



UNIT-3

Managing Tour Operations

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Discuss the strategies for developing and managing links with Principal Suppliers
- ✓ Describe the management of recruitment and training processes in Tourism
- ✓ Explore marketing strategies for Tour Packages

Unit 3

Managing Tour Operations

In the management of tour operations you have to address primarily functions related to two areas, i.e., inbound tour operations and outbound tour operations. In inbound tour operations as a manager you have to design the product according to the market tastes and trends, attend and reply mail regularly by using latest means of technology, prepare quotations of fares, costing packages, supervising and controlling issues of vouchers as tickets as well as motivating your employees to achieve desired goals. As a manager you also have to provide in-house training to your employees on various aspects related to their jobs. Inbound tour operations also involve several field operations like arranging transfers, pick-ups and hotel check-ins as well as to ensure smooth connection of the group by rail, road and air.

On the other hand, outbound tour operations have always been the centre of attraction for all the employees of the organisation because they are also seen as a gateway for frequent overseas visits either as a part of familiarisation trips or to develop contacts with the principal suppliers of services. As a manager, therefore, your prime responsibility is to equip your employees with updated product knowledge by giving them firsthand experience of outbound operations. On the one hand, you can develop your own outbound packages or, you can also sell the packages of inbound tour operators of other destinations. Thus, in this Unit an attempt has been made to familiarise you with management and operational issues related to tour operations.

Developing and Managing Linkages With Principal Suppliers

Tour operations, just like any other industrial operations, largely depend upon the sources of supply. Here the point of difference is that industrial supplies are not visible to the consumer. For example, if you are producing edible oil, the consumer will not come to know who supplies you the raw material but in tourism operation suppliers like airlines, hotels, shopping malls, cultural attractions, all are visible for customers. Moreover, each one of these principal suppliers contributes towards the satisfaction of customers. These service providers play vital role in your successful operation of tours and you need to develop and manage linkages with these suppliers. You have already been told that there are two areas of operations, i.e., inbound and outbound tour operations. Therefore, for each of these areas linkages work differently because the suppliers are different. In the case of inbound tour operations when you plan to design your product you are required not only to collect complete information on what type of travel products are available in the markets and at what price but also you will have to match the existing products with suitable target market segment. For example, if you are approached by a group of tourists having interest in Buddhist circuit, you must have complete and authentic information on all the components of this product including the providers of services and costs only then you can price and

offer such a package. Here comes the need for developing contacts with the service providers to supply you with accurate information. If possible, conduct a familiarisation tour before taking decisions.

Moreover, as a manager, you can negotiate well on various terms and conditions of such purchases when you have developed good rapport with them. Principal suppliers may include airlines, hotels, transporters, insurance companies, health service providers, conference and convention organisers, shopkeepers/shopping mall owners and many more to complete the list, depending on the nature of the product to be packaged.

On the other hand, in case of outbound tour operations such linkages focus upon overseas suppliers who are also on look out for distributors of their products. You might have seen advertisements of Indian tour operators selling destinations like Singapore, Malaysia, Bangkok, Pattaya, Switzerland, France, Mauritius, Australia, New Zealand and many more at attractive costs. This all has become possible because of good linkages these tour operators are able to establish with their overseas suppliers. This has resulted in good terms for negotiations for both the parties, i.e., if overseas supplier assures good price you have to commit good volume of business. This forms the core point of difference between your quotations of a package from that of your competitors. Thus, linkages can play crucial role in making your operations a success or failure. Therefore, you are advised to develop and maintain linkages and contacts with your suppliers both within the country as well as at other destinations.

Managing Recruitment and Trained Manpower

In this Unit, our focus will be on recruitment and selection criteria or guidelines for successful operation of any tour operation business. It is obvious that since employees establish a direct contact between you and your customers, it becomes all the more crucial for you to select the right kind of staff to achieve your organisational goals.

While doing recruitment and selection of personnel for your tour operation business you must take care and caution because this business needs a highly professional approach for providing quality services. For example, if you have produced a wonderful package but your operational staff is not able to deliver in the same way as promised, it may lead to service gap and dissatisfaction. In your tour operation business, therefore, you have to do certain preparation for recruitment. This means before you think of inviting people to apply for a job you have to decide what type of persons are to be invited and what would be their characteristics, i.e., you should outline “job specifications” for each position being created and filled in the organisation.

This may include variations in physical specifications, mental levels, emotional and behavioural outlook and so on. For example, when you are looking for a person to handle pick-ups and transfer, desirable characteristics should be smart, good command over communications, hard working and someone who can work for longer hours with lots of patience. Similarly, when you are looking for a person to do costing/fare construction for you, the desirable characteristics should include good academic

background having knowledge of world geography and international tariff regulation and a background in maths or finances. In tour operations, job specifications may vary according to their area of operations. For example, in inbound tour operations your staff requirements may include:

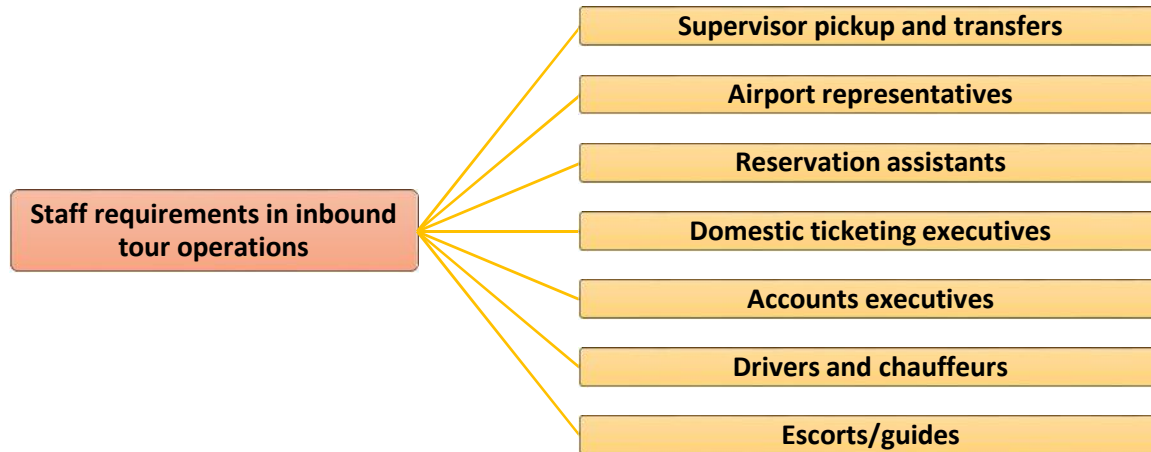


Fig: 3.1

For each of the above-mentioned job you will find that required skills are different. For example, supervisor should be experienced enough to brief and train his/her staff on issues and considerations related to pickups and transfers to hotels. It means he/she should be able to communicate effectively with his/her staff only then organisational objectives can be accomplished. For airport representative as already mentioned, should be smart, hard working person, who can work during odd hours because in India most of the international flights arrive at midnight. Therefore, such candidates should be preferred who can also work during day hours as Office Assistants.

People working in accounts should possess competent qualification and experience because in tour operations most of the business is on credit and timely settlement of payment needs sincere attention otherwise you may have to wind up your business. Accounts executives are also responsible for controlling vouchers meant for transit transporters (pickups and transfers) and for hotels. Drivers and chauffeurs should have sound driving track record and full knowledge of routes and signalling patterns. Drivers and chauffeurs should have good command over communication and if possible good knowledge of touristic attractions in the area of their operations. They should also possess qualities like politeness, courteous, and with good sense of humour to make the tour a memorable experience. Escorts and guides play a vital role in the success of any inbound tour operation. For example, the escorts' job starts the moment a group lands at airport. From airport facilitation to the entire conduct of the tour, it is the escort who represents your company. In fact, he/she is the walking image of your company.

In the field of outbound tour operations recruitment and selection of personnel is almost similar to that of inbound tour operations. However, the difference in the operation section of this department is that

employees have to be selected keeping in view the fact that most of these employees deployed in operations would be visiting the destination that they have to market. Therefore, they must possess adequate skills and knowledge of one or more foreign languages. Skills may be related to the field of international ticketing, fare construction/calculation, itinerary preparation and so on. Here while selecting any candidate stress should be laid on sound knowledge of destinations and geography of the candidate along with touristic attraction of various popular destinations.

To conclude, we can say that well planned and executed recruitment and selection procedure in tour operations can prove crucial for your organisation. If right kinds of people are selected, oriented and trained for these jobs, results would be better than your expectations. Precaution should be taken in putting right person at right job at the right time.

Operations Department

As it is already mentioned in the introduction of this Unit, that operations of tours are the backbone of this trade. These operations primarily take place in both the fields of inbound tours and outbound tours. As managers in the trade you have to ensure that the work force efficiently handles the tasks.

Inbound Tour Operations

For some weeks, or even months, you and your office staff has worked to obtain the business from, and conduct administration for, a group of clients. When these tourists are about to arrive, you must ensure to deliver all that you have promised while negotiating for the group handling. This is the moment to fulfil expectations and to prove that your company and your country as a destination were the right choices for their vacation.

A good impression, in the very beginning of the visit, will put everyone in the right mood towards an overall success. Reverse to this situation would make them feel that they have committed a mistake by choosing this country as a destination and they start foreseeing a lot of problems all during their stay. This could mean that they are likely to make complaints even over small matters, and it could also mean that they will refuse to buy the extra services which otherwise would have contributed to your company's financial gains. Hence, properly prepared, planned and well-conducted transfers of groups will ensure a smooth and happy start. While doing so train your staff to always put themselves in the clients' shoe and how would they feel after a long flight when they are not only tired but they may also be dehydrated (as a result of the physical effects of flying, and of drinking alcohol on the flight which exaggerates this effect). They may be suffering from the change of climate from their country to yours. (A North European coming to South Asia in January could be experiencing a difference of as much as 45 to 50oC which requires a little adjustment). They are often nervous, for there is a fear of a foreign culture, foreign food, foreign people of different races and colours, of getting lost, ill, or robbed, and who knows what others fears! Of course, you can also look at these fears in a more positive way and can

be regarded as part of the challenge, the excitement, or travelling abroad. After-all your clients did choose to come to you. Therefore, you must train your staff to apprise the tourist(s) being comfortable and safe. Once this is achieved atmosphere of noisy and hot airport bureaucracy and rudeness of many immigration and customs officials, the delay for that luggage, and the inadequacy of the trolleys can also be overlooked by them because what clients expect from you at this stage is:

- feel safe and secure,
- satisfy physical needs,
- belong with others, and
- have their status recognised.

Everything you plan before, during or after their transfer must centre on fulfilment of these needs. You should also consider whether your clients actually need you to conduct this transfer for them? He/she may not, since most adults are capable of finding their way to wherever they wish to go. It may take them longer, especially if there are language problems, and it may be less comfortable, more expensive, and slower to do it themselves but still they need you because you can do transfers for them more cheaply, more quickly, more comfortably, than they can themselves, and you can also provide for all those personal needs which are listed above. If you are unable to manage all this you are as good as those tourists in arranging all this for themselves. Clients will soon realise this and your business will evaporate. Now let us look at what steps you shall take as a manager to ensure that all goes well and the clients' needs are met. In fact, several days before pre-arrival day you should cross- check:

- that required/requested kind of transport has been booked, i.e., booked vehicle should be the right kind of vehicle for the purpose.
- that your staff is using the most appropriate transport for your clients. Clients may have requested air conditioned vehicle or they may have been carrying a lot of luggage so that a larger vehicle or even a second vehicle especially for the baggage may be needed. (This particularly applies to active special interest groups like divers, climbers, trekkers, and campers).
- the transport arranged by your staff must be reliable, safe, well maintained and clean. The driver must be briefed as to exactly where the transport will be located in the airport terminal building and how escort can locate it. You must check if a voucher is required for transport and hotel must be released by you well in advance and must ensure that there vouchers are prepared for all items and after rate agreed. If there is need for some cash for payment of porter for luggage then you must assess the required amount and release the cash. Ensure that your staff has informed the transport company about the number of passengers and bags expected and other relevant details.
- As a good manager/supervisor it is your responsibility to ensure that hotel rooms in required numbers shall be made available on arrival and you shall also advise the hotel front office and housekeeping about what time the clients will actually be arriving in the hotel so that the

housekeeping department is ready for them (this is especially true in the case of very late arrivals). Not only this you should also apprise your staff about other needs of your clients.

- You must always brief the escort to collect and carry information on:
- Flight number;
- Name list;
- Details of transport, transport voucher;
- Hotels' name and address, rooming list and hotel voucher;
- Together with any special details such as the nature of the group, difficulties with mobility, VIPs, etc.; and
- Greeting/sign board (individual tourist's placard giving name of the tourist, country coming from or company he/she is representing, etc.)

In some cities where there is a long transfer between airport and city there is a representative who meets at the airport and then despatches the group to the hotel where another representative awaits. In such cases it becomes important for you to arrange for both. In an identical briefing, but, of course, one who receives at the airport has the transport vouchers and one who escorts them to hotels will have the hotel vouchers. In such a system you need to develop proper communication systems between both the employees and try to provide both of them mobile phones so that both of them can update each other about the movements of the tourist(s). It is for you to develop a culture of checks and rechecks among your staff. For example, before reaching the airport they should call the airline and establish the Actual time of arrival. This is possible only when the aircraft has actually left its departure point, advise them not be persuaded by the scheduled time of arrival which can be widely different due to technical or non-technical reasons.

If there is a substantial change to the timings ask them always to advise the transport company and the hotel of changes, accordingly. You must ensure that your transfer staff has reached at the airport before the passengers come out of the waiting hall. Tell by your experiences for how long it may take for passengers to come out of the immigration cell. Try to provide your staff an airside pass only then he/she enter the customs hall assisting and greeting passengers. In some airports where this is not allowed because of security concerns you must apprise your staff of the same so that they shouldn't commit any thing of this sort and while doing transfers they must position themselves in public/visitor's gallery immediately outside the customs hall closely indicating their guest's/group leader's name.

- You should take precautions at this point of time to gain first impression for your company since you will not get another chance to repair your impressions,
- Your staff should be clean, neat, and very well groomed (Use the personality factor),
- Your staff should be wearing a badge which identifies him/her as the official in charge of your clients; and

- If possible your staff can wear a uniform since this also helps your client to easily recognise and trust the staff deputised. In short, you must equip your airport transfer staff with the following material ready for use:

<u>EQUIPMENT FOR AIRPORT TRANSFER STAFF</u>	
Badge	Transport vouchers
Uniform as prescribed	Hotel vouchers
Greeting board	Welcome packs and/or gifts
Name list	Hotel registration cards
Clipboard and pen	Smile of the escort
Mobile phone or phone card or coins	Hotel vouchers
Tips or voucher for porters	

Table 3.1

Certain other aspects to be taken care of include:

i. Passengers' Identification:

You must train your staff to greet tourists cheerfully and briefly welcome them, and tick them off on his/her list (for the purpose of security and status), ask them to wait in the waiting lounge so as to allow all members of the group to assemble. In case, if he/she finds that someone is missing, immediately ask the airport information service to announce:

- Name of missing passenger,
- Name of tour group,
- Place arrived from,
- Easily identifiable meeting point, and
- Ensure this announcement is in the language the passenger speaks.

On rare occasions when the passenger does not appear, your staff must be apprised of procedures as to immediately check with the airline that whether the group was in fact on board the flight or not. If not, there is no need to wait. If so, then your staff is required to repeat the public announcement and shall also leave a written note at the information point giving advice to the passenger about how to catch up with the group. You must advise your transfer staff to wait for at least 30 minutes and then continue with the transfer.

It is advisable that at all stages of tour your staff keep the other passengers informed of the reasons for the delay (This reassures them that you are doing a careful job). If any passenger reports loss or damaged baggage in the customs/baggage areas your staff shall be trained to fill forms for tracing/ replacing the bags obtained from the airline staff. This is where your airside

pass would of great help. Your staff at this juncture shall reassure the passengers, who feel very scared under this situation and may become very upset. Make sure that the airline gives the passenger copies of all forms filled in and that these are carefully kept by the clients as they will be required for insurance claims. The airlines are responsible for finding and forwarding lost bags and fixed rates of compensation are payable to help with the cost of toiletries, and other essentials when bags are lost or delayed. In such cases your staff shall offer themselves to go with the client for this essential shopping. Another critical situation comes when at any point of time your staff has to leave the clients to attend to another matter advise them to always “signpost”.

This means that should not just disappear but they explain therein where they are going and why. Failing to do this can lead to chaos amongst the group members. Examples could be “please stay here I am going to check on the coach” or “I will be back in 10 minutes, I am going to help with that damaged bag”. When your staff has all the passengers, and all their bags are accounted for, he/she should lead the group to the vehicle holding the welcome notice high so that they can follow them through a crowd. Go steadily, so that all can keep up, and talk to the passengers in a welcoming manner about their journey, etc. It is advisable that you should instruct your staff to take care of group members while crossing roads. Before boarding the vehicle your staff shall also ensure that each person checks/is requested to identify their own bags been loaded. Usually, the loading will be done by the porters or the driver but they cannot be expected to know which bag belongs to whom. Before moving off welcome the group again, saying your name clearly and checking the number of passengers present is still correct. When your driver is driving a group to the hotel you should advise him to introduce himself as well the name of the hotel and tell the group the approximate driving time that may take to reach there.

ii. Departure Transfers

Tourists who arrive in groups or as individuals are required to go through transfer procedure once again, i.e., the departure transfers. The departing experience of a client is as crucial as arrival transfer for your company’s image. Departure transfer for your clients is to be handled very professionally by your staff. Like the arrival transfer it starts some days beforehand. Within 72 hours after arrival all scheduled seats for the next sector should be reconfirmed. This means that you should have gathered up all the tickets and done this for your clients. Beware, there are just a few airlines which have different requirements such as “reconfirm within 72 hours of departure” and failure to comply can lose clients their seats. Get to know your local situation. You are supposed to act professionally while handling/supervising such transfers. For instance, each and every client must be advised in writing one day before of their flight time and date and pick up time from the hotel. This can be achieved by putting a notice on the tour notice board, or you can leave a letter for each client with reception. (If you do not put this in writing there is a risk

that a client who misses the flight can blame you.) Details of any departure tax payable should be included.

Once again, you need to reconfirm transport and voucher arrangements with the transport company and double check that there is no change in the flight time. You need to establish and inform how much in advance before the departure clients should settle their extra bills at reception. Computerised accounts of hotels can usually issue bills just before departure unless the group is very large, but some properties prefer this to be done a night before.

On departure day you shall advise your staff to follow the departure transfer checklist (given below) which is essentially the same as for the arrival transfer. Remember that the customers' needs are the same, i.e., full attention. He or she may again be nervous and unsure but by now has developed trust in you and should be easier to direct.

Departure Transfer Checklist

- Brief clients in writing and in advance,
- Brief hotel and porters to be ready,
- Be at hotel early,
- Ask reception if everyone has paid extras,
- Gather up clients, phone rooms of those who do not appear,
- Load bags (each client to confirm),
- Remind clients to:
 - pay extras,
 - return keys,
 - empty safe deposits, and
 - have passports and tickets in hand luggage.
- Load passengers,
- Depart for airport,
- On route explain procedure at airport,
- Explain what facilities are available (toilets, Post office, Duty-free, Café?),
- Drive as close as possible to check in area,
- Before leaving bus wish them a safe and happy journey home and that they will come back soon. Sound as if you mean it,
- While saying goodbye some passengers may offer small tips and gifts. Thank for these but NEVER solicit them,
- Assist with getting porters/trolleys,
- Assist with check in procedures/airport taxpaying, etc.
- Escort to security and passport control,

- When all have gone airside you can leave but not before, and
- If there is a delay before the clients have gone airside you are still responsible for them.

iii. Other Areas for Supervision in Inbound Tour Operations

Tourism is a very sensitive industry as it deals with people and their holidays. In the preceding sections various aspects that are necessary were mentioned for making the customer feel comfortable. However, certain other aspects should also be taken into account.

- As a tour operator you must manage your finances well.
- As a tour operator, besides having proper product knowledge, you must also have a proper understanding about the functioning and role of each organisation (like airline, hotel, surface transport, Government department, such as, Archaeological Survey, Ministry of Environment, etc.). He or she should also analyse the options available and work out contingency plans.
- You, as well as your employees in a tour operation company should always be prepared to react to any sudden development (strikes, health problems, political upheaval, non-availability of hotels or airline seats, etc.) to handle such situations, you should train your staff to take on the spot decision to offer solutions.
- Increasing use of technology has considerably changed the nature of operations management. However, computers, fax machines and even telephone systems also keep breaking down (e.g., power cuts, etc.). Hence, it is important that you should also train your employees in manual systems as it comes handy in times of crisis.
- Market research, market segmentation, understanding the tourist markets, tourist profiles, etc. are essential for achieving success in business and a tour operator must pay considerably attention on these aspects. Besides, proper linkages have to be established with principal suppliers. Preparing attractive brochures, participation in travel fairs and travel conventions help the tour operator in increasing business. Many tour operators are also going for direct selling to the consumers by putting advertisements in the print as well as electronic media.

Outbound Tour Operations

This department specialises in providing facilities to only those passengers who intend travelling abroad. In order to perform a variety of jobs, it can be divided into following small sections:

i. Documentation Section

To travel abroad one requires procuring a number of documents and fulfils a set of formalities. This section, therefore, focuses upon these formalities and documents required for all types of

foreign travel. Any person wanting to go abroad shall have to come into contact with the documentation section of the travel agency/tour operations department. It is only after asking the reason of visit you can and shall advise him/her about the documents needed for obtaining the required visa of the country of visit or for any other approval like that of RBI or Income Tax Office. The formalities and the documents needed for travel abroad differ according to the purpose of visit. There are various reasons for travelling abroad – tourists for higher education, business, medical treatment, immigration, etc. In each case the formalities and the supporting documents differ not only from country to country but from the point of view of motives of travel also.

ii. Visa Section

This section keeps all the information for the formalities involved in obtaining visa for different countries. The staff collects and endorses passports on behalf of passengers and delivers them to passengers much in advance from the date of journey.

iii. Reservation Section

This is another important section which deals with the reservation of transport and hotel accommodation. The staff in this section has to be well conversant with all the airlines' timetables, airfares for different sectors and hotel accommodations, types and tariffs at most visited destinations. After taking note of all the details of the programme information is recorded by them on a specially printed sheet of paper. Thereafter a suitable travel plan is drawn giving suitable flight connections with arrival/departure timing and places of stay. It also makes an approximation of the cost for staying and the airfare. After the approval of the travel plan, a finally typed copy is given to the passenger for his reference. This is known as itinerary. After getting the itinerary approved the reservation section contacts the concerned airlines and asks for seats as per the itinerary. The concerned airline will also be given a copy of the full programme of the passenger because it will also send reservation messages to its concerned officers for the onward flight confirmation as per the programme. On obtaining all the confirmations, the airline informs the agent that all the onward reservations are ready. On receipt of this information the agent issues its voucher drawn on the airlines asking them to issue their tickets in favour of the passenger as per the details of the flight given in the voucher. Some of the important contents of voucher may include:

- Name of the Passenger,
- Place to be Visited,
- Date,
- Flight Number,
- Time,
- RBI Permit Number,

- Passport Number,
- Applicable Fare, and
- Agent Code Number.

After receiving this voucher the airline issues the tickets. The ticket is sent to the agent who Cross checks it and after complete satisfaction hands it over to the passenger. Thus, it is seen that you have to provide a number of services to the passenger for which no extra amount is charged. The passenger gets the benefit of guidance and services from you. You must acknowledge the fact that in your absence he/she would have had to waste a lot of time, energy and money. Another feature of outbound tours is selling the packages of the inbound tour operators of other countries. There are few big companies who develop their own outbound packages and the product designing in such cases involves all steps that are necessary for developing a tour package. However, when you act as a seller of others, you must ensure that the package actually has in terms of services all that which has been promised. Linkages and experience help in this regard. Such a precaution is must because it is you who is selling to the tourist. If anything goes wrong the tourist will hold you responsible and the same will be the case in a consumer court.

Managing the Marketing of Tour Packages

Marketing of tour packages, application of each of these principles vary in inbound tours and outbound tours.

Marketing Inbound Tours

While marketing inbound tours focus is on popularising your product in tourist generating countries so as to attract tourists. Therefore, emphasis is on developing marketing programmes targeting at achieving this goal. So far in India, we have been following traditional methods of publicising our products through 18 overseas offices of Department of Tourism. Only a few tour operators having their offices in other countries too, print and circulate their brochures highlighting the special features of their products, otherwise mostly bank upon the marketing efforts of Department of Tourism. This method is so conventional that even when any small or medium sized tour operator wishes to participate in international travel exhibition or exposition like ITB, Berlin one has to go through Department of Tourism because space is booked by them and then it is sold out to Indian participants through Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO). If you want to succeed in inbound tour operations you are required to make efforts for getting a direct access to overseas markets. This can become possible once you start your marketing programme with one world principle, i.e., “customer care” or “quality”.

Desired quality of the product and proper customer care to the tourists booked by your overseas contact acts as marketing tool for you. This is because your overseas contact develops a confidence in your company. You should also be prepared to design on demand packages as per the tourists’ interests.

When you have designed your products with above-mentioned mantra in mind, pricing will ever act as a hindrance for effective marketing. As a conventional practice in the trade, whoever was providing the product at lower rates could get the business. But today these trade players have shifted their focus to quality rather than quantity while pricing their products. As a result, the market is divided into two blocks – one who is targeting at budget class or mass tourists and other block in targeting at niche markets who are not bothered by prices of product. You have already been told that promotion for quality products is word of mouth rather than expensive marketing campaigns as far as individual tourists are concerned. For example, even before buying a package to India inbound tourists gather a lot of information from those who have already visited India. As a result when an independent foreign tourist (FIT) lands at airport he/she looks for taxi driver to drive him/her to a particular hotel at place X. Not only this he/she has to complete idea of the location of such place of stay. This has become possible due to word of mouth publicity and promotion of quality products. Therefore, if you want to be a successful tour operator you must try to market package tours which are the combinations of quality conscious service providers in the trade. Once the product is designed priced and promoted by application of appropriate tools, its distribution (place) requires proper planning. You have the option of either going directly to the consumers by sending messages to foreign tourists through their print and non-print media or you can plan your marketing efforts in an organised manner along with other trade players. Many countries use their tourism offices and embassies for tourism promotion. In such cases you must apprise the Tourism department about your products.

Marketing of inbound tour operations should centre around quality assurance at all levels of product designing, development, and product delivery/promotion, post-delivery efforts are making an impact on your overall marketing philosophy, i.e., whether you gather feedback and analyse it or not. Thus, you are advised to practise all these and other creative activities to be a successful inbound tour operator.

Marketing Outbound Tours

Unlike inbound tour operations here the target group is ever increasing and ever changing particularly in developing countries like India. In 1970s and 80s outbound tourism was seen as an elite practise and moreover a few destinations in Europe were popular like London, Paris, Switzerland. These destinations were heavily publicised by Indian movies of that period. For example movie like “An Evening in Paris”, “Night in London” and “Around the World in Eight Dollars” and many more movies with the same focus.

Any product be it Singapore, Malaysia or Switzerland, you must familiarise yourself and your marketing staff with these destinations. Only then you can present a convincing picture of the destination in front of your customers. You know that tourism being intangible; it is very difficult to sample it. It is, therefore, your first hand knowledge of the tourist destination(s) you are representing which will help you in marketing them effectively. Most commonly used tool to achieve this goal is take advantage of familiarisation tours conducted by these destinations as promotion tools. Moreover, you or your staff can avail of the facility of group escort, visiting either of these destinations. It's a matter of practice on a

group of every 10-14 passengers you get one complimentary ticket. Same is applicable on hotel bookings. Thus, you can train your marketing staff by equipping them with the first hand knowledge of their products. As an effective marketing manager you shall divide your marketing department according to different destinations you are planning to represent, e.g., if you are representing four destination but within the same continent, i.e., Europe. you need not departmentalise. But if you are representing four destinations falling in different continents (TC Areas) then to train your staff you should departmentalise it.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Sunetra Roday, Archana Biwal, Joshi Vandana, (2009), Tourism: Operations and Management*
- ✓ *B. Prideaux, Gianna Moscardo, Eric Laws, (2006), Managing Tourism and Hospitality Services: Theory and International Applications*