilgrimage sites were studied and developed upon with sole motive of creating new tourist destinations to attract tourists. Thus the concept of tourism products came into picture as like any other industry the tourism industry also sells its products to the potential buyers in order to earn revenue. However these tourism products are quite different from the other daily consumable products due to their peculiar characteristics. We will read about these characteristics which make them different from other products in the later section of this unit. The tourists choose to visit a particular destination depending upon the various tourism products which a particular destination offers.

Hence being a tourism student one must have an understanding about these products. The unit will give the learners a basic overview about the meaning, types, and characteristics of the tourism products and services.

12.2 CONCEPT OF TOURISM RESOURCES

Before understanding tourism resources we will first understand the meaning of resource. In simpler terms resource is something from which we produce some benefit. A resource can be natural as well as manmade. For example sunlight is a natural resource whereas technology is a man made resource. These resources are further used to produce something which adds value to our lives. Resource is something that primarily decides the final product. Resources can be tangible like man, material (raw), machinery, money etc. as well the resources can be intangible like the education, training and skills of manpower, image and goodwill of the organizations, patents and copyrights etc.

Similarly, tourism resource can be referred to as any resource which has potential to satisfy the tourism needs of human beings. The term tourism resource includes all the natural and man made attractions, services, infrastructure and other conditions that have capability to attract tourists towards them. It is the available tourism resources at a particular tourist destination that decides nature and form of tourism product on offer. In other words, tourism resources can be defined as the components or ingredients which go into amalgamation at the hands of tourism business owners/operators to arrive at the final tourism product offering. Like the case with other business resources, tourism resources can also be classified into various kinds, primary being the natural tourism resources and manmade tourism resources. Tourism resources can be tangible ones like water bodies, land bodies etc as well as they can be intangible like rites and rituals, cultural and religious manifestations and events etc. The core element in case of tourism resources is the attraction which when supported by accessibility and accommodation services gives rise to final tourism product offering. So, we can say that in order to have a feasible tourism product there should be not only the attraction but also it should be backed by accessibility and accommodation services.

The natural tourism resources include the resources provided by nature like mountains, deserts, forests, climate, scenic beauty, landforms, flora and fauna, beaches and marine areas etc. These natural resources are developed to convert them into tourism products. For instance a place full of natural beauty and landscape is of no use in terms of tourism without the basic infrastructure like roads, transportation, water supply, electricity, accommodation and food outlets etc.

The natural resources are managed and developed to offer them as tourism products in the market. The role of accessibility comes into play when we talk about developing a natural resource into a tourism product. A destination is of no use if it is not easily accessible. To reach an attraction or a destination a tourist would need some mode of transport. This mode of transport may be a motor car, a coach, taxi, an aeroplane, a ship or a train. A tourist destination is of little value if they are located at places where no transport can reach or where there are inadequate transport facilities.

Further, a destination full of natural resources needs to have good accommodation facilities so that the natural resources of that destination may be utilized for the purpose of tourism. A tourist reaching a destination needs to have an accommodation where he can stay. An accommodation plays an important role and is very basic to a tourist destination. It has often been seen that it becomes difficult to promote a destination full of natural resources as a tourism product without accommodation infrastructure. The accommodations can be of different types which are offered to the tourists depending upon their budget and facilities available. Some examples of accommodation are hotels, resorts, youth hostels, guest houses, dak bungalows, tents, home stays and dharamshalas etc.

Amenities and Activities also play an important role in the process of development of a natural resource into a tourism product. Amenities include all other services which we require while travelling such as water, food, electricity, telecommunication and healthcare facilities etc.. Activities include all the activities which a tourist destination provides for the satisfaction of tourists. These activities may include shopping, dining, nature walks, boating etc.

12.3 TOURISM PRODUCTS: CONCEPT AND MEANING

In simpler terms, tourism is something which is concerned with pleasure, holidays, travel and going or arriving somewhere. Here people usually leave their normal places of residence or work to some other places due to reasons depending upon person to person. Like in our daily life, in order to survive, we consume various products, similarly while performing tourism activity people need to avail various services and consume various goods which are usually different from what they consume in their daily life. The process of buying a tourism product starts right at the time when a person decides in his mind to go on a trip outside his usual place of work or residence. Let us explain this in detail, when a person decides or plans to travel to a

destinations of his choice , he psychologically starts expecting a memorable experience during his journey. The experience of the tourist at the airport on departure or upon arrival at the destination is a part of the tourism product. When he uses transportation facility at the destination he interacts with the local people. The quality of the transportation as well as the behavior of the local people also form part of the tourism products.

While at the destination, the tourists visit different attractions of the destination and during the visit they use various facilities or services which may include transport services, road side shops, rest rooms, services of photographers, coolies, guides, shopping, entertainment services, and restaurants and so on. All these attractions, facilities and services including the experiences of the tourists at the destination become part of the tourism products. The ultimate aim of these tourism products is to satisfy certain needs of the tourists for which they have left their places of residence or work and these needs may include leisure, pleasure, business, adventure or religion etc.

Therefore in order to attract more tourists to a particular destination the authorities need to keep on working upon the quality of these tourism products.

By this time, the learners must have got a basic idea about the meaning of tourism products. Now we will quote some definitions of tourism products as given by various experts and tourism organizations.

As defined by UNWTO “a tourism product is a combination of tangible and intangible elements such as natural, cultural and manmade resources, attractions, facilities, services and activities around a specific centre of interest which represents the core of the destination marketing mix and creates an overall visitor experience including emotional aspects for the potential customer. A tourism product is priced and sold through distribution channels and it has a life cycle”

According to Roger Dosewell (1997), a leading expert on tourism products designing, “Tourism products at a destination comprise of all those attractions, facilities and services used or visited during a stay. It also comprises of everything that happens to visitors and everything they experience”.

Medlik and Middleton (1973) proposed that “tourism products consist of a variety of elements which is a package that is not integral to each other and meet the needs of tourists from leaving his residence to the place of destination and back again to the place of origin”.

According to Suwantoro (1997) “ Tourism product is the overall service provided and felt or enjoyed by tourists since he left his residence to the tourist destination which he has chosen and returned to the house from where he originally departed.”

Bukart and Medlik (1986) describe the structure of the tourism product as an integrated product which consists of tourism , tourist attractions, transportation (transport services), accommodation and entertainment in

which each element is prepared by individual companies and offered separately.

Thus we can safely say that a tourism product is the sum of physical and psychological satisfaction which is provided to the tourist during their entire travelling route to the destination chosen by them.

12.4 TOURISM SERVICES: CONCEPT AND MEANING

A service business is one in which a seller, called service provider, provides services to the buyers rather than the products. The buyers pay a price for the services being used by them. Some services are purely intangible in nature whereas in some other services tangible component is also there. Some examples of services which are purely intangible are cinema halls, art exhibitions and sports events whereas examples of services in which tangible aspect is also there are restaurants and supermarkets. Some other examples of service providers are doctors, lawyers, hotels, airlines, trains, couriers, banking and so on.

Kotler (1991) defined services as “A service is any activity or benefit that one party can offer to another which is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything or may not be tied to a physical product.”

The services cannot be stored for future use. Moreover they cannot be standardized like other physical products as they are mostly intangible. This further makes difficult to measure the quality of the services. Like in tourism services when we buy a tour package we cannot immediately assess the quality of the service unless we go to the destination. Depending upon our experience at the destination, we will realize whether we got the value of the money spent or not. In view of the difficulty of quality assessment of the services sometime it becomes difficult for the customers to purchase the same.

Services are different from the products due to their unique characteristics like **intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity, perishability and ownership** which we will read in the later section of the unit.

In case of goods they are first produced then stored and are finally sold and consumed by the buyers. Whereas in case of services they are first sold and then produced and consumed simultaneously. Since services are usually generated and consumed at the same time the customers are actually involved in the service delivery process by taking into considerations the requirements of the customers. The service providers offer greater scope for customization according to the requirements of the customers thus, offering increased satisfaction which leads to higher customer retention.

The importance of service is such that it can distinguish one brand from the other. For instance in case of two fast food chains, say Pizza Hut and Domino's, delivering same product, more than the product it will be the quality of service provided by them which will differentiate the two brands from each other and will ultimately result in repeat business.

Tourism related services include services provided by the hotels and restaurants, travel agencies, tour operators, tourist guides/escorts and other related services. When a tourist visits a destination he needs services like transportation, accommodation, dining and entertainment etc. These services are provided to the tourists by various service providers operating in the area. The quality of services provided by them can actually make or mar the popularity of a particular destination. For instance when a tourist books a local taxi at a destination for sightseeing then the quality of service provided by the taxi operator which may include punctuality of the driver, condition of the vehicle and behavior of the driver, etc. will decide the overall experience of the tourist at the destination.

Check Your Progress - 1

- 1) What do you understand by tourism resources?

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- 2) Write a brief note on the concept of tourism services.

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12.5 TYPES OF TOURISM PRODUCTS

In this section, we will discuss about the various types of tourism products. Broadly, the tourism products can be classified as:

- Natural Tourism Products
- Man-made Tourism Products
- Symbiotic Tourism Products
- Site based Tourism Products
- Event based tourism Products

12.5.1 Natural Tourism Products

The tourism products which have been created using the resources provided by nature are called natural tourism products. The natural tourism products are closely associated with natural environment. The natural settings in such tourism products attract tourists towards them. Such tourism products have

always attracted the mankind since times immemorial. The mountains of Himalayas in the North, the sea beaches of South and the deserts of Rajasthan are such natural attractions which have always fascinated the tourists worldwide. Major natural tourism resources could be:

- Scenic attractions
- Mountains
- Glaciers
- Climate
- Caves
- Deserts
- Sea beaches
- Islands
- Rivers
- Lakes
- Waterfalls
- Wildlife
- Forests
- Flora and fauna

As discussed earlier, these natural resources are utilized and developed in order to present them as tourism products. Basic infrastructure like transport, accommodation and food is provided at such places to convert them into products.

One such example of natural tourism product is the famous **Dudhsagar Falls** waterfall located on the Mandovi River in the border of Indian States - Goa and Karnataka. The fall is located in the Bhagwan Mahaveer Sanctuary and Mollem National Park in the Western Ghats. The area is surrounded by deciduous forests with rich biodiversity.

12.5.2 Manmade Tourism Products

These are those tourism products which have been built or created by humans to satisfy leisure, pleasure or business needs of the tourists. Such type of products include sites and area of archaeological interest, historical buildings and monuments, places of historical significance, museums and art galleries, theme/amusement parks, fairs & festivals, dance & music, recreation parks and zoos etc. These are the examples of manmade tourism products to satisfy the leisure and pleasure needs of the tourists. Conventions and conferences are the examples of manmade products which satisfy the business needs of the tourists. Major man made tourism products could be:

- Historical monuments
- Historical sites
- Fairs and festivals
- Customs and traditions

- Cuisines
- Museums
- Art galleries
- Folk dances
- Handicrafts
- Religious centres
- Adventure activities
- Resorts
- Botanical gardens and zoos
- Recreational and Shopping facilities

One such example of man made tourism product is the famous amusement park EsselWorld built in 1986 by Subhash Chandra of the Essel Group. Most tourists, who visit Mumbai, always make it a point to visit this magical place. Situated in the Gorai Island, Essel World is one of the first amusement parks in India.

12.5.3 Symbiotic Tourism Products

In this category, we take those tourism products which do not come under the category of natural or manmade products. These type of tourism products have a mixture of both natural and manmade features. In such products, the nature remains the core resource on which humans create recreational facilities. Nature provides the resource and man adds certain facilities to convert them into a tourism product. Thus such products are called as creation by symbiosis of nature and man. For example, the water adventure activities in Goa have been created by humans whereas the resource on which these activities are performed has been provided by the nature which is sea. Other examples of such products could be wild life sanctuaries, marine parks and national parks. However the core attraction in such products usually remains the nature. While creating symbiotic tourism products it is always taken into consideration that we do not over exploit the natural resources and always use them to an acceptable limit. Such products are managed by human beings by taking care of natural beauty as far as possible.

One such example of symbiotic tourism product is the famous **Jim Corbett National Park** located in the Indian state Uttarakhand. It is the oldest national park in India and was established to protect the endangered Bengal Tiger.

12.5.4 Site Based Tourism Products

In simpler terms, when an attraction is a place or site then it is called a site based tourism product. As obvious, such places are always permanent in nature and can never be replaced totally but can be modified to suit the needs of the tourists. Sometimes to keep alive the interests of the tourists, new features are added in such tourism products. If we take an example of famous city of Agra in India as a site based tourism product then we see that the city of Agra can never be replaced however certain modifications, like organizing

night music shows with TajMahal as background, can always be made to keep alive the interest of the tourists.

12.5.5 Event Based Tourism Products

Many times certain events are purposefully organized at certain destinations to attract tourists. The tourists visit such destinations as spectators, participants or sometimes as both. Such events at the destinations make the destinations as what we call event based tourism products. Such events may be traditional, occasional or promotional in nature. The famous Kumbhmela at Allahabad, Ujain, Nasik and Haridwar is a perfect example of traditional event in which people from all over the world participate as tourists.

In occasional events the participants belong to a specific target group. For example wedding destination functions, MICE events etc.

Promotional events on the other hand are events which are specifically organized at a destination to promote the popularity of that destination. Indian Premier League (IPL) in cricket is an example of promotional event which is organized by Board of control for cricket in India (BCCI) . Such events are organized on temporary basis and are not permanent. They are organised to increase the number of tourists to a particular destination. Some of such events have short span of time while others may last for many days or even months.

12.6 CHARACTERISTICS OF TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

What makes the tourism products different from the other consumer products?

Well, as discussed earlier the tourism products are not like our daily use products. They are different due to some of their unique characteristics. Let us discuss about these characteristics one by one.

- Intangibility
- Inseparability
- Heterogeneity
- Perishability
- Ownership

12.6.1 Intangibility

Tangible is something which we can touch whereas intangible is something which we cannot touch. When we buy a tourism product, say a tour package we actually buy a dream, a concept or an idea. We cannot touch it, feel it or smell it. Whenever we plan a trip we start imagining about what we will see at the destination. When we actually reach the destination only then we realize the level of satisfaction or the value of money that we have got in return. In this way the tourism products are said to be intangible in nature.

The tourism products sometimes have both tangible and intangible aspects associated with them. For instance when we check in a hotel at a destination, the hotel room is tangible in nature since we can touch and see the location and physical amenities offered whereas the services attached with the room like laundry, food & beverage, front office etc. cannot be touched and seen which are intangible aspects of tourism products.

When we buy a consumer product, say a bottle of shampoo, we can immediately check its benefits, whereas when we buy a tourism product it is not possible to check its benefits immediately.

12.6.2 Inseparability

In case of a product like a television set we go to the market, purchase the product and bring it back with us to our home. Now a days we order such products online from the comforts of our homes and they get delivered to us. Hence these products get separated from their sellers. Whereas, in case of tourism products we have to go physically to the destination to enjoy them and cannot bring them back with us. In this context we say that tourism products are inseparable from their sellers. In general the services cannot be separated from the persons providing them. A tourist guide needs to be present during his description about the product at a destination. Tourism product are said to be inseparable because the consumer and the service provider should both be present during the consumption of the product.

12.6.3 Heterogeneity

Tourism is a service industry. In this industry humans serve humans. In providing tourism related services human element is always involved which ultimately makes the standardization of these services a very difficult task. For example, at a destination, in a hotel, front office executive greeting the tourist with a smiling face and politeness will make the tourist feel happy about the services of the hotel and will carry good memories with him about the destination. On the other hand, some other day, in the same hotel if the same front office executive behaves rudely and not doing his job smilingly and politely will give bad impression about the services of the hotel. The destination is same and the hotel is same but because of heterogeneity in providing the services by the executive, the tourist's perception about the hotel will change completely. This happened because human factor was involved in providing tourism related services. In another example , a waiter who serves in best possible manner may behave differently on different occasions while presenting the cuisine. The involvement of human factor in tourism related services makes them heterogeneous in nature.

12.6.4 Perishability

Tourism products are said to be highly perishable. It means that these product cannot be stored for a long time like other consumer products. A simple consumer product say a bar of soap is produced in factories and is made available at the shops for selling to the prospective buyers. If unsold, it can remain there for a long time even for days and months. However an unsold

room in a hotel or an empty seat in a transport is lost forever. This is because in tourism products the production and the consumption take place at the same time. Production takes place only when the customer is actually present. And once the consumption starts it cannot be stopped, interrupted or modified. If a tourism product is not used it gets lost for that time. Tourism is highly dependent on seasons and due to perishability characteristic the accommodation and transport sectors offer high discounts during off seasons.

12.6.5 Ownership

In case of consumer products, we go to the market, pay the price and bring the product back with us. These products can range from a book, T.V set, mobile phone or a high end car and so on. Hence we pay its price and become its legal owners. Now this product belongs to us. In case of tourism products and services we pay for its use and can never become its owners. At a destination we pay for the accommodation and use it but we do not become the owner of the hotel. Similarly we pay for the air seat but never own it. The non-ownership of services transfers only the right to use the services for a limited time.

In tourism industry, the presence of human factor has proved to be an important element for the last several decades. In these times the tourism products are facing a lot of challenge in terms of quality and diversity. For instance in the past, classification procedure and requirements of the tourists were simple as they usually travelled for two main reasons i.e trade & religion. But now-a-days the motivation factors for travel have become so diverse that the classification process has become very complex which has further affected the product designing process. Moreover other peculiar characteristic of tourism products and services is that they are highly sensitive to internal as well as external factors which was also proved in the recent past when there were restrictions on travel due to worldwide lockdown because of COVID-19 pandemic which badly hit the tourism industry. There are sufficient reasons to say that in comparison to other services, the tourism services are more vulnerable to sensitive issues. Thus, while dealing with tourism products and their related services one must bear in mind all these issues and considerations.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Explain the various types of tourism products.

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- 2) How does a tourism product different from other consumer product in terms of intangibility and perishability?

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12.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed about the tourism products and services. Tourism products/services are different from other daily consumable products because of their peculiar characteristics. Tourists are motivated to visit a destination depending upon the attractions at that destination. These attractions could be natural or manmade. These attractions are basically the reason for tourists to visit a particular destination. These attractions could be sites and area of archaeological interest, historical buildings and monuments, flora and fauna, beach resorts, mountains, national parks or events like trade fairs, exhibitions, art and music festivals and games etc.. Natural tourism products are those which have been created naturally whereas man made products are created by human beings for the purpose of pleasure, leisure and business. Symbiotic products are created by blend of both natural and man-made features. Tourism as we have understood so far is the phenomena that encompasses many related services under its broad ambit. Some people say tourism is a business of networking. Tourism is basically a service industry. Tourism products/services differ from other manufacturing goods in terms of five main characteristics viz. intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability, inseparability and ownership. In the last section, we have studied about these characteristics of tourism products in detail. Tourism products and services are intangible since they cannot be inspected and sampled in advance before the actual purchase is made. We have seen how tourism products and services are inseparable from their providers and purchasing of tourism products and services usually do not result in the ownership of these products and makes them heterogeneous in nature.

12.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress - 1

- 1) Refer section 12.4
2) Refer section 12.5

Check Your Progress - 2

- 1) Refer section 12.6
2) Refer section 12.2

12.9 FURTHER READINGS

Swain, S.K., Mishra, J.M. (2012). Tourism Principles and Practices, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

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