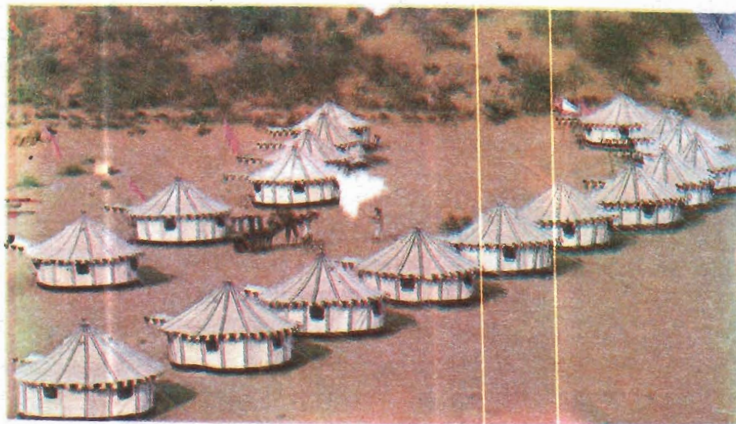

UNIT 9 TOURIST ACCOMMODATION

Structure

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9.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we shall attempt a general survey of the nature of tourist accommodation. It is intended that after reading this Unit you will:

- have a clear idea of the main factors that must be considered when viewing aspects of tourist accommodation,
- be able to have a perspective on tourist accommodation in general in the hospitality industry,
- know about the structure and nature of different types of accommodation,
- learn about various types of accommodation needs of tourists, and
- learn about the ecological and environmental considerations in developing different types of accommodations.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The business of setting up, operating and promoting tourist accommodation facilities is a complex affair. It involves a relationship between “host” cultures and “guest” cultures, ecological and environmental considerations and a fine balance between factors pertaining to leisure and those pertaining to efficiency. These factors are, of course, in addition to the usual commercial aspects of the business.

In a world that is increasingly being reduced to a “global village” the tourist as a consumer is also conscious of the need to be sensitive to the needs and demands of the “host” cultures they are visiting. It should be recognized that in this context there is a healthy tension that can develop between the interests of the host culture, the interests of the tourists and the interests of the commercial organizations such as hoteliers, tour operators and other agencies.

It is not possible in this Unit to explore all issues in detail in addition to various issues involved such as marketing, operational and financial in the accommodation sector. However, a fundamental aim of the Unit is to address these issues and bring it to the forefront as a basic ingredient in the success of the tourist oriented hospitality product.

9.2 VARIOUS TYPES OF ACCOMMODATION

It may be asked why we refer to “tourist accommodation”, when in fact we are talking about hotels. On the face of it this is true, but the word “hotel” has a very defined sense and conjures images of a multi-storied building with anywhere from 100 to 600 rooms. In fact, the tourist avails of such accommodation also, but the kinds of tourists are so varied and the nature of tourist activity is such that the facilities that are used by tourists have to be described in more specific terms.

For example, there are some tourists who wish to travel on a very small budget; they would probably stay at homes of friends in the larger city, and once they go to a more remote place, let us say Goa, they would look for a guest house where they would want a clear bed and toilet facilities at the very most. In addition they may also want to have breakfast there. Alternately, there are very rich tourists who will stay in the Five Star Deluxe category of hotels in the large city and seek to stay in very exclusive resorts on a remote beach in Goa. A quick survey of the destinations tells us that both these categories of facilities are available to the guest. This is applicable to both domestic as well as foreign tourists.

It is important, therefore, that a tourism professional be aware of all categories of accommodation, at least in broad terms, and be able to think clearly about which ones they may wish to identify for their client/guest.

Let us briefly consider each of the various categories of accommodation:

i) Five Star Deluxe Hotels

These are usually to be found in the metropolitan city areas and have anywhere between 200 to 800 rooms. Some hotels in this category have over a thousand rooms in their inventory. They are categorized by certain international standards which include a given number of restaurants, a particular size of lobby, business centre facilities, a swimming pool etc., including, of course, very strict standards of quality control. These hotels are usually used primarily by the business executive (often 90 per cent of the customers are business men and women) and the very upscale tourists.

There are also other star categories like three star, one star etc. However, categorisation into stars is **not mandatory** in India. Hotels offer themselves for categorisation which is based on certain criteria and inspection by officials.

ii) First Class Hotels

These are a step down from the above category, but contain most of the facilities that are provided in the "Five Star Deluxe" hotels. These are also located usually in the large metropolitan cities and some mid-sized cities as well. These hotels are also used by a combination of business executives and tourists.

iii) Non-Star Hotels

At every tourist destination you come across many small hotels who don't come under classified categories. Yet many tourists stay there as per their budget adjustments. For example at Kovalam beach there is the ITDC Ashoka group hotel. But many tourists cannot afford it and they stay in small staying places near the beach. Such examples are abundant at every destination be it a hill station or a pilgrimage centre.

iv) Resorts and Lodges

These are meant almost exclusively for the tourists and more often are found in so-called "off the beaten track" destinations. In some countries, where the economic dependence on tourism is very great, such accommodation can also be found in the cities or just outside the cities. Thus, in Kenya for example, one can find very elaborate lodges even in Nairobi, the capital city where most tourists enter the country.

The Resorts and Lodges usually have certain features such as elaborate swimming pools, a balcony or patio overlooking each room and entertainment facilities.

In India we have Beach resorts, Hill resorts and Wild Life resorts. These resort hotels commonly cater to tourists of different tastes and budgets. Whether luxury or low budget resorts they primarily offer a stay in the natural surroundings. These resorts are generally seasonal.

v) Tented Camps

While most of the types of accommodation discussed so far involve solid structures, a type that is fast gaining popularity around the world is the tented camp variety. These involve relatively low investment. These are ecologically very friendly in that they do not threaten to spoil the

landscape too much and can be set up seasonally to reduce expenditure by not having to spend too much on the upkeep of the place when the tourist season is over.

Tented camps are usually set up in very remote places such as near a game park or reserve (some countries allow such camps even within the game reserve) and they have anywhere from 10 to 80 rooms. Their bathrooms are either attached or set up separately, depending on the level of luxury that is intended to be provided. In addition to game parks, which are associated with wildlife viewing and safaris, tour operators have set up tented camps in conjunction with other activities such as fishing tours, white-water rafting tours and canoeing.

Another variation of the tented camp is the mobile tented camps which are used when trekking in various parts of the world.

vi) Heritage Hotels

Tourists visiting a historical city are very fond of historical palaces. Often they dream of staying in the same way and style as that of Rajas. Keeping in view this tourist interest the Government of India's Tourism Department started encouraging Heritage Hotels. By providing financial incentives to the owners of forts, palaces and havelis the Tourism Department encourages the owners to convert their properties into Heritage Hotels. Responding to this scheme Heritage Hotels have come up in many areas.

vii) Guest Houses

The guest house is to be found in cities, towns and even remote destinations. Usually those who use these facilities are individuals who travel on their own, spend relatively longer periods of time in a particular destination, wish to get to know the host culture intimately and want their expenditure to be modest. Therefore, they may have only one or two meals a day and spend the rest of the time outside the guest house. More often than not, the guest house is run by a family and although they may do so in a very efficient manner, the operations are not what might be called "professionally" managed and the tourist is often living, literally, as a "guest" of a family. The House Boat accommodation is a unique example of this category.

Recently in different tourist places the system of **paying guest accommodation** is gaining much popularity. This has two basic purposes:

- Firstly tourists coming from outside India or from various regions of India are generally fond of local etiquette, household, culture and home made food. Compared to staying in hotels which provide typical hotel culture, more or less same everywhere, staying with a local family at tourist places is both economical and informative for knowing the local people and their culture.
- Secondly, paying guest accommodation provides the local people with a source of earning without any investment as well as the opportunity to learn different cultures.

viii) Alternative Accommodation

While the above are some of the broad categories into which the types of accommodation are divided, there are a whole range of other types of accommodation such as the small boarding houses which are converted into so-called "guest houses", the YMCA and YWCA facilities, lodges managed by tourism departments and "tourist camps." Some of these could also be termed the unorganized sector of the hospitality industry and should be kept in mind when a professional in the tourism industry is informing his or her potential customer of the options available for accommodation purposes. One can also recommend for short or overnight stay the rest rooms of the railways or **dharamshalas**.

In concluding this Section it is important to keep in mind that generally speaking the tourist spends approximately 40 per cent of his funds on room and board. Thus it is imperative that any advice, suggestion or recommendation that is given in this regard must be carefully considered and discussed in great detail. The burden of accomplishing this rests with the tourism professional and not necessarily with the customer, who is not always aware of the options available at a given destination.

It goes without saying that each of the above types of accommodation has its own advantages and disadvantages. But what is **different** about the **tourist accommodation** is that it must

incorporate specialized activities (unique recreational and educational) into its architectural design. Similarly, innovative meal plans (often quite elaborate) are also a customers need that must be taken into account. In any attempt to promote them the tourism professional should carefully consider them, understand the perspective of the potential customer and promote the correct category accordingly. Similarly, if each specific category is examined in detail one will discover that there are various price ranges in each and this too should be kept in mind when promoting the accommodation portion of the tour to the prospective customer.

Always keep yourself **updated about hotel tariffs and types of accommodation** at a destination. This helps in **planning package tours** also.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) What is the basis of classifying hotels?
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- 2) What a tourist professional should keep in mind in deciding about accommodation?
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- 3) Is the system of paying guest accommodation beneficial for the tourism industry?
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9.3 SOME PRINCIPAL CONSIDERATIONS

As has been already pointed out in the Introduction, the business of promoting tourist accommodation is a very complex affair which requires the tourism professional to be aware of several factors at once including:

- host/guest culture relations,
- ecological/environmental considerations, and
- leisure activity.

Given the above, the best way to consider the factors that are involved in any assessment of tourist accommodation is to pretend as if you are “building” a tourist oriented hotel and look at the main commercial aspects of this exercise while taking into account factors such as those mentioned above. This involves asking the correct questions at the time of building the accommodation and, by extension, also when you are promoting it.

It should be understood that the terms we have used to discuss the main considerations in tourist accommodation (marketing, operations and financials) do not pertain to the actual running of a hotel or resort; this is a very specialized and detailed task. Rather, the terms in our context have to do with attempting to give you a comprehensive understanding of what is needed in a hotel or resort that functions well in the current tourism scenario.

9.3.1 Marketing

Someone once defined marketing quite briefly as “knowing what the customer wants”. Simple as this may sound, it assumes a clear understanding of the complexity of the tourists needs and, most importantly, the ability of your organisation to deliver what is promised. Thus, like in the case of any other product, it is critical that there is substantial marketing input at the product planning stages of tourist accommodation, precisely because of the complexity of tourist behaviour and needs.

In addition to the above, in today’s world of tourism it is not just whether you have the right customer, the right location, the right package and the right price. The tourism professional is also required to take into consideration whether the particular accommodation being promoted is **ecologically** and **environmentally** sound.

We will enter into a discussion of this as we consider a case study in Section 9.6 of this Unit, but for the moment it should be mentioned that ecological and environmental “correctness”, while important for any segment of tourist accommodations, becomes more important where its impact is increased. And the impact increases, it should be pointed out, whenever the location is remote or exotic. The same would apply for host/guest culture relations. By definition, a place that is remote or “exotic” is the ultimate tourist destination.

Quite logically, “what the customer wants” is determined by who the customer is, and it would not be wrong to say that the more the customer tends to spend, the more aware he or she is of services and at times social concerns. Therefore, as a rough barometer, it would be accurate to say that the more a customer is willing to pay, the more questions he or she is apt to ask. These could be about the precautions being taken by you to minimise social and ecological damage caused by their activities or related to having all luxury without any concerns. Tourism professionals should therefore make this an integral part of their marketing strategy to convincingly answer the queries in addition to other commercial considerations. You will read in detail about marketing in Units 20 and 21.

9.3.2 Further Considerations (Operational)

We have already made passing mention of several aspects of the operations of a tourist accommodation. It would be helpful to briefly summarize these by way of a review and then discuss some other operational features of such organizations:

- a) **Food & Beverage (F & B):** This, of course, is a feature of any hospitality industry product. However in the case of tourist hotels and resorts the F & B departments need to be considerably more flexible; at times, for example, the tourist may wish not to have lunch in the resort, but take a picnic lunch instead. In such instances it is important that this is anticipated and the quality of service is enhanced. Similarly, the eating habits of people on holiday tend to be different than that of business executives.
- b) **Activities:** All our discussions so far have implied that the tourist is “activity” oriented. Thus tourist accommodation units need to be properly equipped to suit the needs of the anticipated clientele. It should be noted that very often a tourist resort, tented camp or hotel has a Director of Activities. This spells out the importance of this role along with time for **entertainment**.
- c) **Housekeeping:** Again this is a department that is common to all categories of the hospitality industry, but there is, in the instance of the smaller properties and resorts, an element of uncertainty that the professional must be prepared to cope with and not adopt a very hard and fast rule. An example of one such is when a camp with only twenty rooms is full and you are confronted with three or four extra guests as part of larger group. In such an instance the manager is called upon to be more of a host than a “manager” in conventional sense of that word.

In fact the management of smaller resorts and hotels need to be versatile. This “flexibility” might be the motto of a good resort when it comes to its operations.

9.4 WHO USES TOURIST ACCOMMODATION

There are different kinds of tourists. Therefore, it stands to reason that a tourist resort must cater to each category of tourist. It will, of course, be impossible for us to discuss each of the myriad of categories of tourists individually at this time (see Block 1). However, let us look at the broad categories of tourists in the organized sector of the market and see how each would be different and how they are handled by the particular tourist resort-hotel. Let us begin by first identifying the various categories of tourists who use a tourist resort:

- i) **The Frequent Individual Traveller or FIT**, is the category of tourists who make their own customized itineraries with the help of a tour operator or travel agent. They travel either alone or in groups of up to six individuals. These customers often wish to be given personalized treatment. Along these lines they are more demanding as they often design their itinerary as they go along and do not wish to be handed a “package” that is difficult or expensive to change.
- ii) Then there are the **Group Inclusive Travellers or GIT**. This category of tourists often purchase a package tour and can range from ten to over one hundred in number. On the average, however, they would number 30 or so passengers, although that too depends on the destination and the product.

9.5 HOW TO GET INFORMATION

It is necessary for a tourism professional to obtain necessary information about accommodation available at a destination. But how to get it? Well it is not a difficult thing today. The most informative source is the **Hotel and Restaurants Guide** published every year by the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI). It contains information regarding different type of hotels, tariffs, rooms available, address, telephone number and other facilities available. Similarly all promotional brochures of tourism departments list the types of accommodation available at a destination (see illustration). All you have to do is to walk into a Tourism Department Office to get it. Often you read advertisements in the newspapers/magazines given by hotels and these also keep you updated. Besides most of the big hotels carry their own promotional campaigns. You should also keep information about the retiring room facilities at railway stations as many tourists use them for temporary stays particularly those who are always on the move.

Another aspect is to get advance booking done for the individual/group or else the tourist may land in difficulties. For example in December, 1993 the Goa Tourism Department was issuing press releases to the effect that those who don't have a booking in advance must not come to Goa.

9.6 A PROPOSAL FOR A CAMP RESORT

Let us, as a case study mention an accommodation proposal for your benefit. It is important to remember that Ladakh as a destination is popular among well travelled customers who are keen to visit any “off-the-beaten-track” destination. In other words, they have travelled to many other parts of the world and have chosen Ladakh for its exotic value. Another market segment that can be identified in Ladakh is that of the “backpacker” whose itinerary is not pre-determined and whose spending power is limited. The promoters of the project under review intend to target the well travelled, discerning client.

It is planned that our primary market will be the individual traveller and some select groups. It is intended that the project will consist of 20 huts built along traditional Ladakh style. The rooms will be approximately 15' × 15' in size, 9' in height. The huts will be placed in an unobtrusive manner, each hut having a substantial view from its window and verandah area.

The interior of the hut will be fully modernized and contain a minimum of two twin beds, two rugs, two bedside tables, a dressing table, two bedside lamps and a closet to hang clothes. The bathrooms will have a sink, shower and bathtub and towel racks.

Central to the Camp-Resort will be a “golghar” which will serve as a central dining hut and activities area. The golghar will consist of three general area, viz. a central dining room with fireplace, a recreational area where groups can lounge, play games or attend a lecture, and a reading room area which will house a selection of books. The public area will be decorated with rare Ladakh and Tibetan artifacts. In this way the property will have some unique facilities that are thus far not available in Ladakh. Part of the inventory of the property will also be slide projector and screen which will assist in the lectures and talks that the management of the property wish to actualize through invitations to guest speakers and performers.

The ancillary facilities will consist of a kitchen, a pantry/storage area, an office room and staff quarters. The property will also grow its own vegetables and, should it prove to be profitable, also start a small poultry farm. In this way, it is intended that the project be fully self-sufficient and cater for its immediate needs on its own.

You will appreciate that the proposal has been made keeping in view the specific local style etc. Similar proposals can be made for different areas.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Why does a tourist professional keep in mind environmental consideration for accommodation?

- 2) What is the relationship between accommodation and types of tourists?

- 3) From your reading of the proposal of the ‘camp resort’, do you think it addresses the ecological, marketing and operational considerations in the setting up? Please explain.

9.7 LET US SUM UP

After studying this Unit, it should now be clear to you that under no circumstances “tourist accommodation” is a simplistic exercise. Whether you are involved in building it or in promoting it, it is in some ways a more complex issue to address.

Understanding the existing market and the nature of tourist demand is most essential. Ecological, environmental and social considerations also should be important determinants in this exercise. Knowledge of different types of accommodation and the specific characteristics of each category of accommodation along with information of booking should always be in the finger tips of a tourist professional. As far as the operations of such a property are concerned, one needs to juggle efficiency with varied demands and cater to customers who have paid a large variety in their tariffs depending on whether they have travelled as a group or as individual.

9.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

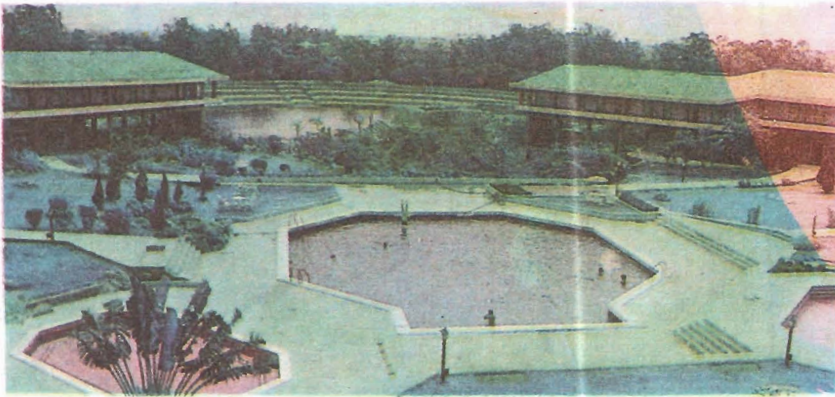
- 1) Different facilities provided by the hotels. See Sec. 9.2.
- 2) Budget, time and taste of the tourists. See Sec. 9.2.
- 3) You will find your answer on the discussion on paying guest accommodation in Sec. 9.2.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sub-sec. 9.3.1.
- 2) See Sec. 9.4.
- 3) See Sec. 9.6.



House boat



Teurist Accomodation, Haryana



Railway Guest House



Tourist accommodation, Leh



Accommodation at a Hill Resort

