



Tourism Promotional Strategies of Tour Operators – A Study with Special Reference To Mysore and Dakshina Kannada Districts

KEYWORDS

Tourism activities, Tour operator, Roles of Tour operator, Tourism Promotional Strategies

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ABSTRACT *As tourism is one of the important sectors in the economic development of the country. Through tourism activities there will be improves of financial activities in both state and country. The design of tourism products is changing due to factors such as the growing importance of the Internet and the ability of tourists to be involved in the production of their own products/experiences. This paper reports a study into the responses of Tour Operators and On-line Travel Agencies to the evolution of the tourism sector. The purpose of the paper is to demonstrate an ongoing repositioning of these tourism players, the way in which Tour operators involve themselves in the tourism promotional activities in the places of Mysore and Dakshina Kannada districts through using their promotional strategies in the field of tourism. A reversal of the Tour Operator's role, from that of a general mass market orientation to the supply of a niche market demand by promoting customized travel packages based on specific requirements. Implications of this process for the marketing of destinations and SMEs are discussed in the final part of the paper.*

1.1 INTRODUCTION:

Over the decades, tourism has experienced continued growth and deepening diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Modern tourism is closely linked to development and encompasses growing number of new destinations. These dynamics have turned tourism into a key driver for socio-economic progress.

Today, the business volume of tourism equals or even surpasses that of oil exports, food products or automobiles. Tourism has become one of the major players in international commerce, and represents at the same time one of the main income sources for many developing countries. This growth goes hand in hand with a increasing diversification and competition among destinations this global spread of tourism in industrialised and developed states has produced economic and employment benefits in many related sectors - from construction to agriculture or telecommunications.

There are a number of benefits associated with tourism, including:

1. Enhancement of the local economy
2. Promotion of the destination
3. Generation of new jobs worldwide
4. Support of the local communities (i.e. education and health projects)
5. Implementation of education schemes
6. Conservation of the environment and protection of some endangered species.

1.2 PROFILE OF MYSORE DISTRICT:

The district is situated at a distance of 146 kms from Bangalore. The cultural capital of Karnataka situated between the rivers Kaveri and Kabini. Spread across 7 talukas namely Mysore, Tirumakudalu Narasipura, Nanjangud, Heggadadevanakote, Hunsur, Piriapatna and Krishnarajanagara. Emerging as the next IT hub of India with the presence of companies like Infosys, Wipro 2nd largest software exporter

of Karnataka. Mysore district is famous for its celebrations during Dasara festival, during this time the city receives a large number of international tourists. Mysore district gets its name from the city of Mysore which is also the headquarters of the district. A statue of Mahishasura, after whom the city is named, and a temple dedicated to Goddess Chamundeshwari on the top of Chamundi Hill near Mysore city, relate to the legend of its origin.

1.2.1 Some of the important tourist places of Mysore district are:

Maharaja's Palace: Built in the Indo-Saracenic style, the Palace is a majestic structure at the heart of the city. It was designed by Henry-Irwin. The dolls hall, the kalyana mantap containing life size paintings and murals of the Dasara procession, Durbar hall and the Ambavilas are open to the visitors. The golden throne is displayed only during Dasara festival.

Jaganmohan Palace Art Gallery: The building was built in 1861 and was converted into an art gallery during the reign of Krishnaraja Wodeyar-IV. It has paintings of the members of the royal family. Works of Raja Ravivarma and other Indian and western painters, display of furniture, glass and chinawares, oriental and western, decorative arts sculpture and musical instruments.

St.Philomena's Church: It has beautifully stained glass windows, built in the Gothic style and it is one of the largest church in the country.

Chamarajendra Zoological Garden: Started in the year 1892, spread over an area of 37.25 hectares is laid out in beautiful garden. Efforts have been made to create a natural habitat for a variety of birds and animals.

Chamundi Hill: A prominent landmark located at the outskirts of the city, can be reached by road or by climbing up 1000 steps.. Temple of goddess Chamundi which was built by Wodeyars is on top of the hill. Goddess Cha-

mundi is the family deity of the rulers. The statue of the demon Mahishasura who was killed by goddess Chamundi is near the temple.

Govt. Silk Factory: The renowned Mysore silks are woven here.

Govt Sandal Wood Oil Factory: Aromatic oil from the sandal tree is produced here.

Lalithamahala Palace: It is built at the foot of Chamundi hill. This palace was used to accommodate Royal guests. Palace is white in colour; Krishnaraja Wodeyar built its dome in 1921. Several ornamentation in this building is reminiscent of British Palaces.

Somanathapura: This Star based temple which is an architectural marvel was built in 1268 AD by a Hoysala general Somanatha Dandanayaka. It is famous for its elaborate architecture and sculptures on fine stone. The Hoysala architecture reached its perfection in Somanathapura.

Bylakuppe: A small village on the Mysore-Madikeri road, Bylakuppe became famous as a rehabilitation centre for Tibetan refugees. Buddhist, Golden temple is a new attraction for the tourists.

Gomatagiri: Located about 18 Kms from Mysore on Hunsur road a Jain pilgrims centre.

Kabini River Lodge: 80 kms from Mysore on the banks of the river kabini, sets the Kabini River lodge, rated as one of the top five eco resorts. To view the wild life one can venture on a jeep safari or an elephant safari or by drifting downstream sitting in a coracle.

Talakad: Famous for Panchalinga Darshana, located on the Banks of river Cauvery. It is fully surrounded by sand beds.

T.Narasipura: Famous for Triveni Sangaman and Kumbamela performed once in 3 years

Nanjanagud: The place is known as Dakshina Kashi with temple of Srikanteshwara built on the bank of river Kabini and also famous for Suttur Mutt.

1.3 PROFILE OF DAKSHINA KANNADA DISTRICT:

Dakshina Kannada is a coastal district in the state of Karnataka in India. Sheltered by the Western Ghats on the east and surrounded by the Arabian Sea on the west, Dakshina Kannada receives abundant rainfall during the monsoon. It is bordered by Udupi District to the north, Chikmagalur district to the northeast, Hassan District to the east, Kodagu to the southeast, and Kasaragod District in Kerala to the south. Mangalore city is the district headquarters of Dakshina Kannada.

The district is divided into five taluks namely Mangalore, Bantwal, Putter, Sullia, and Belthangadi. It used to include three northern taluks, Udupi, Kundapur and Karkala, but these were separated in August 1997 to form Udupi district. Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Kasaragod taluk are often called Tulu Nadu, as Tulu is the majority language in the region. The Alupas ruled this region between the 8th and 14th century CE as a feudatory of all the major Kannada empires of those times and it is for this reason that the Tulu speaking districts are a part of Karnataka. Important towns in Dakshina Kannada include Mangalore, Bantwal, Vittal, Puttur, Sullia, Surathkal, Mood-

abidri, Uppinangadi, Venur, Mulki, Dharmasthala, Ujire and Subramanya. The district is known for pristine beaches, red clay roof tiles (Mangalore tiles), cashew nut and its products, banking, education, healthcare.

1.3.1 Tourism Places in Dakshina Kannada District:

- Mangaladevi Temple is situated about 3 km from Mangalore. Goddess Mangaladevi is the presiding deity of this temple. The city owes the origin of its name to this deity. This temple was built in the 10th century.
- Alekan Falls is an attractive waterfall, noted for its picturesque locale. It is near Bale Kallu Gudda, one of the highest hills in the district. A winding scenic journey from Charmadi, 18 km away, takes to Alekan Waterfalls.
- Dharmasthala is a beautiful sacred island formed by the magnificent river Netravathi, famous for the ancient Manjunatha temple and the Sri Gomateshwara statue. This grand statue was carved out of a single stone to a height of 14 meter in the year 1973.
- Ullal is an enchanting beach marked by abundant fir trees. The Sayed Mohammed Shenphul Madani Mosque sanctifies this place. It is pilgrim spot as well as a good picnic spot. It is situated 12 km from Mangalore.
- Nethrani Island is a small uninhabited island, 18 km southwest off a small fishing village Murdeshwar and is shaped like an upturned boat with some vegetation along the rocky outcrop. The Island is famous for its Shiva temple and for having some of the best dive sites in world.

1.4 TOURISM PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES OF TOUR OPERATORS:

1. Local, Regional or National Marketing Strategies

Tour operators are playing an important role in the promotion of tourism industry. They are the main players for which introduction of new tourism destinations to the tourists. Tour operators prefer not only local tourists but also international tourists in order to provide the tourism services. Tour operators are introducing their tourism services through the web address. So creating the awareness in local, regional and national level is very important for them to increase their business and also development of tourism industry.

2. Seasonality Strategies

Tourism activities are also one of the processes which can be obtained in the particular period. There are few tourism destinations which are famous throughout the year, but many destinations are gaining the preferences only in some duration. So this process has to be identified by the tour operator so that they can provide the tourism services according to the seasonal fluctuation. Depending upon the seasonal, providing the tourism services is one of the strategies of tour operators.

3. Product Strategies

As the manufacturer's business depends on the type of their production, similarly tour operators business depends on the type of services they provide to the tourists. There are many tour operators who provide more than 10 tourism services to the tourists. Which include transportation facilities, accommodation facilities, sightseeing, hotel, bus, train, air ticket reservation, pick up and drop of tourists from place of their destinations etc. All the tour operators are attracting the tourists to their business by offering more number of services.

4. Target Market Strategies

The type of tourists is very important for tour operators by providing the tourism services. Each tour operators have their own type of customers as tourists. Some tour operators are providing the services to the tourists on the basis of group and some are providing the services individually. Tour operators have their own target group of tourists' customers while providing the tourism services.

5. Competitive Strategies

Competition is one of the concepts which acquire all the fields in the present world. Tour operators also facing competition from other tour operating agency on the basis of the different tourism services. In order to achieve the success in the business, tour operators have to face the competition in an effective manner. Each and individual tour operators have their own patron of offering and providing the tourism services to the tourists.

6. Branding Strategies

Many tours operating business has their own patron of rendering the services to tourists. While offering the tourism services, tour operators are using their agency's brand name for the purpose of attracting more number of tourists towards themselves. The past performances of the tour operators become one of the brand image for them to accelerate their business towards the profit region. It might be on the traditional patron of serving the tourists.

7. Pricing Strategies

Fixing of the prices for the service is very important for the tour operators. It should be fixed on the basis of the quality, affordable and accurate pricing methods. There are tour operators, who fix the prices for their services highly, that high cost is not even bared by the tourists. They offer more number of tourism services with special discount and less cost for the purpose of attracting more number of tourists towards themselves.

8. Packaging Strategies

Here the tour operators are supposed to offer the tourism services to the tourists on the basis of the package system. The package offer involve with type of travel, places of visits, where the accommodation facilities are offered and number of days. The packaging type of tourism services are like readymade offer that can't be changed from the side of customers as tourists.

9. Promotion or Event Strategies

Tour operators are conducting conferences, programme, discussion and meeting once in a while. Sometimes they bring some celebrities for the purpose of promotional activities of their services. In certain situation, celebrities may become ambassador for the specific tour operator. The purpose of involving the celebrities is for enhancing the tour operating services to the market.

10. Public Relations Strategies

In order to promote the tourism services, tour operators are building very good relation with the public. When the tour operators built good relation with the public, obviously public will provide the correct information to the tourists to get the tourism benefits from specified tour operators. For the purpose of building the public image and public relations, tour operators are adopting various strategies in order to enhance their tour operating services towards the profit region.

11. Social Media Marketing Strategies

Social media marketing is one the promotional strategy for a tour operator. Many tour operators are publishing their tour operating services through news paper, pamphlets, television etc. Here the main concept of the tour operator is to enhance their business activities towards the higher level. So through depending upon the social media tour operator are promoting tourism services.

12. Advertising Strategies

Tour operators are adopting different type of advertising strategy for the promotion of their tourism services. Incurring the cost for an advertisement is very essential for tour operators which resulted towards the profit making process. Through various channels of advertisement tour operators are introducing their tourism business.

13. Sales Strategies

Sales strategies are varies from tour operator to another tour operator. Some tour operators are increasing their business through rendering good and qualitative performance to the tourists. Some are promoting their business through advertisement, through celebrities and through pamphlets. Even the sales strategies are different but they need to offer the services on the basis of enhancing their business activities.

14. Merchandising Strategies

It's also one of the promotional strategies of tour operators. Tour operators are enhancing their tourism business on the basis of their type of product, here the product represent services like transportation, accommodation, sight-seeing, hotel reservation, bus, train, air tickets reservation, pick up and drop etc. Some tour operators are famous with their particular type of services. Here the product represents the type of services which will be offered to the tourists.

15. Web and E-commerce Strategies

Now a day's web and E-commerce has become one of the parts of human life. For each and every concept human being are depending upon the e-commerce. Majority of the tour operating agencies are promoting their tourism services through the e-commerce. So that tourists can get the information about the specific tour operators regarding their type of services and pattern of system as well as cost.

1.5 REVIEW OF LITERATURES:

Jacobson and Obermiller (1990) the researcher tries to show that the effect of promotions on perception of prices depends on the consumer's knowledge of prices of the product category. It thus seems reasonable to think that the effect of promotions on the formation of tourist loyalty to tour operator is mediated by the effort the consumer is willing to make in seeking bargains. Specifically, we expect that when tourists make greater efforts to find good prices, the indirect effect of price promotions on loyalty to tour operator is stronger.

Middleton (1994) argued that paradoxically, the inability in travel and tourism to create physical stocks of products adds rather than reduces the importance of the distribution process. In marketing practice, creating and manipulating access for consumers is one of the principal ways to manage demand for highly perishable products.

Yale (1995) inside the traditional tourism industry, TOs have always played a very important and exclusive role both with destinations and with local tourist services sup-

pliers. Their bargaining power allowed them to put together several tourist services in travel packages which were sold to mass market tourism demand and through that they can increase their organization image through their tourism services.

Leiper (2000) the researcher argues that tour operators are key factors in deciding the volume of tourists reaching a destination. They also have direct control over the tourist's choice of products and create the demand for a destination through their representation of the destination packages.

Frederick.L (2008) the researcher identifies that the purpose of this initiative is to encourage tour operators worldwide to make a corporate commitment to sustainable development and to make considerations for the environmental, cultural and social impacts as an integral part of the design and operation of their tours and the conduct of their business activities

Molina (2010) conducted research and discovered that there is a relationship between information sources and destination image, implying that a well designed marketing information system will guide tour operators to ensure they induce the correct image in all their marketing communication material.

1.6 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Travel distance, access, and cost continue to be significant barriers for visitors, and a competitive disadvantage for the tourism industry in Mysore and Dakshina Kannada districts of Karnataka state. Competing with well-known tourism destinations that are well-funded and heavily advertised makes the job of tour operator even tougher. Despite these barriers, there are more tourism opportunities open to Mysore and Dakshina Kannada districts. Both the districts are rich in historical events; unique culture, people, and natural environment remain as the key strengths of both the districts. Tour operators are failing in creating the awareness of their tour operating agency. There should be some promotional strategies has to be adopted for enhancement of tourism activities. Utilization of proper promotional strategies is essential for tour operating agency. According to the agency's strengths, it has to formulate marketing and promotional strategies of its various tourism services depending upon the demand and requisites of tourists.

1.7 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To evaluate the various services provided by tour operators in Mysore and Dakshina Kannada districts
- To study the different tourism promotional strategies adopted by the tour operators

1.8 HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY:

H₁: "Services provided by tour operators has substantially enhanced tourist flow of select destinations"

H₀: "Services provided by tour operators has not substantially enhanced tourist flow of select destinations"

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study has its scope of Mysore and Dakshina Kannada districts. The target respondents are chosen from both the districts equally. To analyze the role of tour operators, 400 tourists have been selected for the study. Some of the statistical tools have been used in the study in order to obtain the quantitative results. The selection of the samples is on the basis of the convenient sampling method.

1.9.1 Statistical Methods Applied:

Frequencies: The Frequencies procedure provides statistics and graphical displays that are useful for describing many types of variables.

Chi-Square Test: The Chi-Square Test procedure tabulates a variable into categories and computes a chi-square statistic. This goodness-of-fit test compares the observed and expected frequencies in each category to test either that all categories contain the same proportion of values or that each category contains a user-specified proportion of values.

One Sample T – Test: One sample T-test helps to identify whether the data is consistent with a hypothesized population average, under the more realistic situation when the population standard deviation is un-known.

Cramer's rule: This is an explicit formula for the solution of a system of linear equations with as many equations as unknowns, valid whenever the system has a unique solution. It expresses the solution in terms of the determinants of the (square) coefficient matrix and of matrices obtained from it by replacing one column by the vector of right hand sides of the equations. Cramer's rule will revealed a non- significant association it is revealing that pattern of responses were same.

Table No.1.01
Frequency and Percent Responses for Statement H1

Sl.No	Statement		SA	A	N	D	SD
1	The transportation facilities which have been arranged by the tour operator were comfortable so it leads to development of tourism sector.	F	87	127	59	56	71
		%	21.8	31.8	14.8	14	17.8
2	We felt safe to travel in the vehicles arranged by tour operator which leads to growth of tourism sector.	F	83	122	61	78	56
		%	20.8	30.5	15.2	19.5	14
3	The tour operator found to be highly efficient in terms of time management which influence the improves of tourists inflows and development of tourism sector.	F	93	106	89	58	54
		%	23.2	26.5	22.2	14.5	13.5
4	By considering the quality of transportation, I would prefer to book the same tour operator for my next trip which leads to increases in the activities of tourism.	F	114	119	72	37	58
		%	28.5	29.8	18	9.2	14.5
5	We could visit all places as planned because of the good transportation facilities, so it leads to development of tourism sector.	F	99	124	56	48	73
		%	24.8	31	14	12	18.2
6	The accommodation arranged by tour operator were affordable so which became one of the reason to expansion of tourism sector.	F	131	154	45	41	29
		%	32.8	38.5	11.2	10.2	7.2
7	The accommodation arranged by tour operator were satisfactory and according to our expectations so which leads to development of tourism sector.	F	118	136	65	36	45
		%	29.5	34	16.2	9	11.2

8	The accommodations were clean and hygienic which became one of the reason for enlargement of tourism sector	F	138	142	42	43	35
		%	34.5	35.5	10.5	10.8	8.8
9	Tour operator delivered/ fulfilled all the promises made which were related to accommodation so it leads to progress of tourism sector.	F	103	115	71	42	69
		%	25.8	28.8	17.8	10.5	17.2
10	The place where accommodations were arranged by the tour operator was convenient to visit another tourism destination without wasting time so it became one of the advances of tourism sector	F	83	134	59	58	66
		%	20.8	33.5	14.8	14.5	16.5
11	The guide arranged by the tour operator were well informed and provided good information about all places of visit which becomes one of the reason for expansion of tourism sector	F	109	151	72	39	29
		%	27.2	37.8	18	9.8	7.2
12	The guide arranged by the tour operator was good in communications and exhibited good manners and behavior so it leads to maturity of tourism sector.	F	94	160	70	39	37
		%	23.5	40	17.5	9.8	9.2
13	The guides were very supportive and answered all our questions about the places of visit which became one of the reasons for enlargement of tourism sector.	F	112	152	46	63	27
		%	28	38	11.5	15.8	6.8
14	Guides were arranged in all places of our visit which leads to growth of tourism sector	F	115	172	42	48	23
		%	28.8	43	10.5	12	5.8
15	Guides were arranged as part of the package and we did not pay any extra charges through this there is a cause of improvement of tourism sector	F	117	155	33	67	28
		%	29.2	38.8	8.2	16.8	7.0

(Note-Frequency, %-percentage, SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, N-Neutral, DA-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree)

Table No.1.02
One-Sample Statistics

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
q1.01	400	3.26	1.406	0.070
q1.02	400	3.24	1.354	0.068
q1.03	400	3.32	1.336	0.067
q1.04	400	3.48	1.371	0.069
q1.05	400	3.32	1.433	0.072
q1.06	400	3.79	1.210	0.060
q1.07	400	3.62	1.298	0.065
q1.08	400	3.76	1.271	0.064
q1.09	400	3.35	1.412	0.071
q1.10	400	3.28	1.378	0.069
q1.11	400	3.68	1.182	0.059

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
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q1.05	400	3.32	1.433	0.072
q1.06	400	3.79	1.210	0.060
q1.07	400	3.62	1.298	0.065
q1.08	400	3.76	1.271	0.064
q1.09	400	3.35	1.412	0.071
q1.12	400	3.59	1.211	0.061
q1.13	400	3.65	1.230	0.061
q1.14	400	3.77	1.158	0.058
q1.15	400	3.66	1.252	0.063

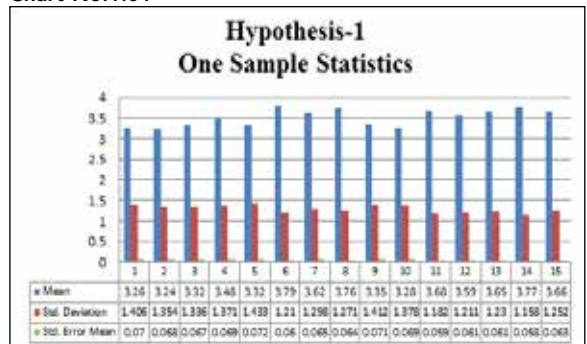
Table No.1.03

	N	Mean obtained	Std. Deviation	Mean expected	t	P
H1	700	52.7700	5.69853	45	27.270	.000

Hypothesis Testing Result- H1

The average total score on the issue of 'Services provided by tour operators has substantially enhanced tourist flow in selected destinations.', were verified against the average expected mean value of 45, one sample t test revealed a significant difference between average expected and observed mean values. T value of 27.270 was found to be significant at .000 levels. Further, it is clear that the observed mean values were significantly higher than the average expected mean values indicating that "Services provided by tour operators has substantially enhanced tourist flow in selected destinations". **Therefore the results indicate that that null hypothesis be rejected and accept the alternative hypotheses".**

Chart No.1.01



1.10 MAJOR RESEARCH FINDINGS:

- The tourists felt that, there is comfort in the transportation facilities arranged by the tour operators towards promotion of tourism activities.
- Majority of the tourists felt safe to travel in the vehicles arranged by tour operator which leads to growth of tourism sector.
- The tour operator found to be highly efficient in terms of time management which influence to improves of tourist's inflows and which resulted towards the development of tourism sector.
- By considering the quality of transportation, tourist would prefer to book the same tour operator for their next trip which leads to increases in the activities of tourism.
- Tourists could visit all places as planned because of the good transportation facilities, so it leads to development of tourism sector.
- The accommodation arranged by tour operator were affordable so which became one of the reason to expansion of tourism sector. By promoting the accom-

modations facilities, tour operators are enhancing the tourist flow in the select destinations.

- The accommodations arranged by tour operator were satisfactory and according to the expectations of tourists, so which leads to development of tourism sector.
- The accommodation which has been provided by the tour operators' was clean and hygienic which became one of the reasons for enlargement of tourism sector.

1.11 SUGGESTIONS:

- As a tour operator, they should not concentrate only on making profit in their tourism business but also tries to develop the tourism industry.
- Tour operating agency depends on tourism activities, so they need to identify various tourism destinations and those destinations should be conveyed to tourists, which leads to promotion of tourism industry.
- Tour operating agency should not concentrate only on restricted tourism services; they need to offer various tourism services so that more number of tourists prefers to such tour operators for their tourism activities.
- While promoting the tourism services to the tourists, tour operators has to highlights the destination's importance and its features so that it enhances more number of tourists to visit those destinations.
- Due to competition, more number of tour operating agency are facing towards the failure, they need to improve on optimum utilization of employees, guides and other stake holders so that it can accelerate their business towards the peak level.

- Many tour operators are promoting their tourism business through using only electronic media and some though pamphlets. There should be equal utilization of promotional activities so that the tour operator can convey their tour operating agency's services accurately.
- Tour operators have to concentrate on tourism policies, so that they can offer the services legally without any barriers.
- Promotional strategies of tour operating business in not fixed, it should be various according to the situation of the business so as a tour operating agency they must have the capabilities to face the competition in an effective manner.

1.12 CONCLUSION:

Tour operators are one of the stake holders of tourism industry. Tour operators are playing their role between tourists and the tourism activities. They are meant for providing the tourism services to the tourists like transportation, accommodation, sightseeing, ticket reservation, pick and drop, providing the tourism related information etc. As well as tour operators are offering the tourism services to the tourists have been considered as readymade package tour and sometimes tourists' only book the services on the basis of their own requirement will be considered as tailor made services. Through promotional strategies tour operators are introducing the new tourism destinations; patron of services, cost budget of tourists will be identified.

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