
UNIT 8 DOMESTIC MARKETS – II

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8.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- the significance of domestic tourism,
- the infrastructural development required for domestic tourism,
- issues involved in domestic tourism, and
- the future prospects of domestic tourism.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Even though international tourism is the flavour of the day yet domestic tourism can not be denied its place in the sun. It is not only the bread and butter for several sectors of the tourism industry but it is also the sole source of getaway for lakhs of middle class families. The informal tourism sector depends a lot on domestic tourists. After having read about the magnitude of domestic tourism and its proportions in the previous Unit, let us now delve into the finer aspects of domestic tourism. In this unit we will look at where domestic tourists are going, how better facilitation of these tourists can be achieved and what the future scenario is going to be like.

8.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF DOMESTIC TOURISM

Domestic tourism is one of the most vibrant expressions of Indian heritage. It is the single unifying force, which helps to achieve understanding between various linguistic, religious and social groups living in different parts of the country. In the contemporary India, the phenomenon of domestic tourism with its living vibrant changing dimensions can be expected to make an even greater contribution towards strengthening the fabric of the unity of India. It is the major way by which myths are exploded and Indians come to know about Indians. For example, the North Eastern part of India would have remained an unexplored, mysterious part of the country had it not opened up and made accessible. Unifying forces can also be seen in the way food is available throughout India. Domestic tourism has contributed in not only familiarising different parts of the country to travellers but in many aspects has influenced the food habits and dress styles, etc. Domestic tourism also provides the much-needed employment to thousands of small-scale entrepreneurs and low scale workers. Small hotel and motel establishments, roadside eateries-dhabas and inexpensive shopping for local handicrafts is surviving rather flourishing because of local domestic tourists. Even though international backpackers also patronise such

establishments yet, a major chunk of business for them comes from domestic tourists. Small and middle hoteliers, tourist transports, shop keepers, etc. largely depend on the domestic tourist market.

8.3 INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT FOR DOMESTIC TOURISM

There is tremendous scope for investing in infrastructure for domestic tourists.

8.3.1 Accommodation

Despite its great significance in the national integration and development, domestic tourism has not received adequate attention in the process of development planning. Accommodation facilities in the form of Dharamshalas, Choultries, Agarshalas, etc., were built around the places of worship only during ancient times through the efforts of private individuals, institutions and rulers. The British administration then built a number of circuit houses, dak bungalows and hill resorts. These were basically for the use of Britishers and Civil Servants. Government intervention in the development of domestic tourism in independent India was first initiated during Second Plan period, when it was decided to assist the State Government on an equal sharing basis to build accommodation units suitable for domestic tourism. The Scheme continued during the Third Plan period and thereafter it was transferred to the State sector. The scheme was again taken up by the Central Department of Tourism during Sixth Plan to build youth hostels for the promotion of youth tourism in the country. During the plan period itself twenty youth hostels were built and they were transferred to the Department of Youth Affairs. A society known as Bharatiya Yatri Awas Vikas Samiti was also set up during Sixth Plan for the construction of low priced accommodation units called “Yatrikas” at pilgrim centres. The concept of “Yatrinivas were completed and four were under progress by the end of Seventh plan period for providing accommodation facilities to budget tourists. These were sixty bed budget hotels in the pattern of tourist bungalow. By the end of Seventh Plan twelve Yatri niwases were constructed and twenty-three were under construction. Yet another attempt by the Government to create basic facilities at places of pilgrimage and tourist importance is the scheme of construction of camping sites taken up during 1991-92. These efforts though useful are grossly inadequate to meet the growing needs of domestic tourists

The unorganised informal sector has its own business in this regard. But still a lot needs to be done in this area.

8.3.2 Transportation

Apart from accommodation there are a number of other issues also that need to be taken care of. The transportation sector for example also needs attention. With the opening up of Indian skies to private airlines the Indian domestic tourist is glad but not happy .The fares are still astronomical, flights are still not on time and the question of safety is still by and large elusive .So far as rail transport is concerned things are still better and more suited to the domestic tourists .The advent of centralised reservations, the concept of three tier air-conditioned coaches and more and more links to various destinations have all facilitated the domestic tourists .However things are still not right at the road transport level .The state roadways buses are ill kept and out dated in their models . Most of the domestic tourists prefer private buses run by operators instead of state road transport for their travelling needs. Surface transport is also hindered by the condition of roads in India. In fact this problem would be faced by all sorts of tourists but more by the domestic ones because this is the cheapest mode of transportation. Apart from some highways like the Delhi-Agra route or the Mumbai-Pune highway most of road connections are in shambles. Credit also has to be given to most of the hill station roads which are well

maintained. But this pretty scene ends at that. Most of the interior roads are ill kept and shoddy getting worst in the rains.

8.3.3 Others

Another area of concern for domestic tourism is slightly more indirect. Let us understand what this area is. Domestic tourism has still not reached that stage in India where it can be said to be mature. In this context, domestic tourism is still very localised and concentrated in activity. Thus, come summer vacations for schools and a major chunk of tourists from north India would be seen rushing towards the hills. The hill stations that have become very popular with domestic tourists are places like Mussorie, Nainital, Simla, Manali etc. leading to overcrowding and civic problems like water supply, sanitation etc. Suffice here to say that it becomes very difficult to manage tourists in those times with traffic jams and congestion being the order of the day. Although the scenario is fast changing and not only are the tourists becoming more experimental but more and more tour operators are trying to explore new destinations and project them to a largely accepting crowd.

Another major disincentive for domestic tourist is the quality and standard of services provided. With no rigorous sets of rules and regulations and no direct enforcement authority the services offered are not the same which are promised and there is by and large flouting of services promised. The safety and security of travellers is not a major concern unlike the western countries where a tour operator can be dragged to the court of law for promising falsely. Further, there are no such checks as insurance for travellers making their security a prime issue.

So far as these problems are concerned there are a number of ways by which these can be resolved. But the most important thing here is to first give domestic tourism the attention and priority it deserves. The tourism industry – in particular the tour operators, the small hotel and motel owners, the small scale restaurateurs, etc. need to upgrade their services in a manner that make them not only more competitive in the market place but also more acceptable to the tourists. It should always be kept in mind that domestic tourists look at value for money and not only cheapness of the product as is usually believed. Once this fact is realised by all concerned in the industry things would be very upbeat.

Check Your Progress 1

1) What is the significance of domestic tourism?

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2) Do you think that the accommodation, transportation and other infrastructure facilities meet the domestic tourism demands?

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8.4 SOME FEATURES OF DOMESTIC TOURISM

A desirable feature of domestic tourism is to sustain the industry during lean periods of International tourism by providing an alternative for demand substitution. It is also less sensitive to various international developments and internal problems, which generally affect foreign tourist traffic. The demands and expectations of domestic tourists are also usually reasonable and do not impose heavy investment burdens on the industry. The infrastructure base for domestic tourism can also become a second line of supply at least for some classes of foreign tourists during peak foreign tourist seasons. These features of domestic tourism make it a desirable development option for a country with limited capital resources. For a country like ours it is very important that domestic tourism be fully developed to its potential to bridge this gap. It is also important that India puts a stop on the rapid movement of outbound tourists so as to control our trade deficit as explained in the earlier Unit. It would be in the interest of our country to promote our domestic destinations as we have no dearth of either sun, sand, sea, mountains or any other natural phenomenon. Neither do we have any deficiency of history, culture or other manmade attractions.

The statistical information available from various sources clearly indicates that a large percentage of domestic tourists on holidays, pilgrim or business tourists. It would be of interest to note that about 60 per cent of the room occupancy in approved categories of hotels is due to domestic tourists. The economic and social conditions prevailing in India today are precipitous for a revolutionary growth in domestic tourism. The economic growth achieved by the country over the years has created a powerful middle class with reasonable affluence and disposable income. By and large these persons also do have access to paid holidays in the form of leave Travel Concession (LTC) and incentives. Socially, they are exposed to greater awareness and sightseeing is thus putting greater pressure of all forms of tourism infrastructure. It will be further aggravated by the increased number of business travellers. It is, thus obvious that any future development plan should have a strong bias for domestic tourism and it would be totally inconsistent to make any investment exclusively for international tourism. (Source: IIPM Report 1998)

8.5 KEY ISSUES IN DOMESTIC TOURISM

A major issue which emerges in the given scenario is the problem of degradation and carrying capacity. The tourist attractions of the country are mainly a multitude of archaeological remains and monuments which are generally in a state of dereliction and despair; meadows mountains and beaches which are ecologically fragile and the entire biotic component of nature including wild life and forests which are constantly being endangered by human intervention. These resources, if not adequately protected would get degraded and lead to disastrous results. It is thus obvious, that a new set of enterprises must be developed for the preservation and protection of such attractions if they have to be used as tourism products. As in a manufacturing industry, the products are produced by an enterprise or factory, in a service industry like tourism, the products are preserved or protected by the enterprises.

The Departments of Environment and Archaeology of both the Central and State Government are armoured with a number of acts rules for the protection ecology and environment and preservation of monuments. These acts and rules, however, do not recognize the existence of tourism phenomenon or for that matter any developmental activity. The vision of these agencies is also, therefore, often oriented towards protecting the rules and regulations and not necessarily that of protecting the

monuments or the environment. The funds available with them are also limited to take up any developmental activity for themselves. The force of tourism, however, does not wait for any protective or development measures to become operational. There is, therefore, an urgent need to resolve this dilemma by identifying specific areas separately for conservation and development around each monument and other tourist attractions. Development plans, thus prepared also must be implemented effectively. The investment required for such an exercise and for their continued maintenance could be generated from the tourists by adopting suitable pricing policies. After all, they would be willing to pay the cost of maintaining those attraction for their won enjoyment. The tourist industries coming up in the development zones should also collectively own the responsibility of maintaining the protected monuments and areas either by paying a development cess or by undertaking the activity for themselves. The introduction of such a scheme for each monument and other places of tourist attraction is imperative to take into account the phenomenon of mass movement of tourists.

An associated problem requiring attention is the carrying capacity of each tourist centre. The physical, biological and infra-structural features impose restrictions on the number of visitors that can be received by any practical area during a given period of time. A clear assessment of this carrying capacity and regulation of tourist flow are particularly important for areas with fragile ecology and social systems. This must, therefore, form a part of the tourism development programme of any area.

Domestic tourism offers direct markets to many suppliers of tourism services unlike international tourism. For example, tourist transport operators can directly market their products to tourists in the domestic market whereas for international tourists they have to depend on tour operators or hotels, etc. Same can be said for the accommodation sector.

Check Your Progress 2

1) What can be the potential problems faced by domestic tourists? Write an essay on it.

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8.6 LET US SUM UP

Domestic tourism is perhaps the most beneficial yet neglected aspect of our tourism industry. It is important that we realise not only the full potential of it but also give it the due recognition it deserves. In the wake of diminishing international tourists domestic tourism can provide the much-needed reprieve. It is time that different segments of the tourism industry start probing and targeting the various segments of the domestic tourism market. This will also help in generating a strong data base on domestic tourism that could be relied upon.

8.7 CLUES TO ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Very significant for local economy. Refer Sec. 8.3.
- 2) See Sec. 8.3.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Refer to Sec.8.5 and Sec. 8.6.