



UNIT-4

Tour Operations Management

Staff Training Solutions

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 4

Tour Operations Management

Introduction

In this Unit, which is about Managing Tour Operations, two main topics will be discussed - the inbound tour operations and the outbound tour operations. As a manager, it is your duty to design a product in accordance with market tastes and trends for inbound tour operations. A manager also has to reply to mail on a regular basis with the help of the latest technology, get fare quotations ready, prepare costing of packages, oversee and control matters related to vouchers and tickets and finally keep employees motivated to reach the necessary goals. A manager also has to make available in-house instruction to employees on the different facets of their jobs. Furthermore, inbound tour operations need to deal with field operations such as making arrangements for transfers, hotel check-in and pick-up, and make certain of effortless connections for the group by road, rail, and air.

Alternatively, the outbound tour operations have always been the focus of appeal for all workers of an organization due to the opportunities they provide for the frequent gateways for visits abroad either as part of becoming familiar with destinations or to develop contacts with the main service providers. A manager's single most important obligation is to provide employees with most up to date product knowledge by providing them with firsthand experience of outbound operations. On one side the manager can create his own outbound packages or he can sell the packages of inbound tour operators of other destinations. This unit will make an effort to acquaint you with management and operating issues associated with tour operations.

Developing and Managing Linkages With Principal Suppliers

Just like all other industrial operations, tour operations have to rely largely on sources of supply. The difference here is that the industrial supplies can't be seen by the consumer. For instance, if a company produces edible oil, the consumer will never know who the supplier of raw material is, however in tourism operation suppliers such as hotels, airlines, cultural attractions, and malls are very visible to the customer. What's more each of the major suppliers makes a contribution towards the overall satisfaction of the customer. Providers of these services play a key role in the success of tour operations and links have to be developed and maintained with such suppliers.

As already mentioned, there exist two areas of operations - inbound and outbound tour operations. Hence, for each area, links operate in different ways as the suppliers are different. For the inbound tour operation, when the product is designed you have to not only accumulate data on what kind of travel products exist in the markets and at what cost, but you have to equate the existing products with appropriate target market section. For instance, if a group of tourists approaches with interest in the Buddhist circuit, you must make available the total genuine information on all aspects of this product, inclusive of all those providing the services and prices. It is only then that you can provide a better price.

So here, the need of contacts with the service providers comes in handy. It is they who have to give you the accurate information. If possible, schedule a tour to familiarise yourself before the final decision becomes necessary.

Once relations have been developed, as a manager you will be in a better position to bargain on the different terms and conditions. Main suppliers can be made up of hotels, airlines, insurance companies, transporters, health service providers, conference and convention organisers, mall owners, shopkeepers/shopping, and numerous others on the list, which relies on the characteristics of the product to be produced.

Alternatively, in the situation of the outbound tour operations, these kinds of links concentrate upon overseas suppliers who are also seeking distributors for their merchandise. You may have come across endorsements of Indian tour operators selling destinations like Malaysia, Singapore, Bangkok, Switzerland, France, Mauritius, Australia, New Zealand, and countless others at appealing prices. All this is possible due to good connections tour operators can cultivate with their overseas suppliers. This leads to agreeable conditions for bargaining for all parties involved, i.e. If a foreign supplier provides a good price you have to counter by providing increased volume of business. This establishes the foundations of the variation between your quotations for a given package from that of your challenger. So, having connections can be vital in making your operations successful or turn to a failure. It goes without saying that you should build connections and maintain links and contacts with your suppliers from within the country and at destinations abroad.

Managing Recruitment and Trained Manpower

In the current Unit, the concentration will be on staffing and standards for choosing them, and guidelines for running a successful operation of any tour operating business. Considering that the employees institute a direct link between you and your clients, it becomes imperative that you choose the appropriate type of staff to reach your organizational targets.

When recruiting and selecting a workforce for your tour operation business, you have to be extremely cautious – after all, this business requires a highly professional method of making quality services available. For instance, if you have created a fantastic product but the operational staff is not capable of delivering in the way promised, it can leave a gap in the service and lead to dissatisfaction in the tour operation business. So, before hiring the staff you have to make certain preparations.

In other words, before you even consider asking for people to apply for a job, you must establish what kind of people you want to invite, the type of personality they should possess, i.e., you need to define “job specifications” for every position that needs to be filled in the organization.

This can be inclusive of varying physical specifications, mental capabilities, emotional and behavioural outlooks, etc. For example, if you are seeking an individual to take care of pick-up and transfer, the characteristics most appealing would be good communications skills, smart, dedicated to work and someone willing to work long hours and patient. Likewise, if you need someone to do costing/fare construction, the best characteristics would be excellence in academics, knowledge of geography of the

world and international tariff regulations and a mathematical or finance background in tour operating business. Job stipulations can vary according to section of operations.

For instance, for inbound tour operations, the staff needs might include:

- Supervisor transfers and pickup;
- Airport representatives;
- Reservation assistants;
- Domestic ticketing executives;
- Accounts executives;
- Drivers & chauffeurs; and
- Escorts/guides

Every single one of the above mentioned jobs will need a different skill set. For example, the supervisor has to have sufficient experience to be able to explain and train his/her staff on points and considerations relevant to pickups and transferring to hotels. This stipulates that he/she should be able to converse successfully with his/her staff and only then will the objectives of the organization will be met. As already stated, an airport representative needs to be sharp, dedicated worker, capable of working non conventional hours because in India majority of the international flights land at midnight. Hence, candidates who can also work during the day as Office Assistants will be given preference.

Accounts workers need to hold expert qualifications and be experienced because tour operation businesses are based on credit and on time settlement of payments requires alert attention or you may end up losing your business. Accounts executive are also answerable for vouchers intended for transit transporters (pickups and transfers) as well as for hotels. Drivers and chauffeurs need to have sound driving record and be knowledgeable of routes and signalling patterns. They should also have good communication skills and if possible, they should possess some knowledge of the local tourist attractions. Finally, they must be polite, courteous, and possess a sense of humour to make the tour a cherished memory. Escorts and guides play a critical part in the achievement of inbound tour operation. The escorts' duty begins the second a group lands at the airport in India. Beginning with the facilitation at the airport throughout the whole conduction of the tour, the escort represents the company. Essentially, he/she is the company's walking image.

Recruitment and selection of staff in the outbound tour operations is approximately the same as that of the inbound operations. The main difference in the operation section of outbound operations is that the recruits must be appointed keeping in mind the fact that a majority of the staff housed in operations will have to visit the destination that they will be marketing. So it is necessary that they have acceptable knowledge of one or more foreign languages. Skills required may be associated with the field of international ticketing, construction of fare/calculation, preparing itineraries etc. When choosing a candidate in this area, one with familiarity of destinations and geography should be sought along with know-how of the tourist attractions of the popular destinations.

In conclusion, it can be said that a systematically planned and carried out method of recruitment and selection process in tour operations can be critical for an organization. If the right types of individuals are chosen, and trained for these positions, the results can prove to be beyond expectations. Care should be exercised to place the right person in the right position at the right time.

The Operations Department

As previously mentioned at the time of introducing this Unit, operations of tours is the strength of the trade. Such operations are implemented mainly in both inbound and outbound fields of tours. It is the managers' job to make certain that the workforce carries out the tasks efficiently.

Inbound Tour Operations

Usually, you and your staff will spend weeks and at times, even months, getting business and administering it on behalf of your clients. When the tourists actually are ready to arrive, you need to make certain that you are able to deliver everything you promised during the negotiating process for the handling of the group. This is the time to live up to the expectations and prove your company's worth and that your country as a destination was the correct vacation choice.

A first good impression will go a long way to put all involved in the right mood towards the total success of the tour. Make one mistake and the opposite of the situation will be that the group will regret choosing this country as a destination, and they will foretell nothing but problems with their stay. This can translate to complaints even over the most minor of issues and it can lead to refusal to the purchase of extra services which in the long run contributes to the financial gains of your company. Thus, a carefully planned, prepared, and effectively carried out transfer of groups will contribute to a smooth and enjoyable start. In achieving this, train the staff to put themselves in the clients' shoes and see how they would feel after having travelled in long flights. They will be exhausted, not to mention, dehydrated due to the physical effects of the flight and consumption of alcohol only enhances this effect. They may also be suffering from the climate changes between home country and your own. A North European visiting South Asia in January can experience a difference of forty five to fifty degrees, and that takes a little getting used to.

Frequently, the visitors will be nervous due to fear of a foreign culture, food, and people of varying races and colours. They could fear getting lost, ill or being robbed in addition to a variety of other things. Naturally these fears can also be of the nature in a positive light and may be considered to be a part of the excitement and challenge of travelling to a different country. In any case, the clients did exercise the option to come to you. In any case, you have to train the staff to ensure the tourist's comfort and safety. Upon achieving this, even the noisy and hot airport bureaucracy and discourtesy of some immigration and customs' officials, luggage delays, and the lack of trolleys will most likely be ignored by them. At this point, the client expects you to do the following:

- Make them feel secure and safe;
- Satisfy their physical needs;

- Ensure that their status is recognised; and
- Provide a feeling of belonging.

Every plan before, during and after transfer has to focus on the completion of these above mentioned needs. You need to keep in mind if your clients really need you to carry out the transfer on their behalf. They may not, as a majority of the adults are fully able of finding their way to the places where they desire to go. It might take more time, especially in cases of language issues; it might not be as comfortable, more costly and slower when they do it on their own. Still, they will need your services as you can do it faster, at cheaper rates and in greater comfort than they can achieve themselves. Additionally, you can provide all the personal touches mentioned above. If you cannot manage this, then your service is only as good as the tourists arranging it all on their own. Clients will realize this very quickly and your business will disappear. Now let us consider the steps you need to take as a manager to make certain that all proceeds smoothly and the clients' wishes are fulfilled. In effect several days before the arrival day you must go through a cross-check:

- The kind of vehicle needed/requested for transport has been booked i.e., the booked vehicle is appropriate for the purpose;
- Ensure that the staff is employing the most appropriate type of transport for the client. For example, the client may have opted for an air - conditioned vehicle or a large one or a second vehicle as they have a lot of luggage (this is especially critical for special interest groups like climbers, campers, divers, and trekkers);
- The transport used by your is mechanically fit, safe and properly maintained and clean. The driver has to be instructed to the exact location of the transport within the airport premises and how the escort should be able to locate it. Ensure if there is a need for a transport voucher and the hotel has to be leased well in advance. Make certain all the required vouchers are prepared in advance and at the agreed upon rates. If cash is required for paying off a porter or other needs, then, acquire the needed amount and have it ready. Make sure that the staff knows about the transport company, how many pieces of luggage there are, and any other relevant details; and
- Being a good manger/supervisor means it is your job to make sure that the hotel rooms and the number needed is available upon the arrival of guests, also, inform the hotel front office and housekeeping about the time of the client's arrival, so, housekeeping is ready to receive them (this is particularly true in situations of late arrivals). The staff should also be made aware of any other needs of the clients.

You always have to brief the escort to gather and take information on:

- Flight number;
- Name list;
- Transport details and voucher;
- Hotel name, address, list of rooms, and hotel voucher;

- Any special details/instructions, such as, the nature of the group, difficulties with mobility, and VIP status, etc.; and
- Take a greeting/sign board (with individual tourist's placard listing tourist's name, country of origin, or the company he/she is associated with, etc.)

In cases where the transit between airport and the city is long, it is customary to have one representative to meet the clients at the airport, and despatch them to the hotel where another representative should meet them to settle in. In a situation like this, the tour operator has to arrange for both representatives. They both get similar briefing except the representative who greets clients at the airport has to have the transport vouchers while the one who meets them at the hotel will have the hotel vouchers. In this system, proper communication between the two representatives is essential. They have to have each other's mobile numbers so they can keep each other updated about the client's movements. It is up to the manager/supervisor to have a system of checks and rechecks in place among the staff. For example, before the arrival at the airport, ensure by calling the airline to check the actual time of flight's arrival. The exact time of arrival can only be determined once the flight has departed from the previous stop; warn the staff to not depend on the scheduled time of arrival as it can vary widely due to technical and non-technical reasons.

If the difference in scheduled time and actual arrival time is great, make sure the staff knows to inform the transport company and the hotel of new timings. Also, the transfer staff has to be at the airport before the arrival of the client, so they are waiting when the passengers come out of immigration. Using your own experiences, inform the staff about how long the clients will take to come out of immigration. If possible, provide your staff with an airside pass, so, they can enter the customs hall and help and greet the client.

In some airports this is not allowed due to security issues, you need to make certain that your staff knows this and they do not commit to something they can't deliver. In this case, they have to position themselves in the visitor's(/public) area just outside the customs hall with a placard having the guest's of group leader's name.

- This is the time to gain the first impression for your company, since there are not second chances of damage caused by a bad first impression;
- Your staff should be well groomed, clean, and tidy (make use of the personality factor);
- The staff member should be identifiable by a worn badge, which indicates to your clients that he is a member of your company and responsible for the clients; and
- If at all possible, have your staff wear a uniform, since it allows them to be identified with ease and establishes trust between the staff and tourist.

The person sent to the airport for transfer should be equipped with the following material:

<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. 4.1

Some other factors that need to be looked after include:

i) Passengers' Identification:

You have to train the staff to greet tourists warmly and give them a brief welcome, then check them off his/her list individually (for the needs of security and status), request them to wait in the waiting area so all members of the group can assemble in one place.

In cases where someone is missing from the list, immediately request the airport information service to make an announcement:

- The missing passenger's name,
- Name of tour group,
- Place of group's origin,
- Easy to identify meeting point, and
- Make sure that the announcement is made in the language that the passenger speaks.

On the off chance that the passenger does not show up, the staff must be trained with the correct steps to follow and at once, check with the airline to make sure that the group was on that flight or not. If they were not on board the flight, there is no point in waiting. If they were on the flight then the announcement has to be repeated, in addition leave a written note at the information desk giving instructions on the method of catching up with the group. Your transfer staff has to be instructed to wait a minimum of 30 minutes and then, they should proceed with the transfer.

It is recommended that, at every stage of the tour, the staff keeps all passengers up – to - date on information about delays, if there are any (this assures them that you care about each individual). If there is loss or damaged to baggage in the customs/baggage area, the staff should be properly trained to complete all paperwork for tracing/replacing the lost baggage. In this case an airside pass will be very helpful. Your staff has to know to be very reassuring at this point, as the passengers may feel frightened, frustrated or might even get upset. Ensure that the airline provides copies of all forms filled out and

these are securely kept by the clients as they will be needed for claims. It is the responsibility of the airline to find and forward the lost bags, also, a fixed rate of compensation is payable to aid with the cost of toiletries and other essential items, in case bags are lost or delayed. If the need is there, then your staff must offer to take the client shopping for essentials. In case your staff member has to leave the clients to take care of some other essential matter, he must leave a “signpost” to let the waiting clients know.

This lets the clients know where the tour representative has gone and why. Not doing this can create confusion within the group members.

Examples of messages to post could be something, such as, “please stay here I am going to check on the coach” or “I will be back in ten minutes, I am going to help with that damaged bag.”

When the staff has gathered all of the passengers and has made sure that all of their belongings are accounted for, he/she can lead them to the vehicle with a welcome notice held high so they can see him and follow through a crowded area. Proceed gradually, so that everyone can keep up, and converse with the passengers in a welcoming tone about their journey etc. It is recommended that you drill your staff to look after the group members at road crossings. Prior to vehicle boarding your staff should ensure that every visitor checks/is asked to identify their own bags being loaded. Normally the loading itself will be done by the porters or the drivers, but they can't possibly know which bag belongs to whom and if all bags have been loaded.

Once seated in the vehicle, welcome the group again, say your name again clearly, and check to make sure that all passengers are present and accounted for. Before the driver starts moving, he should introduce himself, as well, and state the hotel's name, in addition to stating roughly how long it will take to get there.

ii) Departure Transfers

The visitors, who came to a destination in groups or individually, have to go through the process of transferring a second time - when they are ready to leave – it is important for the company's image that the experience of visitors, who are leaving a destination, is just as good as it was for their arrival.

The process of transferring for a departure has to be handled in the most professional way by the staff. Similar to the arrival process, it has to start a few days beforehand. Inside of 72 hours after arrival, all the seats that have been scheduled for the next portion of the journey must be reconfirmed. This means that the staff has to collect all the tickets and carry out this duty on behalf of the clients. Keep in mind that a few airlines have different requirements like “reconfirm within 72 hours of departure” and not doing so may cause clients to lose their seats. Understand your local regulations. You need to behave in a professional way while handling/supervising these kinds of transfers. For example, every single client has to be notified in writing one day prior to their scheduled flight, the time, date and pick-up from hotel. This can be done by placing a notice on the tour notice board, or alternatively you can leave a letter for every client at the reception. (If this is not done in writing, and a client misses the flight, you can be blamed). Any departure tax details should also be included in this letter.

Once again, you will have to reconfirm the voucher and transport procedure with the transport company and recheck to ensure that there is no change in the time of flight. You will have to determine and inform how long before departure the clients need to settle their surplus bills at reception. Hotel computerised accounts can normally be issued just prior to departure, especially if the group is exceptionally large. However, some hotels prefer that this is cleared the night before departure.

On the day of departure, advise your staff to use the checklist (which is provided below), which is more or less the same as that of arrival transfer. Do not forget that the clients still have the same needs, i.e. undivided attention. They may once again be nervous and uncertain, but by now some trust will have developed in you and they will probably be easier to direct.

Departure Transfer Checklist

- In advance, inform clients in writing;
- Inform hotel and porters to be prepared;
- Get to the hotel before the given time;
- Find out from reception if everyone has made extra payments;
- Have clients assemble in one place and call those who are missing;
- Load bags and have each client confirm;
- Remind clients to do the following things before departure :
 - Pay any extras,
 - Return keys,
 - Clear out safe deposits, and
 - Ensure passports and tickets are in hand and that their luggage is accounted for
- Load passengers;
- Leave for airport;
- On the way, outline the procedure for the airport;
- Inform about the facilities that are available (for example, toilets, post offices, duty-free, or cafés),
- Drive up as close as possible to check in area;
- Before disembarking, wish everyone a safe and happy journey home and that they will come back soon. Do it in a sincere way;
- While saying goodbye some passengers may offer small tips and gifts. Thank for these but NEVER ask for them;
- Help out with getting porters/trolleys;
- Assist with check - in procedures/airport taxpaying, etc.;
- Walk with them 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, then, you are responsible for them.

iii) Other Areas for Supervision in Inbound Tour Operations

Tourism is a touchy industry, since it deals with people and their vacation time. In prior parts of this Unit, different factors that are required were outlined for making the client feel comfortable. There are however, some other factors that should be taken into consideration.

- 1) Tour operators have to be able to manage their finances well;
- 2) Tour operators also have to have good product knowledge, and you must have clear understanding of the workings and role of different organizations (like airline, hotel, and surface transport. Governmental departments, such as, Archaeological Survey and Ministry of Environment, etc.). They must also analyse various options available and have emergency plans in place;
- 3) You and all of your staff in the tour operation company must always be ready to act in case of any unforeseen developments (strikes, health problems, political unrest, hotels not available, or airline seats, etc.) and control the situation. Your staff should be trained to take immediate decisions and provide solutions;
- 4) The use of technology has significantly altered the nature of operations management. But, computers and fax machines, as well as, telephones do break down (e.g. in times of power loss, etc.). So, your staff should also be trained in the use of manual systems as they are hand in times of crisis; and
- 5) Market Research, market segmentation, comprehension of tourist markets, profiles of tourists, etc., are all essential if the tour operator business is to be a success and the tour operator has to pay close attention to these factors. Also, appropriate links must be carved out with the principal suppliers. Preparation of appealing brochures, taking part in travel conventions and fairs aid the tour operators in enhancing business. Many tour operators opt for direct selling to customers by placing advertisements in print and electronic media.

Outbound Tour Operations

This division is specialist in making available facilities only to passengers intending to travel abroad. To be able to carry out a variety of jobs, it can be subdivided into smaller sections given below:

I. Documentation Section

To be able to travel abroad, one must be in possession of a number of documents and complete a set of formalities. This section focuses upon the formalities and documents needed for any type of foreign travel. Any individual wishing to travel abroad will have to contact the documentation section of the travel agency/tour operations division. After inquiring for the reasons of travel, you can advise him/her about the documentation required for getting the necessary visa of the country of destination or other approvals like RBI or Income Tax Office. The formalities and documentation necessary for travelling abroad vary according to the purpose of the visit. The reasons for travelling abroad can be different - tourists for higher education, business, medical treatment, and

immigration, etc. In each situation, the formalities and supporting documentation differs from country – to - country and from various points of view of motivations.

II. Visa Section

This division maintains all the information for the formalities pertaining to getting a visa for different countries. The staff has to collect and endorse passports on behalf of the customers and deliver them back to the customers well in advance of the journey date.

III. Reservation Section

This is another important division that handles the reservation of transport and hotel lodgings. The staff in this division has to be well versed about the airline timetables, fares for the varying destinations, hotels, and various types of tariffs at the most frequently visited locations at the destination. After gathering all of the details of the programme, the information is recorded on a specially designed sheet of paper. After which, an agreeable travel plan is designed giving appropriate flight connections with arrival/departure timings and locations of stay. It also comes up with an approximate cost for the stay and fares.

Once the plan is approved, a final typed copy is drawn up and provided to the passenger for reference. This is called the itinerary. Upon approval of the itinerary, the reservation division contacts the relevant airlines and requests seats according to the itinerary. The relevant airline too will be provided with a copy of the total programme of the passenger's plans since it will need to send reservation messages to its concerned officers for the onward flight confirmation in accordance with the programme. Once all confirmations have been obtained, the airline will inform the agent that all is ready.

When the information is received by the agent, he issues it voucher drawn on the airlines, requesting them to issue tickets in favour of the passenger in accordance with the details of the flight given in the voucher.

Some vital contents of a voucher can include:

- a. Name of the Passenger,
- b. Place to be Visited,
- c. Date,
- d. Flight Number,
- e. Time,
- f. RBI Permit Number,
- g. Passport Number,
- h. Applicable Fares, and
- i. Agent Code Number.

After getting this voucher, the airline goes ahead and issues the ticket. The ticket is then passed on to the agent, who will cross-check it and after total satisfaction, the agent will forward it to the passenger. As can be seen, you have to make available several services for the passenger for which there are no extra charges. The passenger has the benefit of assistance and service from you. You must recognize the fact that if you were not there, the passenger will end up wasting a lot of time, energy and money. Another aspect of outbound tours is the sale of packages of inbound tour operators in different countries. Some large companies develop their own outbound packages and design products in these cases are inclusive of all steps necessary in developing a tour package. Keep in mind, that when you sell on behalf of others, make certain that whatever the package actually provides in services is in line with what is promised. Connections and experiences aid in this regard. This precaution is necessary as it is you who is doing the selling to the tourist. If things go wrong, you will be held responsible by the tourist as well as in the consumer court.

Managing the Marketing of Tour Packages

The marketing of tour packages and applying of the principles involved vary in inbound tours and outbound tours.

Marketing Inbound Tours

When Marketing Inbound Tours, it is important to concentrate on making your product popular in tourist generating countries in order to draw in tourists. So, the focus has to be on developing marketing programmes that target reaching this goal. Thus, far in India, we have been using the traditional ways to publicise our products through the 18 offices abroad of the Department of Tourism. Very few tour operators have their own office in other countries, print and distribute their brochures stressing the special aspects of their products otherwise, most just rely on the marketing efforts of Department of Tourism. This method is so typical that even the medium or small sized operator wishing to take part in international travel exhibition and expositions like ITB, or Berlin, they have to use Department of Tourism because they book the space and sell it out to Indian participants through Association of Tour Operators (IATO). To be successful in the inbound tour operations, you have to make efforts and gain direct access to the overseas markets. This can be possible once you start your marketing programme with the principles of “customer care” and/or “quality.”

The wished for quality of the product and appropriate customer care of the tourists booked by your overseas contact is a marketing tool for you. This is due to the overseas contact developing confidence in your establishment. You also have to be ready to come up on demand with packages according to tourists’ requests.

When products are designed with the above mentioned tune in mind, pricing will always be a stumbling block in effective marketing. As traditional practice in the business, the operator providing cheaper rates would get the business. But now the players in the business have switched their concentration to quality instead of quantity when pricing their products.

Therefore, the market is divided into two parts – one who makes a budget their goal or access to mass tourists and the other is targeting niche markets where price is not an issue. It has already been pointed out that endorsement of quality products is a word of mouth rather than costly marketing operations as far as individual tourist is concerned. For instance, even before the purchase of a package to India inbound tourists collect information from those who have already taken the trip. Due to this, when an Independent Foreign Tourist (FIT) lands in India he/she will probably seek a taxi driver to take them to their specific hotel at location X. More than this, they will have an idea of the setting of their place they are staying. This is all due to word – of - mouth, endorsements, and publicity of quality products. So, if you desire to become a successful tour operator, you have to market package tours that are combinations of quality conscious service providers in the business. After designing, pricing, and promotion of a product with the use of correct tools, its distribution must have proper planning. You can approach the consumer directly by sending messages to foreign tourists through their print and non-print media or you can plan the marketing in a systematic way by working with other trade players. A lot of countries use their tourism offices and embassies for promoting tourism. In this situation you have to let the Tourism department about your products.

The marketing of inbound tour operations should focus on quality guarantees at every level of product designing, development and delivery/promotion, after-delivery efforts, as all play an effect on the overall marketing philosophy, i.e., even if you don't gather feedback and analyse it. It is recommended that you employ all these and other creative activities to become a successful inbound tour operator.

Marketing Outbound Tours

Dissimilar to the inbound tour operations, this segment is progressively increasing and changing especially in developing countries like India. In 1970s and 80s the outbound tourism was considered an elitist practice and what's more only a limited number of destinations in Europe were popular such as London, Paris, and Switzerland. These destinations were heavily publicised in Indian movies of that time – especially in movies such as An Evening in Paris, Night in London, and Around the World in Eight Dollars as well as many others with similar focuses.

Regardless of the which areas your tour is focused on, for example, Singapore, Malaysia, or Switzerland, you and your marketing staff have to be familiar with these locations. It is only then that you will be able to present a true picture of the destination to your customers. Tourism is an intangible trade; therefore, it is difficult to sample it. So, it is only your first hand information about the destination (s) you are selling that will aid you in marketing them successfully. The most common tool used to achieve this target is to take advantage of familiarization tours offered by these destinations as endorsement tools.

Additionally, you and the staff can make use of the group escort facility and visiting the destinations. A standard practice is to give one complimentary ticket for every group of 10-14 passengers. The same type of formula is applicable to hotel bookings. So your marketing staff can be trained by acquiring first-hand knowledge of their products. Being an effective manager, you can divide the marketing department in accordance with the different destinations that you will be selling, e.g., if you plan to represent four destinations of the same continent i.e., Europe. You do not have to departmentalise. However, if you will

be representing four destinations on different continents (which are known as TC Areas), then, you need to make sure the staff is trained by departmentalising.

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*

