
UNIT 8 TOURIST DESTINATION – ELEMENTS AND LIFE CYCLE

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8.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- understand the concept and evolution of a tourist destination;
- know the elements of a tourist destination;
- comprehend the meaning of tourist destination lifecycle;
- various stages of destination life cycle; and
- understand the implications of destination life cycle in tourism management.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, we have learnt about tourism industry, its structure, components, linkages and integrations prevalent in this industry. In present unit we shall be discussing an important component of tourism phenomenon i.e. Tourist Destination. We shall be discussing about the concept of a tourist destination, how a tourist destination evolve over the period of time, what are the components of a tourist destination and destination life cycle and its implications in managing tourism. Every country has many cities, towns or villages but does the tourist visit every city, town or village of that country. What makes some locations more popular among tourists and some locations are not preferred by the tourists. In other words, what are the aspects that make a place “tourist destination?”

And, a place, once a tourist destination will always remain so or vice versa. These are the aspects of tourism phenomenon that we are going to look into detail in present unit.

8.2 TOURIST DESTINATION – CONCEPT AND EVOLUTION

All the destinations are places but not vice versa. So what differentiates a “destination” from a “place”. A place can be defined as a separate geographical entity with distinct boundaries, when this place has an attraction which one or more segments of human populace consider worth visiting for reasons that may include but not limited to religion, leisure, pleasure, adventure, study etc. and also the place have available means to access and facilities for an overnight or more stay, then the place becomes a destination.

Tourist Destination- place with some attraction, backed with accessibility and accommodation.

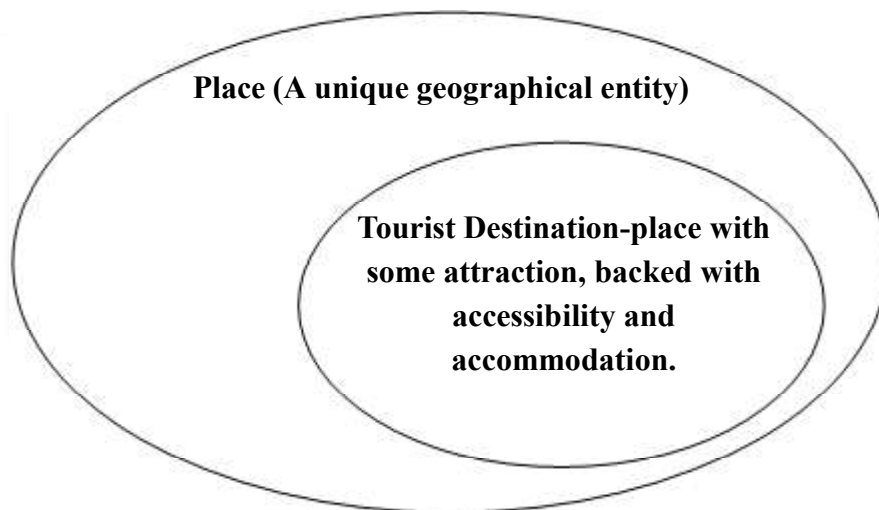


Fig. 8.1: Tourist Destination

In order for a place to become tourist destination two sets of interrelated activities are required. One being the local development of tourist facilities like accommodation, local transportation and other necessary tourism infrastructure, this aspect mainly deals with the supply side of the tourism phenomenon. The other being marketing efforts undertaken in the areas and locations of potential tourists, deals with the demand aspect.

In a more technical sense, a tourist destination can be any place having natural or manmade attraction features, with accessibility and accommodation infrastructural facilities, attributes of host population supportive of tourists and known to adequate number of potential visitors to justify its consideration as an entity and identity. A destination can also be defined as a place or group of places to which tourists prefer to go and in which they stay as primary objective of their visit. Over the period of time the concept of a tourist destination has come over a long

process from traditional concepts of a destination to emerging concepts via contemporary concepts i.e. visitor and developer's perspectives.

A) The traditional concept

Destination is a place where people spend or prefer to spend their holidays. The basic elements of traditional concept are place (the location, infrastructure, superstructure and development of tourism regions), the people (demographics of tourists and hosts, motivation, tourism intensity in terms of number of visitors, destination service personnel etc.) and the holidays (i.e. tourist holiday activities)

B) Contemporary Concepts

- a) Visitor's Perspective- An area so chosen by people to spend their holidays and the resulting impacts of their activities. Here the scope of the destination concept has been widened in relation to the traditional notion of place. Here the notion of choice has been incorporated which implies availability of alternative places and activities. Also it takes into account the ensuing impacts of tourism. The typical elements of this concept are area (city, wilderness, isolated regions, seaside, mountains, lakes etc.), choice (individual motivations, holiday companions, alternative areas and activities) and impacts (economic, socio-cultural and environmental)
- b) Developer / Manager's Perspective - Managing the demand for tourism as well managing the impacts of tourism on destination. In this context, scope has been widened to include the management concept. Management of tourism demand on one side and management of tourism impacts on the destination on the other side. Concepts like carrying capacity, visitor expectation and resource protection helps in managing the fine balance between tourist expectations, tourism demand and consequences for the destination.

C) Emerging destination paradigms

Role of local community in tourist destination development, guiding and modifying tourist behaviours for minimisation of impacts, delivering unique destination experiences, synchronizing the public private partnerships and managing the conflicting interests of various stake holders are some of the emerging destination paradigms.

As we know that in case of tourism product it is not possible to shift the destination from one place to another like in case of other products. So during peak time of the day or peak season of the year destination may be over occupied and in lean season it may be under occupied. Tourist destinations evolve over a considerably long period of time, normally. However, there may be sudden emergence of destination as well, for example in case of any strange natural / religious/cultural happening at any erstwhile non-descript place can turn it into a tourist destination provided it has basic tourist infrastructure. Increase in the numbers of tourists make a destination healthy in terms of earning like hotels, taxies, travel agencies, guides etc., earn good money but it puts pressure on destination's socio-cultural and physical environment too. Mass tourism or mismanaged tourism may result in problems like mass construction, traffic jams, over charging of large number

of commodities, drug abuse, deforestation, host and guest conflicts etc among others. A planned destination can be the best for long term development where all stake holders get benefits for longer periods and guests enjoy the healthy tourism services at reasonable prices. For long run tourism growth, it is very important to develop a destination in well planned manner. Tourist destination planning therefore becomes an important dimension of overall tourism planning and management at a specific place. In the next sections we shall be discussing about the elements of a tourist destination and one very important concept i.e. destination life cycle. But before that, let us have a small quiz on what we have learnt so far.

Check Your Progress A

1) What is traditional concept of destination?

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2) What are emerging concepts in tourism destination?

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8.3 ELEMENTS OF TOURIST DESTINATION - 7A

As we have understood that tourist destination is not a single product identity, rather it is a complex mix of various elements, main of which can be described as 7A framework mentioned below:

- Attractions at the destination (Primary and Secondary)
- Accessibility of destination
- Amenities / Ancillary Services
- Activities
- Authenticity
- Ambience / Atmosphere
- Availability of Package

Let us have a detailed look at each of the destination elements.

Attraction

It is the most important element of a tourist destination, it is the basic or say prime element of a destination. Without any attraction, a tourist destination cannot exist or with loss of attraction, the existing tourist destination also ceases to exist. Attraction can be broadly categorised into two categories i.e. natural and manmade. Natural attraction further can be land based like hills, mountains, valleys etc., water based like sea, rivers, lakes etc. or air based like air based adventure activities. Manmade attractions can be of cultural, religious, aesthetic nature or events and other tourism specific attractions like amusement parks etc. Another categorisation of attraction at the destination can be Primary and Secondary attractions. Primary attraction is the core attraction at the destination like Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri in Agra are the primary attractions. Then, there are secondary attractions which generally are not the primary motivators for visiting tourists, however help in better experience at the destination. For example the local cuisines, handicrafts, sound and light shows etc. can be secondary attractions. So, we can safely say that the attraction is basis element of a tourist destination.

Accessibility / Transport

Accessibility means ease of reaching the destination. It refers to the transportation options available to reach the destination. Accessibility can be via road, rail, water or air. Destinations having multiple modes of accessibility available to them are more likely to perform better as against the destinations having single mode of accessibility available to them. Improved accessibility always helps a destination to perform better. Another dimension of transport is “local transport” at the destination itself. Sometimes, the local transport at the destination acts as a secondary attraction, for example rikshaw rides in narrow lanes of old Delhi or tonga rides in Agra, Bikaner or Camel rides in Jaisalmer or Yak rides in higher hills. So, the accessibility comes out as an integral part of tourist destination.

Amenities / Ancillary Services

Amenities/ancillary services refers to services and facilities which though not basic requirements but they play an important role in overall satisfaction of tourists visiting a particular destination. It includes the services like availability of local tour guides, local vendors speaking tourist’s language, banking and forex services, postal services, tourist police and other security services, shopping and souvenir availability, mobile network and internet connectivity services, availability of tourist information and facilitation centres, facilitation services at airports and railway stations, que management services at the monuments, availability of online tickets and reservation for monuments etc. These are the services, which plays an important role in deriving the overall satisfaction at the destination.

Activities

Availability of activities at the destination is an important element of tourist destination. Once at the destination, a tourist would like to have full value of his money by indulging and experiencing as many activities as possible. The destinations having broader span of activities available there are more likely to be popular among tourists. For example, out of two hill stations, the one having more activities available like adventure games, local tracks etc. is likely to be more popular among tourists.

Authenticity

Authenticity means the quality of being genuine or not being copied. In case of tourist destination this element means the tourist's destination experience being genuine and not a fake one or copied one. This is the element that can make or mar the tourist's over all tour experience. Each of the successful tourist destinations strives to have its own authenticity and genuineness. Tourist destination having element of authenticity in them, be it in terms of local cuisines, local handlooms, local handicrafts or even local customs/culture are always more popular among tourists.

Ambience / Atmosphere

Ambience / atmosphere at a destination is another important element of tourist destination. It encompasses not just the physical environment but also the socio-cultural and economic environment of the destination. While physical environment at the destination accounts for general aesthetics, absence of any kind of pollution etc, the socio-cultural environment is about the general perception of host population with regard to tourists and activities being undertaken by them. On economic front, though tourism brings benefits but mass tourism may also result in negative economic consequences like leakages and higher prices, with the later having implications for tourism also. So, favourable ambience at a destination helps growth of tourism.

Availability of Packages

Tour package means combination of various services in order to offer destination experience to the tourists. It covers all required services from the moment one thinks to undertake a tour until he actually took a trip and return back to his home. It is that one element that combines all other elements and offers to the end user i.e. tourists in a manner that can be purchased. It is of no use if the destination have all the elements but there are no available packages that can combine those elements in a marketable and sellable form.

8.4 DESTINATION LIFE CYCLE (TOURIST AREA LIFE CYCLE)

The notion of life cycle is borrowed from biological science wherein each living organism goes through specific phases during his existence, birth and death denoting the start and end respectively. Later, this concept has been applied in management and marketing realms, by way of tracking a product/service's journey in terms of sales and profitability figures. Life cycle concept for tourist destination was introduced by Butler (1980) to explain the progress of a tourist destination over time. This progress is estimated with the number of tourists coming to a destination and their view about the destination. At the very beginning the numbers of tourist to a particular destination are very low but with the change in the time it grows up and at the end the destination loses its importance and tourist try to find out some near substitute.

According to Butler (1980), Destination life cycle also known as Tourist Area Life Cycle i.e. TALC, a destination undergoes an evolutionary cycle of six stages as shown below.

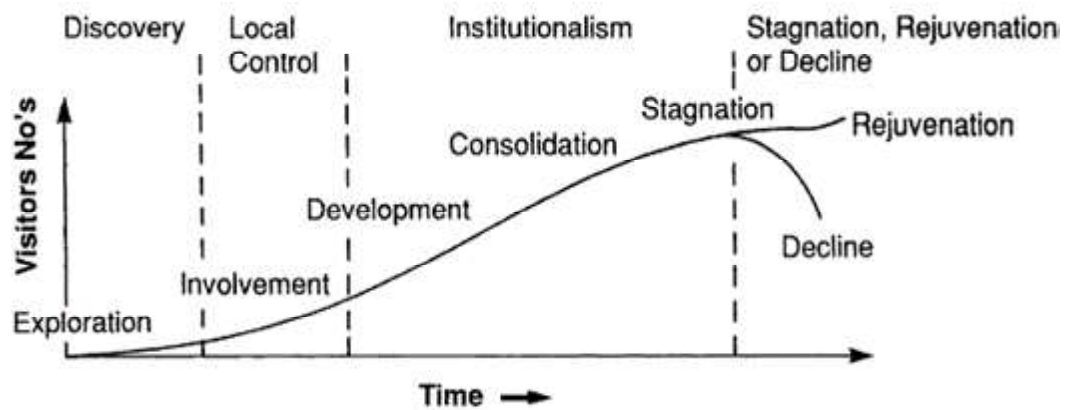


Fig. 8.2: Hypothetical tourist area life cycle. (Source: Butler, 1980)

These different stages are the part of any destination and are defined as follows:

8.4.1 Exploration Stage

In the exploration stage, the destination is remote with a shy or unknown look, with little or no touristic development. During the exploration stage, there are a few adventurous tourists visiting sites with few public facilities. Prior to the beginning of tourism development, a settlement, perhaps a village, which is nature or agricultural orientated is present. A very limited number of businesses exist and that too provided facilities are used and owned by locals. The visitors or tourists are primarily attracted to the destination because of some natural features like silent nature, no mass tourism, village life, pleasant people, honest life etc. At this point, the destination only attracts a very specific type of visitor which can be termed as ‘allocentrics’.

Tourists are controlled by lack of access and facilities. Because if there will be more tourist to that place all will not get the accommodation and ancillary facilities at a single time. There is lack of transport facilities at the beginning. There is only a road that connects the settlement with an urban centre and some smaller roads for access to that particular place. Very few numbers of adventure tourists (explorers, allocentrics, thinkers, writers,) discover the destination for making themselves comfortable with limited resources but adequate time to perform their desire of learning and exploration, making their arrangements without the help of any professional tourism service provider and having limited impacts on the area because of their less number and limited desire from that destination.

These tourists are welcomed by the locals as locals see them as a source of earning. In the starting explorers may stay in the accommodation of locals which they constructed for their own use, or in locals fields by pitching up tents, or in any inn because of non-availability of paid accommodation. Under the exploration stage, there are chances of non-availability of food and beverage services in newly explored destination but soon host communities learn about the benefits of tourism, and it leads to the development of that destination in terms of construction of accommodation, improvement in travel connectivity, improvement in the qualify food and beverage service and other travel related services.

8.4.2 Involvement Stage

Involvement means interaction between host and guests and exchange of ideas, money, services and many more. Under the involvement stage, visitors/ tourist from the congested citycentres are fascinated by the calm, and unspoiled landscape of the destination. They got the information about the new destination from those visitors who already visited the destination. Local entrepreneurs realise the economic significance of tourism and begin to provide facilities and services to tourists. Under this stage, people from different groups work together for the betterment of the tourism. With the increasing numbers of tourist, host community start to develop tourist facilitation centres like best category hotels, restaurants, entertainment centres etc. Under this stage, the host community find out tourists as an opportunity for money earning. Some people from host community built a good hotel in comparison to the local standard. It can be termed as pioneer hotel and its opening represent as an event of joy because it capitalised the potential of tourism into reality. New restaurants specially designed for the tourists developed around the tourist's destination. Some more jobs are created for the stakeholders and due to the demand of tourists leads to production of locally made articles, handicrafts, wines, clothing etc.,.

With the increase in the number of tourists a seasonal pattern emerges at the host destination where during a particular time of the year tourists comes and enjoys. At this stage host community demands for the better transportation and infrastructure facilities from their respective government (Public sector). From the success of one entrepreneur, other people start the business of tourism. It is a kind of neighbourhood effect where people influenced with the idea of other stakeholder which leads to increase in the number of accommodation, travel agencies, guides, commercial complexes, recreational activities and many others. As a result, the area of the destination expands to facilitate the tourist.

8.4.3 Development Stage

At the stage of development the number of tourists increases and at peak periods it is more than the size of the local population. Many locals appear to bear tourism unwanted effects because of its substantial economic benefits. The increase in tourist arrivals is helped by the improvement of accessibility to the resort through the extension of the road network. Now in this stage, the work of tourism trade is not limited up to the hands of locals but it passes up to the national and international chains. Now, the destination becomes well known place among the tourists and most of its booking are done online. All these agencies are well known for providing high end quality services to the clients at any time of the day or year. Advertising of many available tourist products are on its peak as most of the stakeholders sell the same kind of product or with little bit difference. For stakeholders it is more profitable to sell their land for the construction of hotels, home stays, camping sites, recreation centres than doing their traditional activities like agriculture. Many outside agencies come to the destination for land, hotel, restaurant or any other infrastructure related to tourists use. Host community focuses on the construction at mass level for getting the monetary benefits from tourists. The number of workers increases and more residences are constructed to accommodate the imported workforce. Local agricultural and cattle production cannot provide the quantity and perhaps the quality of food demanded by enterprises and many food item are imported. As a result many outsiders

came into the business of food and beverage and provide high end quality services to the tourists. With the increase of tourist arrivals, most traditional houses are converted for business purposes. At this stage, and the earlier stage of involvement, community initiatives for tourism and sustainable development strategies are most appropriate in order to guide the destination for the future development.

8.4.4 Consolidation Stage

With the increase in the number of tourists now destination reaches in the stage of consolidation. In this stage, one can see huge change in the destination. Stakeholders and other outsiders continue their infrastructure development work because day-by-day the number of tourist's arrival increases. Due to the mass construction, availability of open space for the tourist starts shrinking day by day. Locals who are earning good amount from tourism try to carry on the activities at its regular speed. Local efforts are made to extend the visitor season and market area.

They do large scale advertisement of their destination through various associations like hotel association, taxi operator association, guide association etc. Now the destination becomes a full fledge known destination among the tourists. With huge number of tourist arrival, many new accommodation of international standard are established at the destination. There may be conflict between traditional architecture and newly adopted architecture. With the increase in the number of tourists the native of that region cannot get enough space for their day to day activities. The road network expands further in order to provide access to the accommodation establishments, businesses and residences. A major part of the local economy is tied to tourism, but native residents may find themselves excluded from major attractions. The rate of increase in the number of visitors declines, though total numbers are still on the rise and exceeds permanent residents during the peak season or during the year too. As a result of oversupply of hotel rooms and other tourist facilities, prices fall and the market cannot generate as much money as expected. The community perceives some negative effects and anti-tourist sentiment may emerge. The host community which is earning good money from tourism start to depends on tourism business only. There may be loss of tradition business because of tourism activities like loss of agriculture or horticulture yield, shifting of business from traditional to tourism, etc. There are chances that there may be lack of formal education too because host community earning good money from tourism hence no one want to jump in any other business or job where some special educational skills are required.

In consolidation stage some good part of the destination are managed by the foreign tour operators only. In this stage almost all natives of the destination are engaged in any kind of tourist activity.

8.4.5 Stagnation Stage

Stagnation stage means a very little chance of future development of the destination. When any destination reaches at this stage, the tourism landscape becomes overriding and little scope is available for further expansion. The destination has become the centre of mass tourism and its capacity levels have reached or exceeded to the extent that it loses the local original quality that made it attractive in the first stage.

Tourism related developments such as (accommodation, food and beverage, travel agency operation, money exchange counters, entertainment centres, shopping complexes, etc. at the destination and the nearby areas, as well as the increasing tourist activities have led to the degradation of the destination. Although the destination now has a well-established image among the tourists but it is no longer in fashion and overall destination turnover is high. Repeat visits (non active, non adventurer) tourists dominate, but generally major promotional and developmental efforts are needed to maintain the number of visits. Now the destination becomes a centre of non activities only as there is no upgradation in the tourists activities and there are very few chances of newer developments. Now amenities decline in value and local ownership of tourist facilities increases as outsiders which are in business start quitting and jump to new destinations.

8.4.6 Decline Stage

If the tourist market continues to diminish and the destination is not able to compete with newer destinations, through the development of an artificial attractions which may result in decline. In this stage, the destination loses its charm and tourists find out some newer destination of same choice. Now, the destination needs innovative ideas for growth. Development of new tourist related activities can occur in this stage and tourists may feel fed up with already existed system. Now, destination is visited by very few tourists and that too on weekends or on some special occasions only. There are chances of two more events in the declining stage and these are:

- A) **Stagnation (in declining stage)** - Under this situation, the business of the area will be stand still for long term but the chances of this situation or stage is very less because each destination has a life and with the passage of time it will lose. So there is very less chances for the long term stagnation stage in any destination. But if the destination works on strict action plan like provision of adequate services to the tourists at reasonable rate, adopting purely traditional architecture (which is unique in entire region), limiting the number of arrival of tourist during the involvement and consolidation stage (like Bhutan Model of Tourism) this stagnation in declining stage can be stopped.
- B) **Rejuvenation (in declining stage)**- Under this stage, there are chances of reconstruction of the destination by adopting the new ideas and doing it by best available sustainable methods.

But the chances are slightly low in comparison to stagnation stage. At the time of stagnation, any destination can do many practices like developing new tourism product, developing nearby area (but main centre must be the same), sustainable tourism activities for the long run growth of destination and many other.

- C) **Declining (in declining stage)**- Now if the destination has no option to retain the flow of the clients, the destination declines. Tourists walk away to a new destination and the present destination which is in declining stage can be visited weekly or very few tourists. Now the stake holders which are already engaged with the tourism business either move to new destination (whose chances are very less) or they will come back to their traditional business.

But this model of destination development by Butler is not applicable or appropriate for each destination as Choy (1992) suggested that it is better to treat each destination individually. Each destination has its own charm, it is a unique entity, and if authorities decide to control development and limit the construction of tourist facilities before the destination reaches the stagnation stage, the destination can live for longer time.

8.5 TOURISTS DESTINATION LIFE CYCLE IMPLICATIONS

Some studies examined the physical and psychological factors that affect the life cycle and the eventual decline of the destination. Carrying capacity, location, tourist base, and destination management were cited as important factors related to decline. Carrying capacity means the available area of any destination for operating tourism activities; location means the distance of host destination from big city centre from where tourist will come and destination management means how the host community manages the destination so that the revenue till long run can be managed from it. The effect of cultural patterns on the life cycle of a destination is also important to understand during the destination management. Carrying capacity and government policy were found to have an impact on the life cycle of a destination. It means that if at the time of first stage of destination life cycle a strong government policy related to the construction of tourism infrastructure, carrying capacity, rates of related commodities will be managed then these steps can ensure the long run of the destination.

The debate on the issue of long term utility of any tourists destination is there in tourism industry. Haywood (1986) made a detailed study to find out how long run sustainability of any destination can be achieved. Cooper and Jackson (1989) suggested three basic use of destination life cycle approach to tourism studies as:

- A) As conceptual framework.
- B) As a tool for forecasting.
- C) As a guide to strategic planning and development.

These are the basis of development process of any destination or resort of tourist's importance. These all must be planned in well manner so that high end profitability of the destination can be ensured.

8.5.1 Conceptual Framework

The life cycle provides a useful and well acceptable framework for the understanding of the dynamics of destination evolution. In the early stage of the development, the destination is adopted by more adventure tourists which is replaced by the laggards or those which are more concerned about their comfort as destination passes through future stages of development. Acceptance of the destination depends upon certain element like market structure, the competition in the present market, pricing policy, the number of the tourists visiting the destination and the location of the destination.

With the change in the time and increase in the number of the tourists the destination become more and more popular and the centre of mass tourists too. Destination life cycle approach is good conceptual framework to describe relationship between market and product.

8.5.2 Forecasting

Forecasting is based on certain strict assumption like confine about the long run growth of the destination, homogeneity of the customers and gives no explicit consideration of the competition. For ensuring the success of forecasts, a destination needs the long run data of the tourists or customers. In the case of domestic tourists the data is mostly unreliable. There are some measures to find out the reliable data like to check the official website of concern department for the arrival of the tourists, checking of hotel register of the concern area for the number of tourists, but these are not reasonable for comprehensive work on any destination life cycle.

8.5.3 Strategic Planning

Destination life cycle have the utility in strategic planning. All tourism destinations have the distribution of share among all stake holders, profitability, competition and many marketing option based on personal and institutional efforts. For the long run growth of the destination a different marketing mix and strategic option will be there at different stages of the life cycle. There is a process of strategic Planning which includes the following steps:

A) Defining the Mission Statement

Mission statement means that how the tourism destination is run and managed. Mostly this part is done by the official government bodies of the tourist destination because there are many private entrepreneurs who work at the destination. There are hoteliers, travel agency operators, restaurants operators, guides and many others. Hence the official public bodies of the destination coordinate all the sector of tourism industry. These mission statements are invisible hand which guides that how a destination can be planned.

B) Business Portfolio Analysis

Based on the mission statement each segment of the tourism industry decides about that what kind of tourism product will receive less or more emphasis. Different products are available at a tourist destination and which product is good for long run is offered to the tourist. The advantages of many opportunities are known as the strength of tourist destination. This analysis make destination more attractive among the tourists and it make a positive change in the longer stay of the tourists at the destination.

C) Growth Strategies

Strategic planning tries to determine the future markets and product of any destination. Based on the available data of tourist arrival the future possibilities can be traced. There are a number of indicators about the growth of the destination like growing numbers of tourists, expenditure per head, length of the stay, visitor's profile, and ratio of repeat tourists and growth of travel agency operation. Based upon the competition and available tourism resources different type of growth can be applied.

Check Your Progress B

1) What do you understand by Mission Statement?

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2) What is forecasting?

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8.6 LET US SUM UP

Destination life cycle tells about the different phases or stages of any destination. Destination is a place where tourist visit for leisure, learning, adventure, relaxation, or any other activity related to tourism Life cycle of any product represents the different stages of any product. According to Butler (1980), under destination life cycle, an area undergo an evolutionary cycle of six stages. These stages are exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation and decline. Mostly all tourists' destinations passes through all these mentioned stages. During exploration a new tourist's destination emerges on the tourism map of any region; during involvement stage many resident of that destination starts tourists related avenues for money earning; during development stage many tourist visit the destination and sometimes these are more than the host population too; during consolidation stage, the arriving number of tourists reaches very high and very less area is there for future development, in consolidation stage the destination starts to loose its charm as there is no fascination in the destination for tourists and finally in declining stage the number of tourists to the destination becomes very less because tourist shifted to any other destination of their choice. Tourist's destination life cycle find out the long term profitability of any destination by using it as a conceptual framework, as a tool for forecasting and as a guide to strategic planning and development.

8.7 KEY WORDS

Destination : Destination is a place where tourist comes for the purpose of tourism.

Product life cycle : It represents the different phases of any product which can be a normal product or tourism product.

Destination life cycle : There are six stages of any tourism destination; there are exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation and decline.

8.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress - A

- 1) See Section 8.2 (A)
- 2) See Section 8.2 (C)

Check Your Progress B

- 1) See Sub-section 8.5.3(A)
- 2) See Sub-section 8.5.2

8.9 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

- 1) What do you understand by a tourism destination?
- 2) What is Destination life cycle?
- 3) Discuss the main stages of a Destination Life Cycle?
- 4) Write short note on the following:-
 - A) Exploration Stage
 - B) Declining Stage
 - C) Forecasting
 - D) Consolidation Stage
 - E) Business Portfolio