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Amalia Jane Kelly Marie Dieudonné

HOW TOUR OPERATORS PROMOTE MAURITIUS AS A TOURIST DESTINATION



TURUN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
TURKU UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Amalia Jane Kelly Marie Dieudonné

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The objective of this research was to study: What are the major roles of Tour Operators; What are the main tools that tour operators are using in-order to promote Mauritius while facing high competitors; Do they work alone or do they have the support of Mauritian government, what are the countries that are mainly targeted; What do they promote and why?. What are the obstacles that their company faces in order to fulfill customer needs?

The work is to found out how tour operators promote Mauritius as a tourist destination. As tourism activity in Mauritius continues to grow rapidly so do the expectation of tourists for high quality services and environments. The challenge is for destinations to develop a service culture, physical environment and a set of products that can satisfy not only first-time visitors but attract repeat visitors. Tourism was always a center of interest for me I was all the time wondering how can our small island been visited all the time with such a mass amount of tourists from all over the world. Mauritius economy was in the past depending on just textile and sugar but nowadays it depend also on the tourism industry.

For the research Destination management, destination, tourism promotion, tour operators are the main purpose of the study.

KEYWORDS:

Destination management and marketing), Tourism promotion Mauritius, Tour Operators Destination.

Tekijä(t)

AMALIA JANE KELLY MARIE DIEUDONNE

Tässä työssä tarkoituksena oli tutkia, mitkä ovat matkanjärjestäjien roolit, millä keinoin Mauritiusta markkinoidaan kun kilpailu alalla on suurta, työskentelevätkö matkanjärjestäjät yksin vai saavatko he apua valtiolta, mille kohdealueille Mauritiusta markkinoidaan, mitä asioita kampanjoissa korostetaan ja miksi. Tutkin myös, minkäläisiä vaikeuksia yritykset kohtaavat yrittäessään täyttää asiakkaidensa tarpeet.

Työn tarkoitus oli tutkia, miten matkanjärjestäjät markkinoivat Mauritiusta matkakohteena. Mauritiukselle suuntautuva turismi kasvaa nopeasti, mutta niin kasvavat myös turistien odotukset palvelun ja ympäristön korkeasta tasosta. Matkakohteiden haasteena on kehittää palvelua, ympäristöä ja tuotteita, jotka tyydyttävät sekä ensimmäistä kertaa Mauritiukselle matkustavan että uudestaan palaavan turistin tarpeet. Turismi on aina kiinnostanut minua, sillä olen usein miettinyt, miten pienikokoiselle saarellemme saapuu valtaisia määriä turisteja. Aikaisemmin Mauritiuksen talous on ollut riippuvainen tekstiiliteollisuudesta ja sokerintuotannosta, mutta nykyään myös turismista.

Tutkimuksen pääkohteita ovat matkakohde, sen johtaminen, turismin edistäminen ja matkanjärjestäjät.

ASIASANAT:

Matkakohde, Johtaminen, Turismin edistäminen, Matkanjärjestäjät.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (OR) SYMBOLS

WTO	World Trade Organization
MTPA	Mauritius Tourist Promotion Authority

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

“Tourist destination management actuates the process of planning, organizing performing and realizing the development of tourism” (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001:64; Evans & et.al, 2003; Uran & Ovsenik 2006:42).

According to Page, S. (2006) the word ‘management’ connected with tourism could be seen as how tourism needs to be handled as an activity that is developing at all the levels, i.e. local, national and global level.

Tourism management often handles with contradictive aspects. Tourism as a private sector has to be able to gain profit. However tourism will always affect the environment. These two aspects should be harmonized in order to satisfy all parties.

Managements as an activity consist of the following:

1. *Planning*, Setting of goals and the ways to attain them.
2. *Organizing*, Separating the work into smaller projects connected together logically. Sharing the tasks between people.
3. *Leading*, Finding the right ways to motivate the staff.
4. *Controlling*, searching for an efficient way to collect information about the progress of the projects.

An important aspect in all these steps is the decision-making by managers, companies or tourist destinations in order to rein them to accomplish objectives coupled with tourism management. Page, S. (2006)

Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert, et al (1998) debate that the destination of the tourism is the one to profit for the tourism and hence also the main factor for tourism activity.

There has been small research addressing on strategic and marketing management in the tourism context (Riege and Perry, 2000). They indicated that urgent need to concentrate research on strategic marketing in international travelling and tourism in order to accomplish an advantage in constantly competing markets.

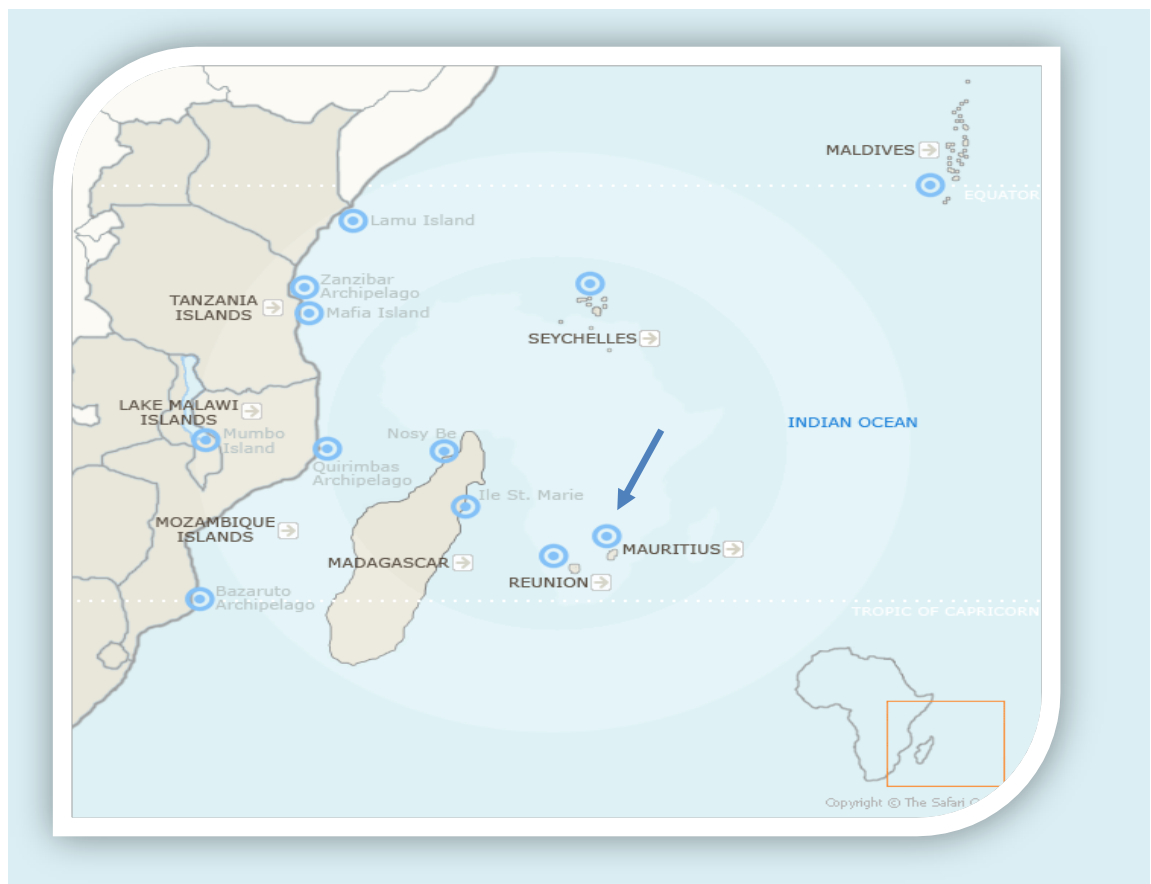
According to Middleton and Clarke (2001) stated that the essential component of a marketing strategy is the formulation of brand, image and positioning. This elements aims to answer “the organization position in terms of customer and retailers perceptions of its products and values.” and it includes the choice of corporate brand and image in relation to competitors Hartl (2004) recognizes product branding to be vital concept in traditional marketing .

American Marketing Association defines a brand as *“a name, term, sign, symbol, or a design, or a combination of them to identify the goods and services of one seller group or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition”*. (Morgan, Pritchard and Pride (2004). Ritchie and Ritchie’s (1998) defines a destination brand as *“a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience”*. Further Hartl (2004) points out that can be affiliated with accommodations, airline businesses, car rentals, tour operations and attractions in the tourism industry examples are. Disneyland and Legoland can be named as good examples of global attraction brands

The aim of the thesis is to gain better understanding of how tour operators promote Mauritius as a tourism destination. This study enquired specific attention on what is being done to magnetize tourists to visit Mauritius. It further looks into the weaknesses and strong points that tour operators have. It addresses how tour operators achieve their goals with the increasing demand

for new destinations. Operators face a constant pressure for development in order to satisfy the growth of this complex and diversify tourism industry in Mauritius. Tourism industry is the 3rd pillar; Finance services is the 4th; Textile is the 2nd pillar and Sugar is the 1st pillar of Mauritian economy that partakes greatly to the government's GDP.

1.2 Introduction to Mauritius



In 1715, only five years after the Dutch had left the island, French entered it and renamed it Ile de France. The French imported slaves from traders in the Muslim ports of the East African Coast and Madagascar. The slaves were brought to the island for the plantations they had in both Reunion Island and Mauritius (Wolf 1982)

Dr. Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, the son of an Indian immigrant, brought independence to Mauritius on 12 March 1968, and granted everyone an equal right to vote (Moerkamp 1998; Mulloo 2009). Dr. Seewoosagur Ramgoolam became the first Prime Minister of Mauritius. Mauritius is until today, the only nation in the world belonging both to La Francophone as to The New Commonwealth (Eriksen 1998). At first Mauritius was a constitutional monarchy of United Kingdom and became a republic in 1992.



Mauritius is a small island situated in the Indian Ocean and one of the most fascinating vacation destinations in Africa. It is mostly famous for its tropical beauty and sandy beaches, as well as a cultural experience. Mauritius has a cosmopolitan culture; Indian, African, European and Chinese. The most astonishing thing is that there is a good understanding among people from different roots. Mauritius is today a unique melting pot of peoples, languages and cultures.

There is a plethora of intriguing choices for the cultural traveler. It is usual to find mosques, churches, Chinese pagodas and Hindu temples in a short range. A journey from one side of the island to the other side is also a journey into astonishing traditional habits. Peoples from different continents have imported also their traditions when it comes to culinary art; Chinese, Indian or mixed restaurants can be found all over the island. The folkloric dance, *Sega*, offers a unique experience for the tourists. *Sega* dancing shows are held in the hotels almost daily.

Mauritius has been a member of World trade organization (WTO) since 1995, and has its own Airlines Air Mauritius. Air Mauritius has regular flying routes to Nairobi (Kenya), Antananarivo (Madagascar), Saint-Denis (Reunion Island), Cape Town, and Johannesburg (South Africa), in Africa. To Europe it flies to and from France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and United Kingdom. In India it serves Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Bangalore. On other continents the company flies to Australia, China, Malaysia, and Singapore. With this diverse tourist can visit the country.

1.2.1 Mauritian Market

Compared with the other African nations, Mauritius has been successful both socially and economically: It is a sugar and clothing exporter and a center for high market tourism. Though it has been suffering from competition with low

cost textile producers and the decrease of sugar subsidies from Europe (BBC newsletter).

1.2.2 Tourism Flow

Mauritius has registered a net increase in incoming visitors during the past decade. It has a strong tourism economy with both growing local and international market.

Statistics from January to November 2011 shows that the mass tourists came from Europe. Approximately 544,451 from this 266,632 come from France, 80,904 from United Kingdom, 51,830 from Germany and Italy 47,519 (see Appendix 1) (Ministry of Tourism).

1.3 Research Purpose and Research Questions

Based on the discussion above, the aim of this thesis is to gain a better understanding of how tour operators promote Mauritius. The purpose is reached by addressing the following research questions:

1. How is Mauritius promoted?
2. Where are the target countries?
3. What do tour operators promote?

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Destination

According to Cooper et al (1998) destination is defined as “the focus of facilities and services designed to meet the needs of the tourists”. A destination can be characterized in the six As framework illustrates in Table 1. Buhalis (2000).

Table 1: Six As Framework for the analysis of tourism destinations (Buhalis (2000))

-
- **Attractions** (*natural, man-made, artificial, purpose built, heritage, special events*)
 - **Accessibility** (*entire transportation system comprising of routes, terminals and vehicles*)
 - **Amenities** (*accommodation and catering facilities, retailing, other tourist services*)
 - **Available packages** (*pre-arranged packages by intermediaries and principals*)
 - **Activities** (*all activities available at the destination and what consumers will do during their visit*)
 - **Ancillary services** (*services used by tourists such as banks, telecommunications, post, newsagents, hospitals, etc.*)
-

Destinations are any places that can attract visitors for a temporary stay, it can range from continents, countries, states, provinces, cities and villages provided built resort areas are available. At the foundation level destinations are essentially communities based on local government boundaries. The WTO defines “local tourism destination”: as a physical space in which a visitor spends at least one overnight. It incorporates tourism products such as support services and attractions sites, and tourism activity can be done within one day of travel. Tourists travel to various destinations. Other definitions include according to Kotler et al., (2006) destinations are places with actual or perceived boundary, such as the physical boundary of an island, political boundaries (countries), or even market-created boundaries

2.2 Destination management and marketing

Destination marketing is a vital part of developing and retaining a particular location’s popularity. However, most tourism planners focus only on destination

developments without paying attention to retaining and preserving the attributes that first attracted travellers to that destination in the first place

Therefore, development of a tourist destination has lately become one of the most research fields in the tourism literature. Hence, destination management or destination marketing is one of the key theoretical standpoints in this study.

Wahab et al. (1976) outlined the scope of tourism destination marketing: as the management process through which the tourist organizations or tourist enterprises identify their prospective tourist either actual or potential, communicate with them to find out and possibly influence their wishes, needs, motivations, likes and dislikes, on local, regional, national and international levels. Based on these therefore, tourist organizations or enterprises formulate and adapt their tourist products accordingly in view of achieving optimal tourist satisfaction thereby fulfilling their objectives.

Destination marketing plays a crucial role in entangle that the destination lifecycle does not enter a stage of saturation or decline. This is attained by constantly been in communication with the target markets at each stage of development. For example raising visitors' awareness at the initial stage of development, informing them in the growth stage, to persuade visitors to come in a mature and saturation stage and to retain visitors and later introduce them to new markets in the declining stages of the current market.

Destination marketing hence involves or presents patterns of cooperative and competitive linkages among the commercial operators and also the coordinating organizations. According to Buhalis (2000), a destination is a combination of tourism products, offering the tourist an integrated experience.

Destination marketing can be said to be the "heartland of tourism marketing": because of its role as a catalyst. It links all the other industries in the tourism, transport, accommodation and attractions sectors Seaton and Bennett (2004). With regard to the term 'marketing' Fyall and Garrod (2005) note the definitions tend to fall into two principal camps focusing on either processes and systems or philosophy and customers. However, marketing is defined in a general sense

and not specifically with reference to tourism. From the tourism point of view, marketing has to be located in the context of services and service marketing and keeping in mind that all the components in the tourism 'product' work in harmony. This reflects how tourism differs from other services. It is more supply-led, the product is a complex in a sense that it incorporates an extended product experience with no predictable critical evaluation point. Tourism marketing has high involvements and high risks for the consumers.

Whether considered from the management or marketing perspective, the role of public-sector support and/or the creation of private-sector partnerships in marketing a destination cannot be ignored (Seaton and Bennett). Page, S. et al. (2002) define the role of the public sector in tourism as "an anchor and counterbalance to the private sector", needs to "work in harmony with the private sector". The connection between the image and the identity of a destination cannot be taken care of only by the private sector, especially when it is the image or identity of a town, a region or a country. Therefore, public-sector intervention in promoting and protecting a local identity is essential for the development of a viable and successful private industry (Page, S. et al., 2002): the private organizations cannot successfully work independently.

Tourism in most economic sectors involves the development of collaboration both formal and informal partnerships and networks (Scott, Cooper & Baggio, 2008; Saxena, 2005; Tinsley & Lynch, 2001). Such inter-organizational networks independently work together to deliver an overall product of tourism regionally, as well as manage demand and supply in order to maximize benefits for all stakeholders.

2.3 Marketing research: identifying market segments for destination products

Marketing research is one of the tools used extensively by destination marketers to identify the types of customers that can be attracted (active demand), as well as the prospective visitors (suppressed demand) who do not visit for a variety of reasons (Athiyaman, 1997). Approaching the right target market and providing the most suitable combination of local tourism products

and services is the secret for successful destinations. Therefore, the product design and formulation should be based on marketing research (Baker, Hozier & Rogers, 1994; Ritchie, 1996; Calantone and Mazanec, 1991; Hu & Ritchie, 1993). The effective of promotional tools can be evaluated so that the most cost-effective media is used to approach, inform and persuade target markets to visit the destination (Woodside, 1990). Table 2 illustrates the contribution of marketing research to destination marketing.

Table 2: Contribution of marketing research to destination marketing (Baker et al., (1994), Ritchie (1996), Calantone and Mazanec (1991)).

-
- *Identification of the main attributes anticipated by each market segment*
 - *Design and attributes required for tourism products and services*
 - *Evaluation and development of destination image*
 - *Segmentation of market and development of corresponding marketing mixes*
 - *Opening new markets and reducing dependency on existing ones*
 - *Evaluation of the elasticity of demand for each market segment*
 - *Reduction of seasonality by matching market segments*
 - *Examination of reasons deterring people (suppressed demand) from visiting destinations.*
 - *Assessment of tourism impacts to the destination and selecting the right segments*
 - *Evaluation of marketing effectiveness and selection of media for promotion.*
-

It is therefore very important to have a co-ordinated surveys and data in order to produce meaningful inferences to inform and guide tourism policies and marketing strategies (March, 1994; Hawes, Taylor & Hampe, 1991)

2.4 Destination marketing mix

Once a tourism management and marketing strategy have decided on destinations a marketing mix is developed. This will enable them to approach each target market with a comprehensive range of offerings and to propose an integrated solution to consumer needs and wants

2.4.1 Formulating the destination product

Destinations are amalgams of individually produced goods. Understanding the core product as well as all the facilitating, supportive and augmented products for each target market is of paramount importance for destination marketing. The augmented environment will include also the intangible elements for example customer interaction and customer participation, accessibility to the region and physical environment (Kotler, Bowen et al., 1996)

2.4.2 Promoting the destination

Promoting destinations essentially implies the development of communicating channels with clientele and other stakeholders to raise awareness and persuade to purchase products. Destination promotion requires a co-ordinate campaign and message for all local principals and suppliers. Designing a cost-effective promotional mix is difficult because of the diversity of tourism suppliers at destinations and the spread of consumers throughout the world. Achieving a consensus on the marketing campaign as well as raising adequate funds to develop and implement is one of the most challenging tasks for destination marketing. A wide range of techniques are used; Horner & Swarbrooke, 1996; Millington & Cleverdon, 1999). Promotional activity includes advertising on television, radio, and press as well as using poster campaigns. Targeting the right market with the right message at the right time is always difficult, especially for destinations, which attract consumers from several geographical regions as well as cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Although this can be very expensive, advertisement can assist the development of the destination brand as well as influence a large number of visitors to travel to the destination or to

extend their visit (Bonham & Mak, 1996). Crouch (1994) has illustrated that although many countries have substantially increased their spending on tourism promotions there is little evidence of their effectiveness as studies which have attempted to evaluate the promotional impact empirically have generally produced inconclusive and varied results. Other promotional ways include hosting a journalist or a celebrity in the destination can generate more interest than any other forms of promotion because consumers are more passive receivers than with advertising. Public relations are also critical for the development and updating of the right image (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998; Kotler et al., 1996; Middleton, 1992).

2.4.3 Marketing competitive destinations for the future

Destination marketing is increasingly becoming extremely competitive worldwide. Providing innovative and well-co-ordinate tourism products is therefore exceedingly important for tourism regions. Local suppliers should co-operate rather than compete. Buhalis and Cooper (1998) argued that tourism suppliers at destinations need to mature and understand that they should not compete with each other at the destination level.

3 TOURISM

Tourism cannot be explained unless we understand man, the human being
Przeclawski, (1996)

According to The World Tourism Organization (WTO), Tourism can be defined as “the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited”

Tourism a major source of revenue for governments as well as individuals nowadays, some developed economies and developing economies are focusing on the tourism industry for economic growth and GDP earning (Burns 1999; van

Egmond 2001; Greenwood in Smith 1998; De Kadt 1979; Lanfant, Allcock & Bruner 1995; Murphy 1985). Therefore many countries invest in the development of the tourism industry in order to gain higher living standards for the population. Nowadays the world is getting smaller and is fondly referred to as a global village modern transportation facilities such as airoplanes and jets, cruise ships and boats, fast trains and even cars, have made moving from one place to another quite easy and fun-filled. One can therefore visit many places within a short period of time. People have been moving from places to places since the man started populating the earth and moving around in itself is not a new phenomenon, because it is through migrations that the world has expanded and with human population growing rapidly migration or moving around as the case may be cannot be ruled out. However, when it comes to tourism, this moving around is not permanent, as shown in the definition it's for a period of time, and it is expected to be for recreation or sightseeing, in a relaxed atmosphere and with lots of money to spend. So rather than moving from place to place in search of greener pastures of better living conditions, when it comes to tourism, the travelling is shorter and money is spent, shopping, feeding, and having fun.

In Mauritius the tourism industry has seen rapid growth since 1983 (Eriksen 1998). It has now become one of the main resources, next to the sugarcane, financial services and the textile industry.

Since tourism was proclaimed to be a universal and fundamental right of all citizens of the world in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of December 1948, tourism has seen a great leap in growth (Singh, S.et al., 2003). Entrepreneurs leave no stone unturned in producing dream holidays, and government follow suit for various reasons including economic growth and GDP earning which will lead to greater prosperity of the populace (Richter, 1989). As such, value based tourism was brought under the dictates of capital economic logistics. As Waters (1978) put it Tourism can be found in every accessible corner of the world. In some cases, tourism's presence is gradually slashing the lifeblood of the societies. According to Singh. S.et al., (2003) even governments

that were aware of the parasitic nature of tourism could do little to protect themselves against the ills of tourism culture, which has an inherent tendency to pit people against people (e.g. tourists against locals, humanists against technocrats, rich against poor, and practitioners against intelligentsia)

Fainstein and Gladstone (1999) argue that, other than tourism, cities nowadays have few options for economic development. Tourism is an attractive sector for policy makers primarily because of its wealth- and job-creating potential, not to mention that 'ordinary residents have often benefited from tourism-related

The tourism-related improvements can also boost a community's image for potential investors seeking locations to establish their business or attract new residents in search of a locality with a high quality of life (Law, 1992)

According to Mathieson and Wall (1982), the extent to which the tourist sector can establish linkages with local entrepreneurs depends upon:

- The types of suppliers and producers with which the industry's demands are linked.
- The capacity of local suppliers to meet these demands.
- The historical development of tourism in the destination area.
- The type of tourist development.

All too often the tourist sector in various communities depends heavily on outside interests (e.g. hotel chains or tour operators, expatriate owners) and has little control over its fate (Timothy and Loannides, 2002).

This research is to have an understanding about how tour operators achieve their goals because the increasing demand for new destinations has put a constant pressure on development in order to satisfy the growth of this complex and diffuse industry. Tourism industry is very vital to the Mauritian economy as it is the third highest GDP earner.

3.1 What is Tourism Demand?

Tourism demand has been defined in numerous ways, including ‘ the total number of persons who travel, or wish to travel, to use tourist facilities and services at places away from their places of work and residence’ (Mathieson and Wall 1982) and the relationship between individuals motivation (to travel) and their ability to do so (Pearce 1995). In contrast, economic-focused definitions of demand are more concerned with ‘ the schedule of the amount of any product or service which people are willing and able to buy at each specific price in a set of possible prices during a specified period of time’ as written by Cooper(1993).

There are three principal elements to tourism demand.

1 *Effective or actual demand*, which is the number of people participating in tourism, commonly expressed as the number of travelers. It is normally measured by tourism statistics typically, departures from countries and arrivals at destinations.

2 *Suppressed demands*, which consist of the proportion of the population who are unable to travel because of circumstances (e.g. lack of purchasing power or limited holiday entitlement).

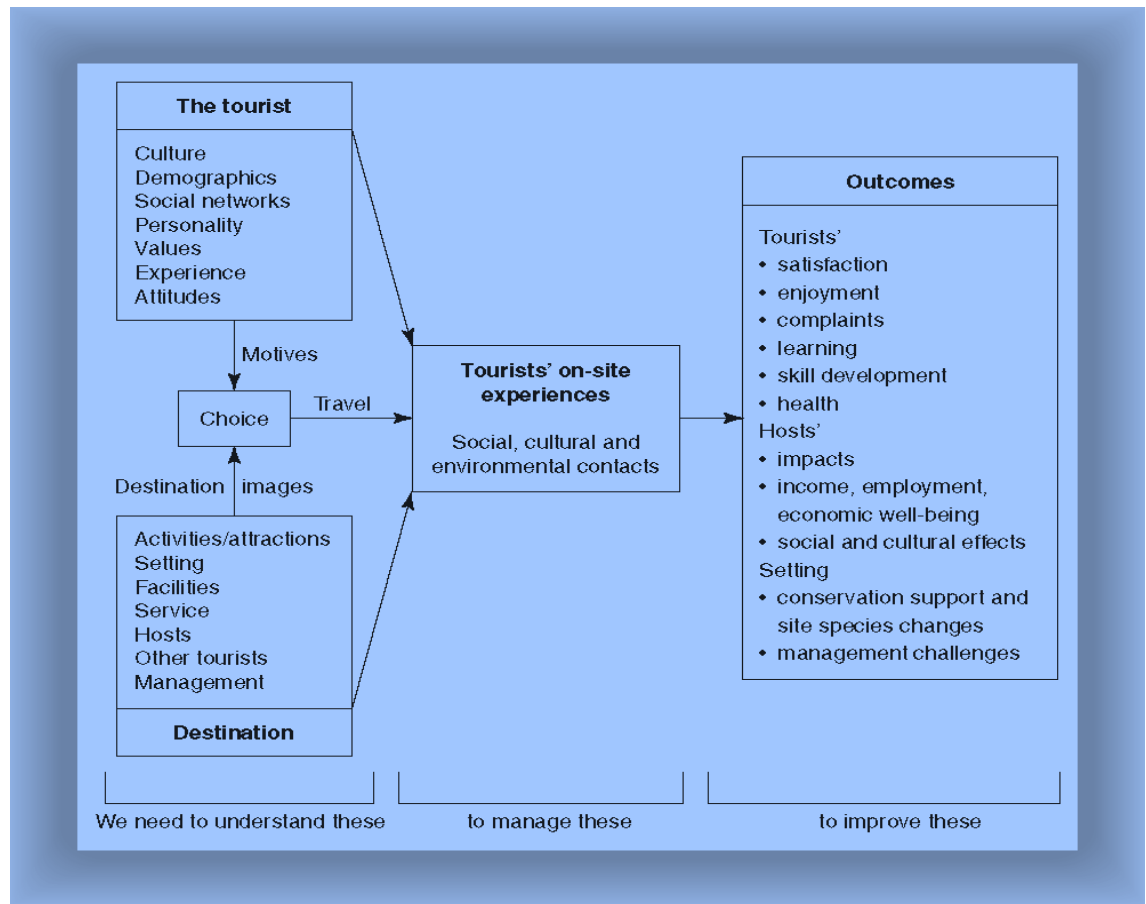


Figure.3.1 Concept map for understanding tourist behavior (Pearce P, 2005 reproduced with permission)

Suppressed demand is also sometimes referred to as 'potential demand'. Potential demand can turn into effective demand if the circumstances change. There is also 'deferred demand' where constraints (e.g. lack of tourism supply such as shortage of bed spaces) can also be converted to effective demand if a destination or locality can accommodate the demand.

3 No demand is a distinct category for those members of the population who have no desire to travel and those who are unable to travel due to family commitments or illness.

An interesting study by Uysal (1998) summarized the main determinants of demand (see **Figure 3.2**): These determinants include economic, social-psychological and exogenous factors (i.e. the business environment). This useful overview provides a general context for tourism demand and many of the

factors help to illustrate the complexity of demand, but do not adequately explain how and why people decide to select and participate in specific forms of tourism, which is associated with the area of motivation.

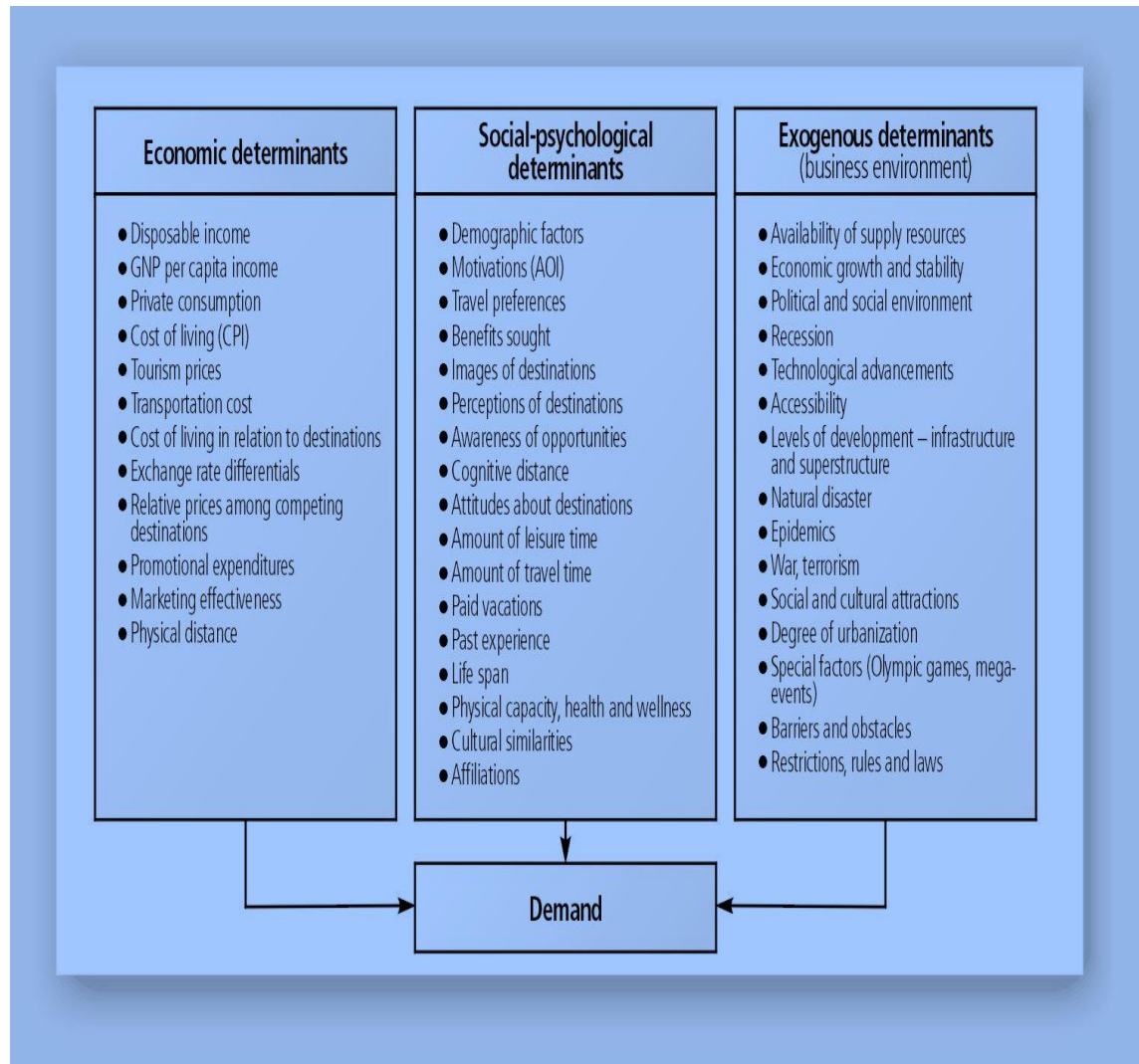


Figure.3.2 Determinants of tourism demand (Loannides, D. and Debbage, K. 1988)

3.2 The Future of Tourism Demand

Some of the consumer trends now affecting tourist consumption which may shape the quality as well as the nature of tourism demand in the next decade.

- Consumers are more discerning of tourism purchases, irrespective of what they pay, and have high expectation of quality.
- In a Postmodern society, some researchers argue that the consumer gains as much satisfaction from the process of purchasing as they do from consumption, implying that the purchase process needs to meet these raised expectations.
- Many consumers across the globe are now more e-savvy and able to use technology to establish the range and extent of travel and holiday options, leading to a greater demand for value-adding in the purchase and consumption process.
- More experiences travellers are seeking more innovative, unusual and targeted products which fit with their lifestyles, perception of their lifestyle and needs. The traditional annual holiday of one to two weeks, purchased through a travel agent from a mass produced brochure, will be willing to purchase a portfolio of products that appeal to their time-poor, cash-rich lifestyles. Ease of consumption will be the new buzzword: the holiday or trip will be an opportunity to de-stress and will not commence with stress, disorganization and lack of attention to detail.
- Marketing techniques which allow targeting segmentation and client identification to capture the individual needs of the traveler will provide premium profits for the tourism provider.
- Low-cost, high- volume mass products such as low-cost airline travel will continue to fill a niche for independent price sensitive travelers without any restrictions from government.
- Consumers are continuing to be heavily influenced by branding, brands and advertising which create an image of the market position, consumer benefits and promise made by tourism products. This trend is likely to continue, with destinations and operators using the brand image to create a unique appeal to certain markets and groups.
- New product development to appeal to individualized aspects of demand (e.g. health and wellness tourism) will see further growth, as niche

products aimed at specific groups with these interests are developed.
Page, S. (2006)

3.3 The tourism supply chain

The supply chain concept originates in economics and has been used to explain how different businesses enter into products at different points in the supply chain. Tourism is well suited to the concept of the supply chain because the product, service or experience that is consumed is assembled and comprises a wide range of suppliers. All too often our knowledge of the supply chain is quite restrictive, since a wide range of components are consumed in tourism including the use of bars, restaurants, handicrafts, food, infrastructure and related services. Once the consumer has chosen a destination and product, the decision to purchase involves contacting a tourism retailer. Having chosen a booking medium and selected a package from a tour operator, the package is then assembled.

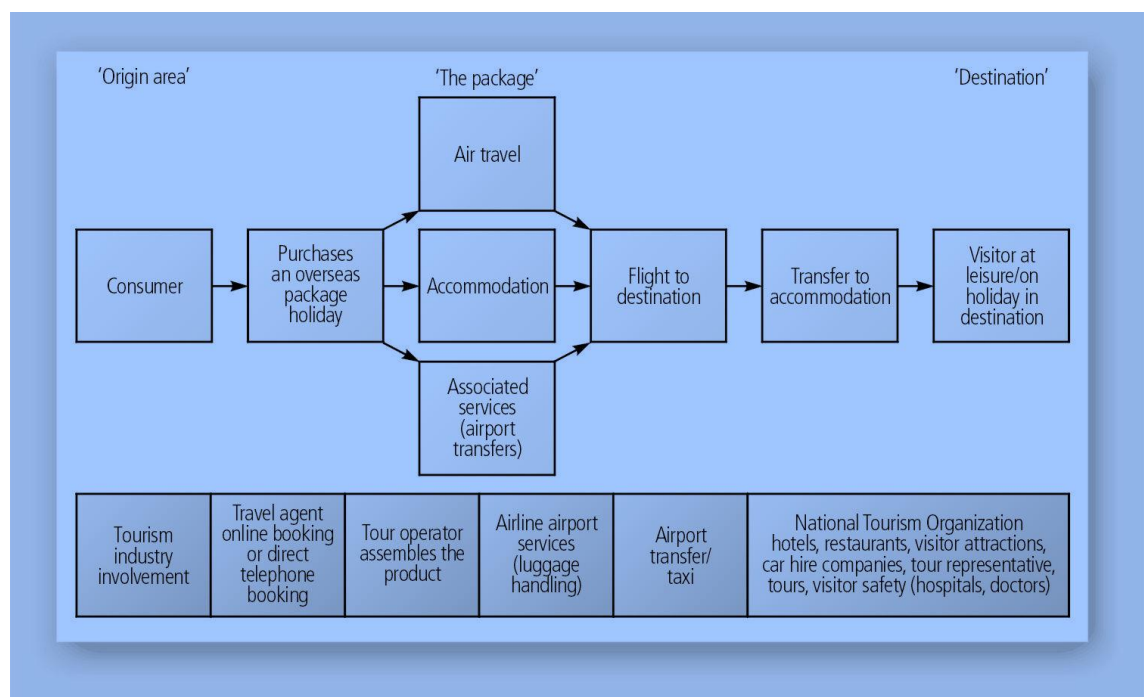


Figure 3.3 A typical tourism supply chain. (Page, S. 2006)

The tour operator enters into contractual relationships with tourism suppliers such as airlines (although larger tour operators may also own their own charter or schedule airline), hotel operators and suppliers of associated services such as airport transfers. These suppliers, in turn, contract other suppliers who service their business needs: in-flight caterers, airline leasing companies, airport terminal services (i.e. check-in services, baggage handling, flight controllers, customer service agents for visitors and those with special needs, such as the disabled). At the destination, ground services are also contracted. An example is the employment of tour representatives to meet guests at the airport, welcome them into their accommodation and utilize the opportunities for retail sales of additional services such as tours and events.

3.4 Transport:

Transport is the most critical element in the promotion of the growth of domestic and international tourism. At a simple level, transport links the tourist from the origin area with the destination area. It enables the tourist (the holidaymaker, business traveler and other categories of traveler) to consume the products and experiences they have purchased because it links the supply chain together.

Figure 3.4 illustrates the all- embracing role of transport to:

- facilitate the tourist trip to the destination
- Enable tourist travel within the destination.

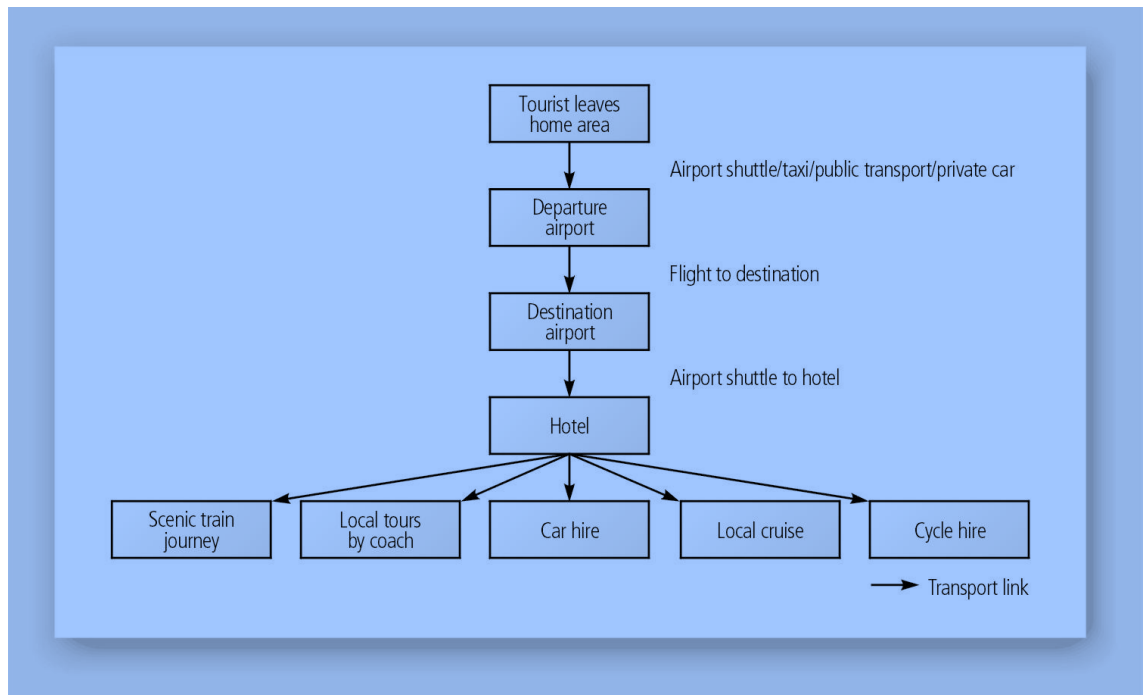


Figure 3.4 The role of transport in tourist travel. (Page, S. 2006)

4 TOUR OPERATORS:

A tour operator is in academic literature frequently described as an intermediary (Burns and Holden 1995; Cooper et al., 1998; Holloway 1998). Cooper et al., (1998) describes the role of an intermediary in the following way.

“The principal role of intermediaries is to bring buyers and sellers together, either to create markets where they previously did not exist, or to make existing markets work more efficiently and thereby to expand market size... In all industries the task of intermediaries is to transform goods and services which consumers do not want, to a product that they do want”

In 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights declared tourism as universal and fundamental right of every individual, after which the number of tourists has been enormously increasing (Singh, S et al. 2003). Since then, travelling has transformed to Fordian tourism, generally described with the term mass tourism (Wang, 2000)

Entrepreneurs try their best to fulfill customers' expectations, and governments have their own motives to please the tourists (Richter, 1989). Value based tourism was introduced to the dictates of capital economic logistics. Waters (1978), "there is reason to believe that... the worldwide interweaving of trade, tourism and financial relations is beginning to inhibit the national exercise of self-serving economic and political policies".

Tourism can be discovered everywhere in the world Tourism can in some cases be the essential for the existence of societies. Tourism is not only positive but can also harm the existing societies. Sometimes governments lack the means to protect themselves against the side effects of tourism. Tourism creates confrontations between different groups, for example tourist against locals or rich against poor (Singh. S et al., 2003)

4.1 Tour Operators Roles

According to Jenkins (1991) the actions of the tour operator in the developing societies needs to be carefully considered.

"...the tour wholesaler acts as a catalyst of demand- he interprets the market needs of his clients and packages these needs into destinations. His influence on the direction of demand is particularly significant to long haul, relatively expensive, destinations, i. e. most developing countries. Limited market knowledge, finance, and experience force many of the more distant countries offering high-priced, low-volume tours to work with and through specialist wholesalers. This can impose serious limitations on tourism policy making in the host country."

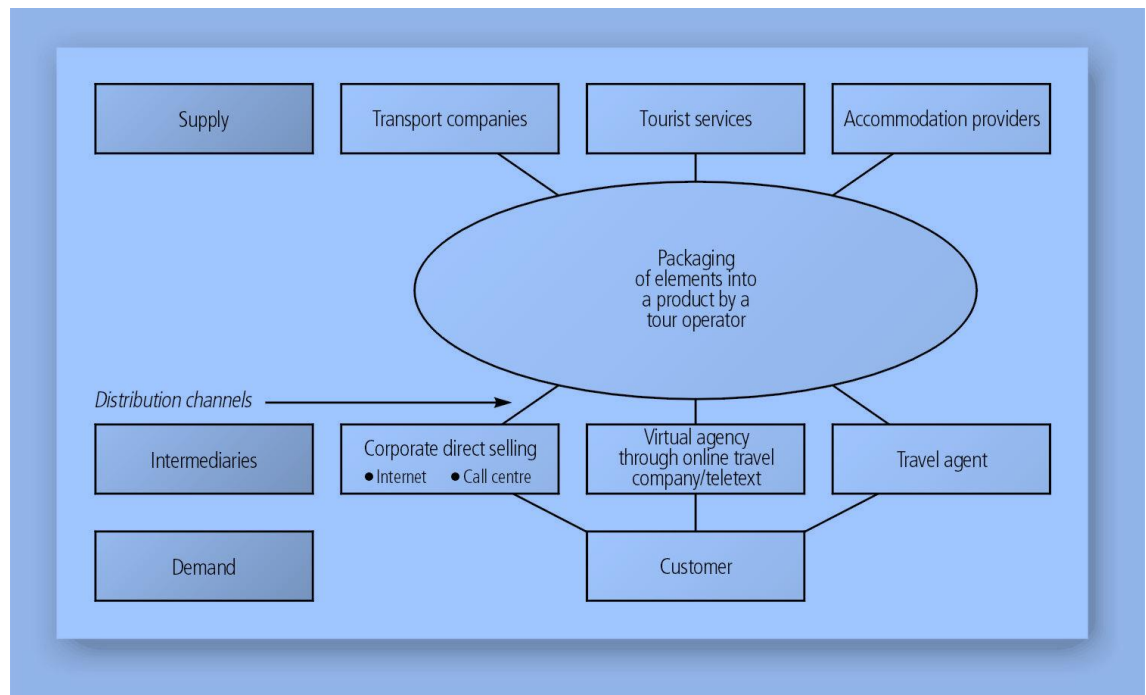


Figure 4.1 Linking of the elements of a holiday in order to generate, assemble and distribute the ready product to the customer. (Page, S. 2006)

A tour operator will organize, put together different elements of the tourism experience (see **Figure 4.1**) and offer them for sale to the public by means of advertising. An inclusive tour is a term used for a package that tour operator offers. An inclusive tour generally contains minimum of two elements offered for sale at the inclusive sale price, and will include a stay of more than 24 hours in overnight accommodation and other tourists services. (Page, S. 2006)

4.2 Economics of tour operation: Managing for profit

Tour operator generally procure airline tickets, transfer services from coach operators, and taxi services at the travel destination. They also write a contract with a host of a local entertainment host or attraction site. These additional services are sold to clients at the booking stage or at the destination. This way tour operators can get discount on their purchases, they can fix their costs in

advance and achieve economics of sales. The result is a business opportunity for the tour operator, who puts together a package of product or experience, takes care of the advertising and selling them. Then the tour operator will use the third-party service provider to serve the tourist with the promised experiences. Naturally the service chain is not always impeccable, and in some cases tourists may end up with unsatisfying experiences. Hence, customer care is one essential key factor for tour operators to ensure that the customers have enjoyed their travelling experience. Mark-up defined by the tour operator by adding altogether the input costs and their overheads and adding a profit margin to calculate the final price for the service.

The process of establishing a tour through from the initial idea to its sale and delivery to the client is presented in **Figure 4.2**. The time line illustrates the long time frames involved in restudy, planning, developing, and administering and finally actualizing the tour programme. In the following list there are some major risks that must be considered when tour operators are planning their operations.

- evaluating the possible customers
- how to compete with the already existing tour operator brands in the destination
- Investing significantly in human resources and infrastructure to start the tours in a new destination.
- Competing with long-established tour operators in a destination with a recognizable brand
- Investing significantly in human resources and infrastructure to start the tours in a new destination

Considering these factors, it is essential for tour operators to notice how important it is to set up and operate their business in a competitive and sustainable way so that the investment will be profitable. (Page, S. 2006).

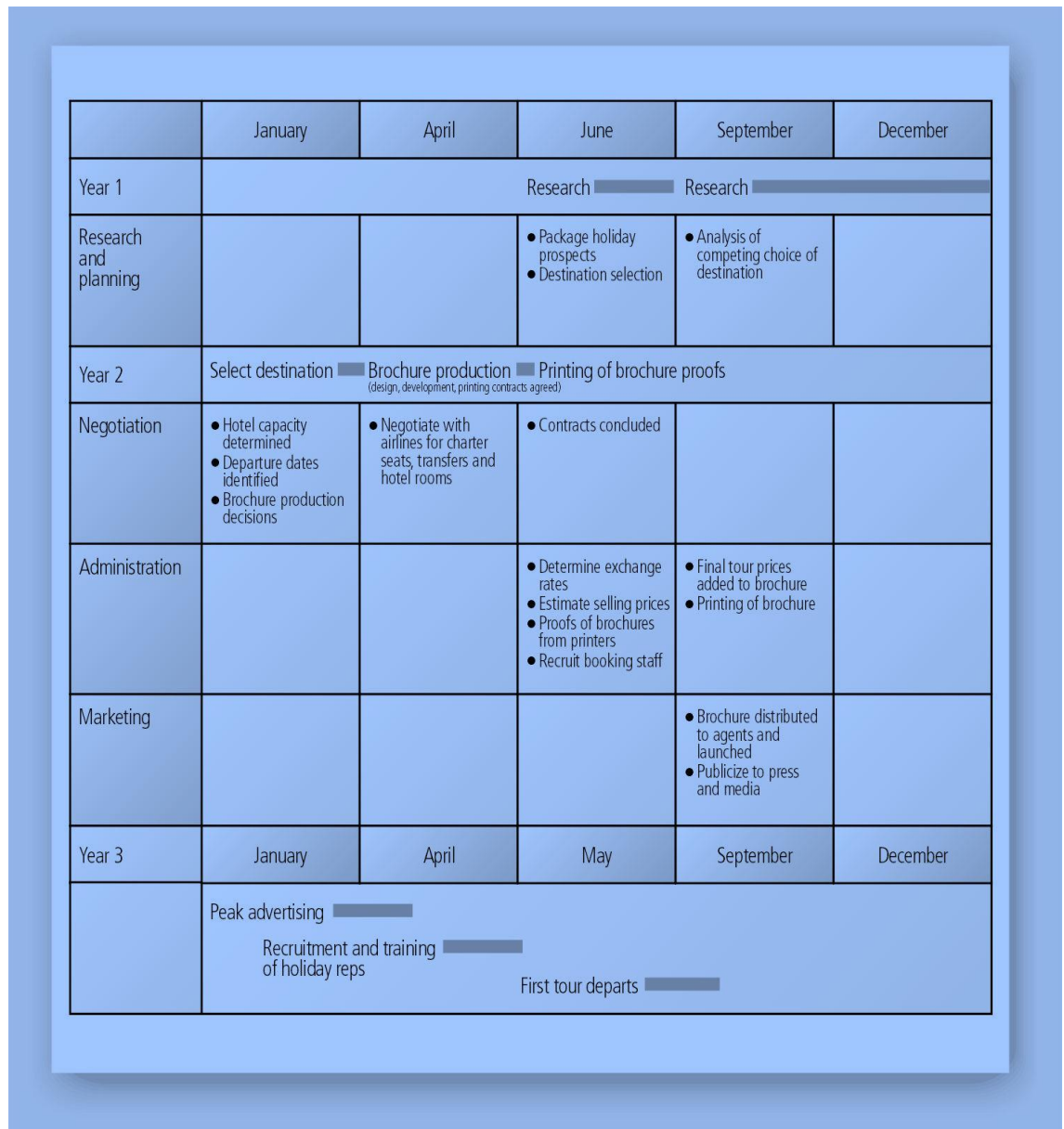


Figure 4.2 Planning horizon for a tour operator's summer programme (Holloway, 2001)

4.3 Marketing and Planning The Holiday: The Holiday Brochure

Tour operators use up to 50% of their marketing budgets to produce the traditional, printed holiday brochures. Printed brochures are still

considered as the most powerful marketing tool to attract the potential clients. In **Figure 4.3**, can be found an example of a printed holiday travel brochure. Lately printed brochures have been accompanied by web-based materials. Online brochures, websites and virtual tours make the places easy to access and they are more and more invested in. When planning, organizing and actualizing the tour programme, web based services have to be taken into consideration. When planning the tour, the tour provider has to remember the research and planning, negotiating with the service suppliers, the administrative issues and the marketing strategy.

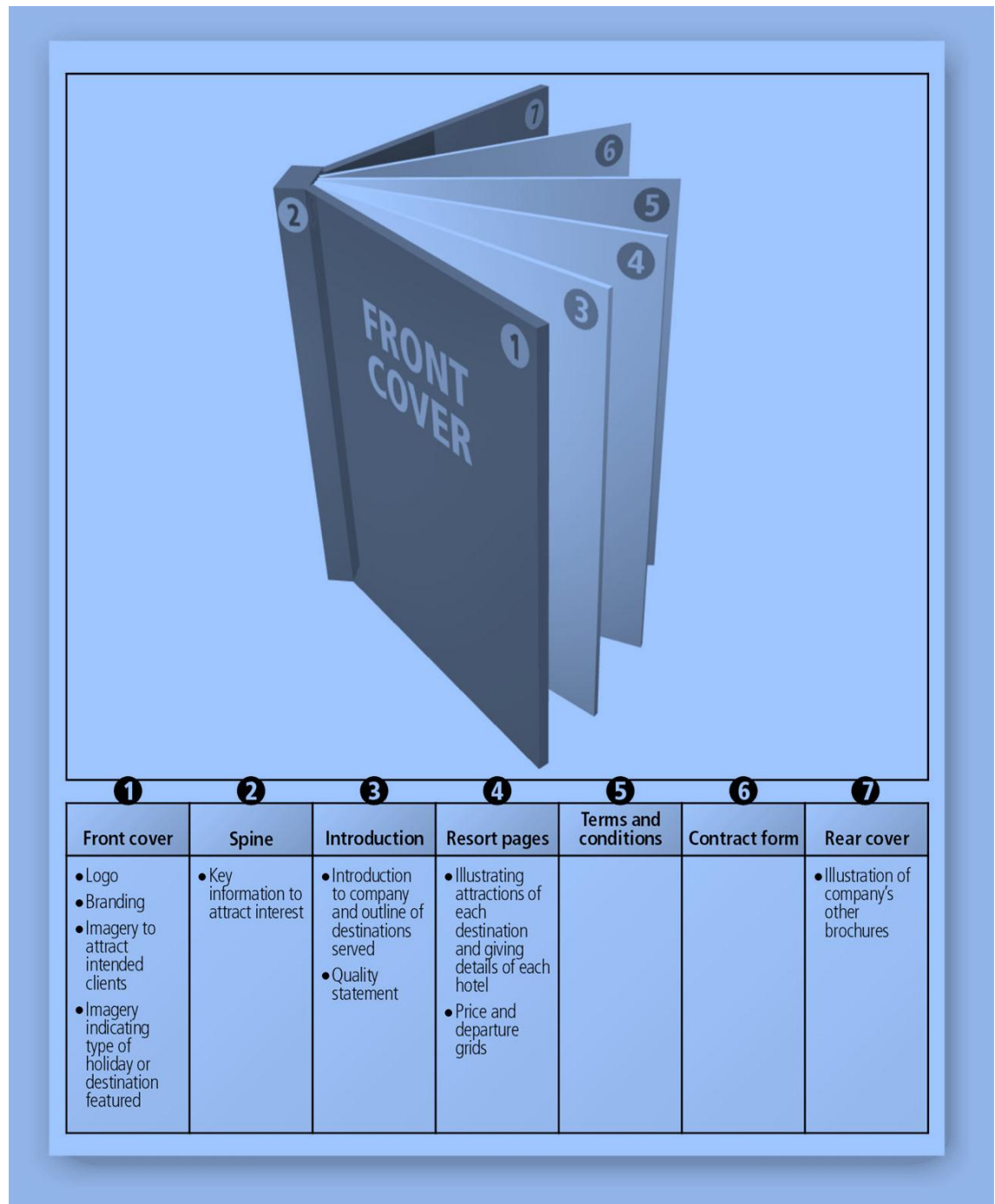


Figure 4.3 Structure of inclusive holiday brochures (c Eric Laws, 1997; redrawn and reproduced with the author's permission)

Thomas Cook was the first to introduce a printed holiday brochure in 1953 and the ever so popular modern day brochures have developed from his time. The holiday brochures adopted a format from women's magazines, as the woman was seen as the decision maker when it comes to spending the holidays. In the 1960's brochures started becoming glossier and filled with information and its main task has stepwise altered to its present one of a holiday catalogue.

Holiday brochures handed out by travel agents have several objectives listed below

- to increase sales
- to provide supporting information, such as product offerings, timing prices or additional services, to help the customer in decision making
- to provide the tour operator a cost-effective distribution channel of information and advertisement both for customers and agents selling the tours.
- to allow a contract to be written between the tour operator and customer providing information on procedures for managing bookings, complaints, refunds, the details of the service, the client's details and the possible insurance.

A brochure is normally planned like the example in **Figure 4.3**. Design of a brochure includes the following steps.

- identifying the customer and product
- using an appropriate company brand
- designing of the brochure with illustrations of the destination, photographs of the hotel, product offerings and additional services.
- layout of the brochure
- Producing an example that is properly checked prior the printing

Brochures do advertise dreams and images of the perfect vacation, but the legislation and consumer regulation in most countries regulates that the brochure has to be truthful and accurate. They must not make inaccurate statements that can be prosecuted under trade descriptions legislation.

To meet the obligations of a tour operator's license, the following information is required:

- the name of the firm responsible for the tour
- the means of transport used, including, in the case of air transport, the name of the carrier(s), type and class of aircraft used and whether scheduled or charter aircraft are operated
- full details of destinations, itinerary and times of travel
- the duration of each tour
- a full description of the location and type of accommodation provided, whether meals are included or excluded
- services or a representative are available abroad
- the price for each tour, including any taxes
- full conditions of booking, details of cancellation
- details of any insurance coverage (clients should have the right to choose their own insurance, providing this offers equivalent coverage)
- details of documentation required for travel to the destination featured, and any health hazards or inoculations recommended. Holloway, (2001)

5 METHODOLOGY AND THE DATA

According to Denscombe (1998), there are four data collection methods: questionnaires, interviews, observation and written sources. At the beginning a questionnaire was designed to be sending to 29 Tour operators in Mauritius due to nonrespondents participants the author was due to change the concept and had adopt for an interview as a data collection method. Denscombe (1998) argues the choice of interview is based on the researchers “decision that, for the purposes of the particular project in mind, the research would be better served by getting material which provides more of an in-depth insight to the topic, drawing on information provided by fewer informants”.

Yin (2003) states there are three types of interviews: open-ended, focused and survey. The interview in this study was chosen to be conducted via email due to lack of time and budget as the author and the respondent reside in different countries. The author created the questions based on literature.

5.1 Interview with Chief executive officer and Tourism & marketing assistant.

Respondent 1- Chief executive officer – Terry Harrison (STELL 'AIR VOYAGE LTD).

Respondent 2- Tourism and Marketing assistant (Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority) – Kalpana Dwarka.

Interview Questions:

Q1. What is the name of your company? How many years do you operate as a tour company?

Respondent 1	STELL'AIR VOYAGE LTD and the company have been operative since Nov 2010.
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Respondent 2 We are not a Tour company. We are a semi government body promoting the destination as a whole.

Q2.Is your company a Private sector or Public sector?

R 1 –R 2 Private sector

Q3. How many employees does your company have?

R 1- R 2 50-100 employees.

Q4. Where do most of your clients/customers come from?

R 1- R 2 Europe and Asia

Q5. Which country do you target the most and why?

R 1 France, Germany (They are the most captive markets and have always provided a constant inflow of tourist to Mauritius)

R2 France, Germany and Switzerland (Product answer to target groups)

Q6. When the visitors arrive, do- They have a plan? Or do you offer a plan? What kind of plan do you offer?

R 1 offers a plan (We offer tailor made packages for specific market and for a specific clientele.)

R 2 they have a plan

Q7 what do you think interest/attracts your customers in choosing Mauritius as their holiday destination?

R 1 Mauritius is well known destination, especially by Europeans. The natural beauty of our island, coupled with our courtesy in this type of industry has demarked us from other islands of the region, namely; Seychelles and Reunion Island.

R 2 Beach, quality accommodation, good food, security, excursions, golf and spa.

Q 8 Do you know any outstanding factors which make Mauritius a preferred location?

R 1 We go out of the box to make any tourist visit a memorable one

R 2 Hospitality, security, value for money, excellent service

Q 9 Do you have any joint ventures with other companies (collective) or do you operate exclusively/ solitary?

R 1 We have joint venture with other Tour Operators in South Africa, Dubai and Europe.

R 2 The Tourism Authority promotes Mauritius as a destination on its own.

Q 10 what is the high season and low season? How do you define high and low season?

R 1 High season: April – May, August- September & December – January

Low season: February – March, June – July & October – November. It is difficult to define high & low season from our end, because all is based on the room nights and market segment we are targeting- However, the airlines and hoteliers have based the above periods as high & low season.

R 2 High season: Christmas, New Year, Easter, European Winter, Summer Holiday. Low Season: May / June.

Q 11 (Marketing) where / how do you advertise your company? Or just give options like newspapers, bulletins, social media agents?

R 1 Website, International Newspapers and E-marketing

R 2 Online: website – banners off line: Prints Outdoor: Displays / Mega prints.

Q 12 what challenges do you face while during marketing or rather on the operation part of the company?

R 1 The constant change in airline fares and hotel tariffs policy. We have to presale our products 60-90 days in advance and a change in airfares and accommodation rates, affects the business. Sometimes we have to absorb the cost of same as not to reflect same on the client.

R 2 Competitors from other island destinations.

Q 13 what set your location apart from other similar locations?

R 1 The product and service we offer

R 2 Multicultural population living in harmony. Hospitality. Diversified experience

Q 14 how often do you offer discounts? What kind of discounts do you offer?

R 1 It depends on the season and type of packages we are offering. Discounts are mostly on land and sea excursion. However, we do also work with the airlines to offer special discounts during the low season

Q 15 Does your organization have a marketing plan?

R 1 Yes, as it's an important element of the business

R 2 Yes

Q 16 Does your organization engages in market research to study consumer needs and wants?

R 1 It's the basis of our in-house SWAT analysis to benchmark our services, products and budget to identify the client's needs, wants and financial means.

R 2 Yes

Q 17 does your organization keep customers profiles? If yes why and how is it useful?

R 1 Yes (To contact them when we have promotions).

R 2 Yes (To target right segments

Q 18 how often is your marketing plan update?

R 1 Every 6 month for specific markets and every 4 months for high yield markets.

R 2 Yearly

Q 19 how would you range competition in the industry?

R 1 For the general tour operation, competition is tough, but we deserve a dedicated VIP &VVIP market. Hence, there is limited competition in this sector in Mauritius.

R 2 Fierce competition on price.

Q 20 what are the vast ranges of risks that your tour operator faces when planning a holiday package?

R 1 (1) The fluctuation of the EUR and USD against the MUR

(2) Increase in airfares

(3) Increase in hotel tariffs (very rare)

Q 21 how much does your marketing budgets spent on brochure production?

R 1 28% of our turnover

Q 22 Are brochures more fruitful for your business or web-based materials?

R 1 In this new E-marketing era, web-based materials is the pivotal solution.

Q 23 Do you achieve your objectives when distributing holiday brochures to tourists? Can you please give some examples?

R 1 Yes (It gives the tourist a glossy impression of the tour operator and at the same time, the same tourist can pass over as a potential client.

R 2 Yes, No (Influence final choice of holiday destination)

Q 24 what is your future sales expectations in five years?

R 1 In our selected

R 2 Increase in global arrival across the board.

Q 25 Nowadays experiences travelers are seeking for more innovative and targeted products do you think that your company can provide that? If yes can you give an example?

R 1 Yes (We offer tailored made special packages to suit the different type of client/tourist and markets. Hence, we cater only for the VIP/VVIP market, but also propose packages to businessmen, families, and newly wedding couples. All our packages are offered on an ALL INCLUSIVE BASIS, which in turn covers 95% of the tourist holiday budget

R 2 Yes (Targeted products: Green Tourism, golf, spa, diving, and honeymoon).

Q 26 How extensive is the competition among tour operators in Mauritius? Who are your direct competitors?

R 1 There is a stringent (behind the door) competition amongst the traditional tour operators in Mauritius. However, same doesn't affect us because we offer a different type of product, market and clientele.

Q 27 who is the biggest player in the field?

R 1 Beachcomber and World Leisure

Q 28 what separates Mauritius from its competitors?

R 1 The beauty of our island, quality of the product versus value for money, the service level and our hospitality.

5.2 The Plan and inconvenient

The plan of the author was to interview at least 5 people from Tour Operators whose job description involves marketing, promotion and a questionnaire of 28 questions were built on literature reading in order to gain some concrete answers from Tour operators. But unfortunately most of the respondents disdain to respond at the questionnaire. The next step was then taken due to lack of time and the author cannot afford to fly back home, change the whole plan into an interview. The author had tried to contact some Tour Operators but in vain. The author had also tried to seek for help from school friends from the past, from relatives and some other contact persons. The interview was chosen to be conducted via email due to lack of time and budget as the author and respondents reside in different countries.

6 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to gain better understanding about how Tour Operators Promote Mauritius as a tourist destination. Due to lack of time the

author think that if she was in Mauritius for her research and explaining the main purpose of the study, face to face to the participants then she would have obtained more opportunities and information's. Most Tour operators didn't respond to the questionnaire that the author had send 1 month ago, so the author had decided to contact some school friends and also the Mauritius Tourism Authority to search for information about the subject.

From the interview questionnaire: *According to Mr. Harrison, their target markets are France and Germany "as they are the most captive markets and have always provided a constant inflow of tourist to Mauritius " On their arrival tourists visitors get a plan from the tour operator. The interviewee thinks that customers choose Mauritius as their holiday destination as Mauritius is a well-known destination, especially by Europeans. The natural beauty of our Island, coupled with our courtesy in this type of industry has demarked us from other Islands of the region, namely, Seychelles and Reunion Island. In the case of STELL'AIR VOYAGE LTD they do not operate alone they have joint venture with other Tour Operators in South Africa, Dubai and Europe. For advertising they used website, International Newspapers and E-marketing. The challenges that the tour operator faces during marketing operations are the constant change in airline fares and hotel tariffs policy. The company offer discounts depending on the season and type of packages, discounts are mostly on land and sea excursion and they also work with airlines companies to offer special discounts during the low season which is during February-March, June-July & October-November.*

From the interview questionnaire: *According to Mrs. Kalpana Dwarka their main customers come from Europe and Asia but their target countries are France, Germany and Switzerland. The customers more often have a plan on how will they spend their holidays but the MTPA also provides them a plan. Beaches, quality accommodation, good food, security, excursion, golf and spa are the main interest that attracts their customers in choosing Mauritius as their holiday destination. Competitors from other island destinations are the main challenges that the MTPA faces during marketing. Multicultural population living*

in harmony, hospitality and diversified experience set Mauritius apart from other similar locations. Their company keeps customers profiles in order to target right segments; they update their marketing plan yearly. MTPA range the competition in the industry as a fierce competition on price. To satisfy experience travelers seeking for more innovative and targeted products the MTPA offers Targeted Products: Green Tourism, Golf, Spa, Diving and Honeymoon.

Therefore the author had effectuated a research on the internet to acquire further information about the subject. Statistics shows that the tourist arrival flow came mostly from European countries at the first place is France with 266,632 with an increase amount of 2, 9 % in 2011, second place is United kingdom 80,904 with a decrease of -12,8 % in 2011, third place Germany with 51,830 and a decrease of -1,5 % in 2011, fourth place Italy with 47,519 and a decrease of -12,8% in 2011 and finally Switzerland at the fifth place with 21,692 with an increase of 12,3% in 2011.

Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) had unveiled a Rs100 million promotion campaign to boost the numbers of French tourists visiting the island, for the first time the campaign will include a television advert of 20 seconds to be broadcast by French company (Canal+, i- tele etc.) 75 times a week. The French market is the island's major market with around 400,000 French tourists, including visitors from Reunion Island who come to Mauritius bringing revenue of 500 million Euros yearly. (Mauritius Now) The increase in French arrivals was due to a combination of a resilient French economy, a strong French influence in Mauritius and visits by family and friends. The country plans to diversify its market by drawing more visitors from Russia, India and China and aims to attract a total of 150,000 tourists from these three economies by 2012. In order to differentiate itself from other summer holiday resorts, such as the Maldives and the Seychelles, the country is promoting green tourism positioning itself as a cultural and eco-tourism destination, with nature reserves and wildlife parks opening up to tourists. Other niche markets include weddings and honeymoons,

golf, medical tourism, and duty-free shopping. Over 2010-2020, the government is investing MUR 250 billion in infrastructure, aiming to transform the country into a world-class, tax – free shopping, business and leisure destination. The government’s initial target is to attract around 200,000 brands – conscious visitors per year from emerging markets like India, China, Russia and the Middle East, as well as traditional markets like Europe. (Travel and Tourism in Mauritius)

In the past Tour Operators were offering just a package of sightseeing, visiting of cultural heritage of the nation for example: museum and historical colonial houses and National Park. As there is a fierce competitions among Tour Operators in Mauritius, due to the increasing amount of tourist visiting the island nowadays Tour Operators are offering tour packages that will attract more tourist to the island the tour packages includes; Sea Excursion (Deep Sea Fishing- Big game fishing, Swimming with the Dolphins, Magic Sails with catamarans, Kite surfing, Blue Safari Submarine, Blue Safari Sub scooters, Parasailing, Helicopter tours, Catamaran Cruises, Undersea Walk, Scuba Diving, discovering of other small islands around Mauritius. Wedding in Mauritius.



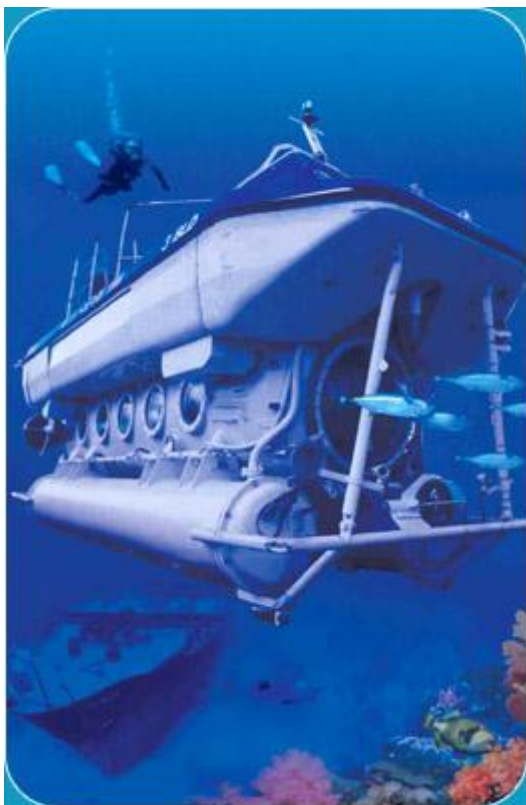
Catamaran Cruises



Parasailing



Ile aux Cerf's



Blue Safari Submarine



Blue Safari Subscooters



Helicopter



Undersea Walk



Scuba Diving

There are travel agents in different sizes everywhere for example in Grand-Baie you can find car rental companies and small travel agencies with offices full of beautiful pictures promoting the places that you can visit in Mauritius.

It is not just Tour operators who promote Mauritius word of mouth between friends and contacts who had visited the Island before promptly recommend some places where to visit sometimes they know better accommodation to stay rather than going to a 5 stars hotel and recommend it to their friends, contact and relatives.

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1. How is Mauritius **tourism** promoted?
2. Where **and what** are the target countries?
3. What **strategy** do tour operators **use** to promote **tourism in Mauritius**?

QUESTIONS

Tour operators

1. What's the name of your tour company? How many years do you operate as a tour company?
2. Is your company a private sector or a public sector?
3. How many employees does your company have?
4. Where does most of your clients:/customers come from? Europe , USA, Canada, Australia, Asia
5. Which country do you target the most and why?
6. When the visitors arrive, do they have a holiday plan or do you offer a plan?
7. What do you think interest/attracts your customers in choosing Mauritius as their holiday destination?
8. Do you know any outstanding factors which make Mauritius a preferred location?
9. Do you have any joint adventures with other companies (collective) or do you operate exclusively/solitary
10. What are the high season and low season? How do you define high and low season?

Marketing

11. Where/how do you advertise your company? Or just give options like newspapers, bulletins, social media agents?
12. What challenges do you face while during marketing or rather on the operational part of the company?
13. What set your location apart from other similar locations?
14. How often do you offer discounts? What kind of discounts do you offer?
15. Does your organization have a marketing plan?
16. Does your organization engage in market research to study consumer needs and wants?

17. Does your organization keep customers profiles? If yes why and how is it useful?
18. How often is your marketing plan update?
19. How would you range competition in the industry?
20. What are the vast ranges of risks that your tour operator faces when planning a holiday package?
21. How much does your marketing budgets spent on brochure production?
22. Are brochures more fruitful for your business or web-based materials?
23. Do you achieve your objectives when distributing holiday brochures to tourists? Can you please give some examples?

Innovation

24. What are your future sales expectations in five years?
25. Nowadays experiences travellers are seeking for more innovative and targeted products do you think that your company can provide that? Yes or No. If yes can you give an example?
26. How extensive is the competition among tour operators in Mauritius? Who are your direct competitors?
27. Who is the biggest player in the field?
28. What separates Mauritius from its competitors?

TOURIST ARRIVALS BY COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE, JANUARY -
NOVEMBER 2010/2011

Country of residence	November			January - November		
	2010	2011 ¹	% change	2010	2011	% change
EUROPE	63 492	64 185	1,1	536 558	544 451	1,5
Austria	1 106	951	-14,0	8 073	7 949	-1,5
Belgium	1 214	1 208	-0,5	8 943	10 485	17,2
France	34 359	35 361	2,9	264 094	266 632	1,0
Germany	6 217	6 124	-1,5	47 814	51 830	8,4
Italy	4 623	4 031	-12,8	50 036	47 519	-5,0
Netherlands	371	428	15,4	4 453	4 728	6,2
Spain	468	660	41,0	7 410	9 140	23,3
Sweden	559	465	-16,8	3 706	3 418	-7,8
Switzerland	2 978	3 345	12,3	16 014	21 692	35,5
United Kingdom	7 781	6 918	-11,1	89 904	80 904	-10,0
ASIA	7 907	7 881	-0,3	68 846	82 003	19,1
Hong Kong SAR 3	29	43	48,3	350	523	49,4
India	5 190	4 290	-17,3	45 151	48 384	7,2
Japan	126	151	19,8	1 263	1 359	7,6
Malaysia	179	347	93,9	1 266	1 825	44,2
People's Rep. of China	629	1 300	106,7	6 981	13 871	98,7
Singapore	205	222	8,3	1 643	2 027	23,4
United Arab Emirates	351	350	-0,3	3 118	3 386	8,6
Other Asian	1 198	1 178	-1,7	9 074	10 628	17,1