Paper 11: Special Interest Tourism

Module 09: Resources for Special Interest Tourism Development
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEMS</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION OF MODULE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject Name</td>
<td>Tourism and Hospitality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper Name</td>
<td>Special Interest Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module Title</td>
<td>Resources for Special Interest Tourism Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module Id</td>
<td>Module no-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Requisites</td>
<td>Basic knowledge about Tourism Products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>To study the meaning and concept of Special Interest Tourism Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keywords</td>
<td>Niche markets, Grand Tour, Specialized tourism Mass Tourism, Appeal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1. Learning Outcome
2. Introduction
3. The history of Special Interest Tourism
   3.1 Types of Special Interest Tourism
   3.2 Classification.
   3.3 Factors helpful for growth of Special Interest Tourism
   3.4 Internet & TV Influences in Special Interest Tourism Growth
   3.5 Scope of Special Interest Tourism
4. Developing Special Interest Tourism
   4.1 Understanding Market
   4.2 Market Segmentation
     a. Travel Motivation
     b. Product Differentiation
5. Developing Special Interest Tourism Product
   5.1 Marketing Challenges
   5.2 Understanding Management Needs
   5.3 latest Trends
6. Summary
QUADRANT-I

1. Learning Objectives
After completing this module students will be able to:
   i. Understand the concept of Special Interest Tourism
   ii. Various types of Special Interest Tourism
   iii. Understand the factors responsible for the growth of Special Interest Tourism
   iv. Devolve a framework for designing SIT as a tourism product

Resources for Special Interest Tourism Development

2. Introduction
Special Interest Tourism (SIT) involves travelling with the primary motive to enjoying or practicing special interest or special activity. Generally speaking, the special interest tourists exercise the same profession or have a common hobby or interest. This can include unusual hobbies, activities, themes or destinations, which tend to attract niche markets. Special Interest Tourism attracts a smaller population of highly dedicated people towards a particular interest. These interests may include unusual hobbies or activities which are undertaken by only few people.

The term ‘special interest tourism (SIT)’ refers to those forms of tourism which focus on activities which attract a small number of highly dedicated visitors, which may be relatively unusual hobbies or activities practiced by only a few people. Douglas et al. (2001: 3) describes special interest tourism as an alternative to mass tourism. They suggest that it is ‘the provision of customized leisure and recreational experiences driven by the specific expressed interests of individuals and groups. A special interest tourist engages in the activities of personal interest.

Special interest tourism (SIT) has become an important part of present tourism industry. The present tourist is more interested, motivated and confident about travelling to new places around the world where they will find something different rather than traditional mass tourism. It can be said that Special interest tourism (SIT) allows tourists to choose holidays of their individual and personal needs, replacing the traditional mass tourism.
According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, special interest tourism can be defined as the specialized tourism that involved individual or group tours by those people who wishes to develop their given interests or visit sites and places that has a relation or connection with their specific interest or subject.

Recently, SIT has become more popular as it satisfies the specific needs or interests of individuals or groups.

3. The historical development of special interest tourism.

The development history of Special interest tourism dates back to the earliest forms of tourism. Earlier in the tourism industry, there were specific reasons why the tourists travelled viz. religious, special events, cultural, or for trading purposes. In Medieval Times, the pilgrims and missionaries became the most active travelers, where pilgrims travelled to the sacred places such as Haridwar, Shaktipeeths, Kailash Mansarover Yatra, Char-Dham, Amritsar, Ajmer, Jerusalem, and Mecca etc as per their religious convictions. Gradually, tourism grew over the centuries and spread all over the world. The new part of tourism, known as Grand Tour, was developed in the early 17th century. The young men from rich families started travelling across Europe to complete their education requirements. The tours organized by Thomas Cook consisted of: accommodation, travel tickets, timetables, attractions, travel guides and currency exchange. Initially these tours were meant for the specific needs of the tourists and catered more to the mass market with the growth of the company. Thomas Cook started offering tours within UK and soon moved to Europe.

With railways coming into existence in 19th century, the development of tourism industry was boosted up. Travel through railways became cheaper, easier and safer, and all classes of society could travel. Leisure travel was introduced to the middle class by the industrial revolution, because they had more time and money to travel. The development of large and faster aircrafts in the post war period contributed to the growth of the mass tourism. Tourism was made accessible for a large portion of society by the increase in disposable income and they can afford to take more than one holiday per year.
The social factor behind the growth of tourism worldwide is linked with the new attitude of the world about travel and leisure. People are more interested about new destinations, trying to explore something unusual and unexplored. The increase in number of self dependent women has also contributed to the tourism. Changing demographics, such as aging population, grown up children have made a big impact on the SIT market.

3.1 Types of Special Interest tourism:
Special interest tourism is comprised of the different special interest travel forms which have become known as niche markets over the years and gained popularity among the actors of the tourism industry. These main categories along with a short description for some of them are as follows:

Adventures tourism: As per travel-industry-dictionary, adventure tourism is “recreational travel undertaken to remote or exotic destinations for the purpose of exploration or engaging in a variety of rugged activities”. These are the programs and activities with an implication of challenge, expeditions full of surprises, involving daring journeys and the
unexpected. Climbing, caving, jeep safaris, rappelling, trekking are examples of adventure tourism.

**Agri-tourism (also known as agro-tourism or farm-based tourism):** This involves the agriculture related activities such as fruit-picking, cultivation. Tourists may also go on tours of working farms or on established tourist routes such as brandy or wine routes and may visit factories that process farm produce and can stay overnight there.

**Ancestry tourism:** In such type of tourism activities the tourists travel to those destinations where they can learn more about their ancestors and possibly trace them.

**Avitourism (or birding tourism):** The tourists who are bird lovers and wanted to watch them, travel to the destination where they can do bird watching.

**Cultural Tourism:** “Cultural tourism is a genre of special interest tourism based on the search for and participation in new and deep cultural experiences, whether aesthetic, intellectual, emotional, or psychological” (Stebbins, 1996, p. 948).

**Cinematic Tourism:** People watch beautiful destinations in cinema, movies, reality shows etc and get motivated to travel to these destinations.

**Dark Tourism:** Dark tourism encompasses the travel to the sites which are in some way connected to death, suffering, battle or disaster.

**Ecotourism:** According to The International Ecotourism Society (1990) ecotourism is “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people”.
The tourists are interested in travelling to such destinations which are environmentally and culturally rich, well conserved, seldom frequented, unexplored and places where one can still enjoy the luxury of tranquility.

**Food tourism (or Gastronomy tourism):** The tourists who are food lovers travel to a destination to experience cuisine of that place. For such tourists the main motivation or attraction for travel is food.

**Gambling tourism:** The tourists who are interested in gambling visit casino destinations and spend the holiday in playing gambling activities in the cities with many casinos.

**Lighthouse tourism:** The tourists visit and sometimes stay in lighthouses that provide accommodation for tourists.

**Photographic tourism:** Tourists visit natural and cultural attractions to take photographs and to satisfy their interests.

**Rural Tourism:** According to Euro stat (1998) rural tourism “regards the activities of a person travelling and staying in rural areas (without mass tourism) other than those of their usual environment for less than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes (excluding the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the placed visited) ”. This includes home stays so that tourists can experience rural life and food.
**Religious tourism:** It is that form of tourism where groups of people or individuals travel to the religious and sacred places.

**Spa tourism:** In this form of tourism, tourists visit mineral or hot water springs. This is a type of niche tourism which is not bound to any season. It is a year-round activity.

**Wedding tourism:** This type of tourism involves honeymooners and couples wishing to have their wedding ceremonies at their favorite places which may be far flung. Wedding tourists tend to travel in quite large numbers.

**Wellness or spiritual tourism:** Tourists come to a destination in order to unwind and enjoy reflexology and massages. Tourists may also visit spiritual destinations as per their religion or spiritual philosophies.

**Wildlife tourism:** In this type of tourism, tourists participate in various activities such as safaris, viewing marine wildlife and photographing wildlife.

**Wine tourism:** Here, tourists visit wine-growing regions and wine routes, vineyards, wineries (cellar tours and tasting rooms), wine festivals and so on, for the purpose of consuming or purchasing wine.

### 3.2 Classification of Special Interest Tourism (SIT):

The interests of mankind are endless and so is the classification of SIT. The SIT can take many forms as per the interest and situations. The classification of SIT is as:

**Educational** – The Grand Tours, cooking, language schools.

**Cultural** – Historical attractions and resources, history and archaeology, people and their lifestyle, museums, cultural diversity, galleries and exhibitions, theatre.

**Religious events** – Fairs and Festivals, Pilgrimage.

**Health and wellness** - Spa resorts, Medical tourism, Yoga.

**Sporting and entertainment events** - World Cup, Olympic Games, IPL, Commonwealth Games.

**Discovery** – Antarctic exploring, Galapagos expeditions.

**Active/Adventure pursuits** – Sports, cycling, hiking, skiing, sailing, climbing Everest, trekking.

**Social** – Youth tours, clubbing, singles trips, etc.

**Hobbies** – Wine tasting, garden tours, flower shows.
Relaxation – Cruising, canal boats, camping.

Educational: Now the educational industry is one of the most popular types of special interest tourism globally. The Grand Tours in the 17th century were organized for young students with the purpose of education. Nowadays, many people are travelling to enhance their education, to learn foreign languages and to take some special course. People travel to take part in the activities of their interest like language schools, cooking classes etc and enhance their knowledge.

Cultural: People who are interested in cultural activities usually visit museums, art-galleries and exhibitions. Cultural tourism provides the visitors with the opportunity to understand and appreciate the essential character of a place and its culture as a whole, including: history and archaeology, people and their lifestyle, cultural diversity, etc.

Religious events: People who are interested in religious holidays focus on visiting places with religious significance such as Char-Dham, Haridwar, Varanasi, Shaktipeeths, Kailash Mansarover Yatra, Amritsar, Ajmer, Jerusalem, and Mecca. The tourists can explore the world in which their deity lived and also enjoy the recreational and leisure activities there. There are specialist tour operators who organize such tours. The fairs and festivals across the globe are main attractions for the tourists.

Health and wellness: People who are interested in enhancing their well being through Health and wellness tourism can take part in these activities. Here, the aim of tourists is to look and feel better, to lose weight, to slow the effects of aging, to relieve pain or discomfort, or to manage stress. This market is very popular as people are becoming more health conscious.

Sporting and entertainment events: People can take holidays to watch the sports activities or participate in special sports events. The specialist tour operators offers packages for World Cup, Olympic Games, IPL, and Commonwealth Games.

Discovery: People interested in exploring new destinations, lands and areas visit unexplored destinations. They experience the science of nature at its best.

Active/Adventure pursuits: People who want to check their physical strength, want to take risks, can take such activities. In the recent times adventure tourism has become famous amongst tourists.

Social: People who are interested in social work and want to know the society.
**Hobbies:** Special personal hobbies of mankind motivate them to travel. Few examples are wine tasting, garden tours, flower shows.

**Relaxation:** Those who are interested in relaxing and recreation and want to experience the peace of nature can indulge in activities like cruising, canal boats, camping.

### 3.3 Factors responsible for Growth of Special Interest Tourism

Following factors are responsible for the growth of special interest tourism:

- Better transport facilities
- Increase in paid holidays and incentives
- Advent of long-haul travel via jet aircraft
- Increased awareness of environmental & impacts of mass tourism
- DINK (Double income no kids)
- Empty nests (people after retirements are free).
- Emergence of budget airlines and cheap tickets
- Increasing Competition among service providers and destinations to attract more tourists
- Increased access to remote locations
- Improved communication technology and marketing of natural features
- Improved facilities and infrastructure.
3.4 Role of Internet & TV in Growth of Special Interest Tourism

With the increase in usage of internet, social media and TV in the recent times it has a huge impact on the SIT market.

- With the expansion of TV travel shows, travel channels, reality shows, cinematic tourism, game shows featuring exotic locations and activities people get interested to visit these destinations.
- Internet is used for promoting niche products, special packages, places and huge expansion in online booking systems is helpful in expansion of SIT.
- The use of social media tools like facebook, whatsapp, twitter, Instagram etc, for marketing, networking, promotions and communicate with consumers is increasing day by day.
3.5 Scope of Special Interest Tourism

India is a country that has intrigued travelers and tourists for a very long time. It’s rich cultural heritage and traditions have always left a lasting impression in the hearts of travelers from the beginning. With a vast diversity that ranges from bustling modern metropolises to ancient temples, from the peaks of the Himalayas to the Arabian sea, India is a country that has always been popular with the tourists. From being a major tourist destination for trade in exotic spices, silk and precious stones, today the modern image that India projects as an International tourist destination is something very different. Today India is a popular travel destination that offers unique experiences to the traveler. The key is to identify the need of the customer and to iterate a travel plan that best suits the traveler’s needs and demands. The tourists engaged with SIT seek to learn more, improve their knowledge, enrich their awareness, and express themselves, expect high standards of service and individualized focus.

Difference with Special Interest Tourism:

SIT is also referred to as niche tourism and is seen as counter-point or alternative to mass tourism; it includes the set of practices that differentiates tourists from each other depending upon their special interests. SIT provides greater opportunities for tourists to get involved in their favorite activities and learning is increased. It is a more meaningful set of experiences for tourists than other forms of tourism.

Special interest tourism has many different things than traditional mass tourism, some of them are:

- It is more flexible than other types of tourism
- It provides more personalized service
- It is less standardized as compared to other types of tourism
- It has a strong interpretive element, i.e. it provides more knowledge, education and information.
Disadvantages of Special Interest Tourism:
The following points can be considered:

- It leads to increased travel costs.
- It may sometimes carry a high risk.
- Expecting the travel industry to be controlled by local communities seems unrealistic.
- It is also superfluous and quite unrealistic to propose that SIT will negate environmental effects of tourism due to the fact of its projected increases.
- The negative effects of mass market tourism over a larger area may also be increased by SIT influence.

4. Developing Special Interest Tourism
When developing SIT product there are few important areas to look upon:

- The products & services which should be offered to consumers
- The types of consumers to be targeted with specific products & services
- Price to be charged for products & services
- Ways to promote products & services

4.1 Understanding market:
Understanding market is an important part in developing SIT. To understand market one has to get the information related to following points:
1. Profile of tourists
2. Tourist expenditure
3. Motivations behind travel
4. Tourist behavior and consumption patterns
5. Consumer satisfaction levels

1.1 Tourist Types/Classifications:
There are different types of tourists and hence their interest and needs are also different.

The tourists can be classified into various segments as under:

- By product: mass market or special interest
- By nature of the activity: active or passive
- Location preference: coastal, rural, city, mountains, lakes
- Duration of trip & distance travelled: day trip, weekend break, and annual holiday
- By purpose: business or pleasure
- By age/socio-economic group: backpackers, DINKS, SINKS, Both DINKS & SINKS, empty nesters, boomers, youth
- By tourism type: heritage, rest, experience, special purpose

**There are three basic factors which influence demand for tourism:**

- What is the purpose or motive for travel? The purpose may include educational, adventure, cultural, health, sports, or pilgrimage etc
- What is the ability of the tourist to travel? This may include sufficient disposable income, incentives, time, freedom of movement, no responsibilities etc
- What is the travel choice of tourist? This may include knowledge about destinations, interest, environmental factors, ability to travel and ease of getting the desired product.

There are many typologies developed from time to time to classify the tourists.

The best known typologies are by Eric Cohen and Stanley Plog.

Eric Cohen classified tourists according to the nature of the environment they prefer. He placed tourists into the following four groups:
Organized mass tourist- These tourists prefer to visit safe and secure destinations with safe environment. These tourists do not want any element of risk or mismanagement in their tour. They prefer to buy pre-organised tour packages.

Individual mass tourist- These tourists are little flexible as compared to organised mass tourists. They have some personnel choices and can be moulded as per that.

The explorer- These are the tourists who are interested in unexplored destinations. They have a good risk taking ability, and they can compromise with facilities as well.

The drifter- These are the tourists who are interested in adventurous travelling, high risk activities. They are least worried about luxury or facilities at the destination.

As per Stanley Plog there are three types of tourists:

Allocentric- These type of tourists are also known as explorers. They are confident travellers and travel to unexplored destinations.
- Midcentric - They prefer to travel to new destinations which are explored by allocentric tourists.
- Psychocentric - These are the tourists who prefer to visit safe destinations with all facilities.

4.2 Market segmentation:
Market segmentation is a process of dividing the market into different groups with similar needs and wants. The most common types of Market segmentation are as follows:
- Geographic Segmentation
- Demographic Segmentation
- Socio-economic segmentation
- Psychographic segmentation

Geographic segmentation is done on the basis of geographic locations of the customers such as country, region, city size, and climate.

Source: Adapted from Plog (2001)
Demographic segmentation is done on the basis of demographics such as:

- On the basis of religion of customer such as pilgrimage, retreat.
- On the basis of age of customers such as old age traveller, snowbirds, empty nesters, young budget travellers
- On the basis of Gender such as Man, Women, Transgender.

Socio-economic segmentation is done on the basis of occupation, status, social class, income level etc.

Psychographic segmentation is done on the basis of tourist's behavior, their lifestyles, activities and attitudes.

4.3 Travel Motivation:
According to Businessdictionary.com, Motivation can be defined as" internal and external factors that stimulate desire and energy in people to be continually interested in and committed to a job, role, or subject, and to exert persistent effort in attaining a goal."

Travel motivation plays an important role in selecting a tourism product. There are few questions to be considered:

- What factors motivates people to travel?
- What factors motivates people to travel to a particular place?

“People go away because they no longer feel happy where they are doing, where they work and live. They feel the monotony of the daily routine, offices, apartment blocks and transport, shrinking human contact, the repression of feelings, the loss of nature and naturalness. Thus holidays become a choice to get away from all these situations.”

Motivation Theories:

Maslow Hierarchy of Needs
Abraham Maslow outlined a motivational hierarchy consisting of five categories of human needs arranged in ascending order. The key notion in the model is that as a need of lower category becomes satisfied, its determination of behavior diminishes and the next higher need category becomes proponent.
Maslow's hierarchy of needs assumes that all human beings have same needs and wants to be satisfied. Therefore, it is important to apply motivation theory in relation to different tourist types.

**Motivations for SIT**

Motivations for SIT can be divided into two major groups:

- Intrinsic motivation
- Extrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation encompasses the internal desires to perform a particular task, people do certain activities because it gives them pleasure, such as challenge, skill improvement or relaxation.

The factors external to the individual person and unrelated to the task they are performing are under the ambit of Extrinsic motivation, such as money, status, rewards, and sustainability.
4.4 Product Differentiation:
Product Differentiation is an important part of the ‘marketing mix’. Product Differentiation is defined as: to make output of your business distinctly different from the competitors. It is a process in which a product is distinguished from others so that it looks different from others and appeals more to the target audience.

- Product Differentiation ensures distinction of the product from the other products
- With Product Differentiation the product gets an ‘edge’ over the products of competitors.
- Product Differentiation highlights unique aspects of the products and increases the value for the product in the eyes of the buyer.
- Product Differentiation helps buyers to remember the product and they will buy it if they perceive the difference.

4.5 The Marketing Mix in Tourism:
The Marketing Mix in Tourism comprises of Eight-Ps as:

1. **Product:** it is an item that satisfies consumer’s needs or wants.
2. Place: The place where the customers can obtain a product they want.
3. Price: It is the amount to be paid by customer for the product.
4. Promotion: Tools to give information about the product to the customers.
5. People: Employees of the organization who come in contact with the customers.
6. Packaging: To integrate many products into one package.
7. Programming: Strategies designed to increase customer spending limits, by giving add on products ao offers.
8. Partnership: Partnership with two or more businesses co-operations on some aspect of their business operations.

5. Developing Special Interest Tourism Product:
Developing SIT product needs to consider following areas to work upon:
  - Marketing Challenges
  - Understand management needs and issues of SIT
  - How you can take lead in developing SIT
  - Trends in SIT
5.1 Challenges for Marketing:

- Competition is faced by the tour operators not just from other tour operators in their area, but also from other areas and destinations.
- Not only a different tour company can be chosen by the potential clients, but they can choose a different type of holiday to a totally different place.
- Globalization has led to an increase in the similarities between destinations; hence countries have in many cases become interchangeable in the tourist’s mind.
- Now-a-days consumers often make choices based on “whether the product represents an exciting new concept: a desirable experience”.

5.2 Understanding the management needs and issues of special interest tourism:
Evaluation of the organizational and support logistics involved in the management of special interest tourism trips.
Profitability which is the main goal of all the businesses can be achieved by meeting the tourist expectations and providing safe and secure travel arrangements. This will lead to profitable growth of the travel companies.
Market research being an essential tool for any business helps to identify potential customers, their needs and expectations. Target marketing is a group of customers to be aimed at where the potential customers with similar needs and characteristics are identified and divided by market segments based on age, income level, etc.
Travel products comprises several segments, viz. hotel, transport, accommodation facilities and for the tourists this all have to be organized and put together as well.

5.3 Latest Trends:
The tourist today is interested in visiting new places, discovering authentic places. Online booking of tour packages is becoming quite famous among tourists.
The latest trends in Special Interest Tourism are:
- Adventure Tourism
- Dark Tourism
- Cruising
➢ Medical and Health Tourism
➢ Culinary and Food Tourism
➢ Shopping Tourism
➢ Grey Tourism
➢ Doom Tourism
➢ Cultural & Heritage Tourism
➢ Bird-Watching Tourism
➢ Farm & Country Tourism
➢ Educational Tourism
➢ Cycling Tours
➢ Sports Tours
Summary:

The activities in contact with nature, beauty of a conserved natural area, the pleasure of watching the fauna in its natural habitat, of exploring, discovering and learning, overcoming obstacles and feeling the pleasure of overcoming them, are enjoyed by the special interest tourists. The SIT has evolved from the needs of the tourism industry to expand the destination experience beyond the simple leisure and recreation tourism. Tourism being the most important industry of any country, most of the countries are doing their best in order to maintain and preserve all of their resources that can attract the attention of their target tourist. Many issues can affect special interest tourism, some of which are known in advance and others are unexpected. The potential problem should be identified and the awareness of possible outcome must be created. Risk management is a crucial part of planning for businesses. The process of risk management is designed so as to reduce or eliminate the risk of certain kinds of events happening or having an impact on the business. One of the main issues of SIT providers is the need to provide the best quality and to keep the standards high. Realistic assessment of the potential of SIT is required. A few types of SIT show greater potential while some may not be developed as feasible products relating specifically to the Indian situation. To wind up this discussion, a consideration of the attitudinal characteristics also helps in the designing of the SIT product. These characteristics also show the potential of protecting and preserving tourism resources to be harnessed by a successive chain of visitors without seriously endangering the authenticity of the SIT product.