Tourism Marketing In Ethiopia- An Empirical Study of the Level of Performance of Travel and Tour Operators

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Development of Tourism Industry of any country, to a great extent, depends on the performance of the various intermediaries marketing. It has been observed that the most significant dimensions of services provided by tourism marketing intermediaries are : Use of professional experience on schedules of train connections, religious pilgrimages; advises on the type of itineraries which travelers select, serve travelers with well trained multilingual guides, provide information relating to destination, climate etc, sells packaged tours and sometimes escorting groups personally, etc. The study is based on the analysis of the responses of international tourists visiting Ethiopia. They were asked to identify the most significant dimensions or attributes/ travel and tour operators in elevating the level of satisfaction of tourist visiting Ethiopia. The findings of this study may be useful to tourism marketers to develop appropriate strategy in tourism marketing with regard to the role of marketing intermediaries in order to enhance the level of satisfaction of international tourists.

Introduction

The rapid development of international tourism has contributed to the increasing domain of tour operators. In this competitive arena, tour operators are seen both as influential sources of information and as distribution channels, that affect tourist images and decisions (Gartner, 1993; Woodside and Lysonski, 1989). In fact, they provide information to potential travelers (Baloglu, 1997; Gitelson and Crompton, 1983; Hseish and O'Leary, 1993), develop and promote destination packages (Gartner and Bachri, 1994; Mill and Morrison, 1992;), determining market trends, prosperity of destinations and suppliers, and affecting the demand levels for destinations. Therefore, tour operators can be considered as an enterprise that transform production inputs such as environmental attractions and tourist services , in order to provide travelers with tools to create new products with a tailored personality and originality with respect to the single components. In fact tour operators, owing to their central position in the information network and their know - how , are able to identify and connect the various centralized services such as overnight stay and transport., homogeneously by price and quality level , based on a previous segmentation in relation to travel and expenditure capacity.

The tourism value chain starts with the customer order. Customer or tourists have some alternative when they purchase the tourism product. They can arrange their travel plan with the help of tour operators or outbound travel agents (Package travel)–that is that has the advantage of taking professional advice on the Whole Holiday Package without any thinking or arrange it themselves (individual travel), which allows them to be flexible in their travel experience. Incoming travel agents can be used to make transfer arrangements from / to the airport or train station , harbor, etc; to/ from the hotel and for daily excursions and other activities held at destinations. The Tourism industry has been analyzed in a holistic manner through distribution channel perspective by many authors (Laws 1997; Middleton and Clark, 2001; Mill and Morison, 2002).

According to Wynne (2000), the international tourism industry is characterized by large number of small suppliers who are globally scattered. In 3rd world destinations this is compounded by the secluded locations of many of the attractions , limited domestic markets and weak infrastructures Likewise , tourists are numerous , diverse and are geographically separated from the suppliers. Many live in different time zones. A vacation to Africa may well represent a large expense for the individual tourist, but each destination will only capture a small part of this revenue. The value chain members in the tourism industry: Destinations'! IBTO (Inbound Tour Operator) '!OBTO (Outbound Tour Operators) '! Travel Agent '! Tourists.

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Research Methodology

This study has been undertaken to analyze the role marketing intermediaries in marketing tourism. To realize this objective of the study both secondary and primary sources were used. The secondary sources include magazines, brochures, newspapers, articles; statistical bulletins, websites etc. were used. The respondent group consisted of international travelers who visited Ethiopia and all were 18 years and above. An international tourist who stayed in the selected hotels or guest houses was asked to fill the questionnaire by the front desk manager in charge and receptionist staff depending on their convenience.

A questionnaire containing various sections was developed and tested on 10 three to five star hotels on 60 tourists in total 6 from each hotel. Based on the response and comments given from the respondents, necessary adjustments were made on the wording, phrasing, sequencing as well as other issues related to those questions. Based on the feedback given from sample tests and making all the necessary adjustments to the point of certain omissions or deletions, the final questionnaire was developed.

The questionnaire tried to solicit answers for various variables/dimensions motivating tourists to visit Ethiopia, factors that helped the tourist to decide to visit Ethiopia, level of destination attractiveness, detrimental factors for destination loyalty, identification of most valued market segments, and evaluation of various infrastructural facilities available, quality of experiences and services and role of marketing intermediaries to meet the needs of tourists.

The developed questionnaire was distributed to 4 government hotels, 4 private hotels, 4 guest houses, where tourist traffic is quite high based on recommendations from the hotel industry relevant personnel's and 11 actively performing travel and tour operators. The number of copies distributed to all hotels and guest houses was 480 (12x40) and 220 copies (11x20) respectively to actively performing travel and tour operators. Out of the 700 hundred copies 350 copies were returned, however, during editing; only 300 copies were found valid/usable for analysis.

Although, the nominal response rate was 50 %

(350/ 700) the actual response rate turned out to be 43% (300/700). Since the number of questionnaires distributed in total was 700 where as the actual number of usable questionnaires were only 300 copies the actual response rate was pushed down to 43 % (300/700).

Once the data was collected, then the questionnaires were edited, coded, entered and processed using SPSS. During analysis both descriptive and inferential statistics methods were used, wherever they were deemed appropriate. The inferential methods used for the purpose of analysis in testing the hypothesis included independent T-test, one way – ANOVA, stepwise multiple regressions analysis and factor analysis. From the descriptive statistics, descriptive, frequency tables, ranking methods, bar charts, simple line graphs etc; were used.

Data Analysis and Results

A comprehensive questionnaire was distributed to international travelers and data was collected, edited, coded into the data editor and processed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics-stepwise multiple regressions. Frequency tables and graphs were used for data analysis.

A hypothesis was developed for the purpose of testing travel agents and tour operator's service dimension / performance dimensions in satisfying international tourists who visited Ethiopia.

Evaluation of Travel Agents Tour Operators/ Marketing Intermediaries

H0: Travel agents and tour operators service / performance dimensions are not significant drivers of tourists overall satisfaction.

To test this hypothesis, the stepwise multiple regression analysis has been used.

$$Y= ß_0 + ß_1X_1 + ß_2 X_2 + ß_3X_3 + ß_4X_4 + \ldots\ldots ß_kX_k + e_i$$

Where,

Y= tourist overall satisfaction

X_i = travel and tour operators performance dimensions

$ß_i$ = slope of the line and

e_i= error term associated with the ith observation.

The stepwise multiple regression outputs are analyzed as follows:

Table 1a) Performance Dimensions of Travel and Tour Operators (Model Summary)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
16	.770(p)	.592	.578	.51083

*** (Alpha = .8449)

The Alpha coefficient (0.8449) for Performance dimensions of travel and tour operators (Table 1a) is reliable, i.e., it exceeds the 0.5 threshold recommended. The value of R= .770 shows a strong relationship between airport facilities/ dimensions and over all satisfaction level of tourists.

The value of R^2=.592 explains that 59.20 % of the variation is explained and 39.80 % remained unexplained. Thus, the predictive ability of the model is moderate.

ANOVA output (Table 1b) describes the overall variance accounted for in the model. It appears the 13 predictor variables are not all equal to each other and could be used to predict the dependent variable, overall satisfaction of tourists as is indicated by an extremely large F value (41. 963) and a small significant level (.000). Moreover, the associated Sig. value is less than the significance level (p<0.05). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected based on the F statistics shown above.

According to the stepwise multiple regression, the above 10 out of the 13 Performance dimensions of travel and tour operators (Table 1c) (uses professional experience on schedules of train connections, religious pilgrimages; advises on the type of itineraries which travelers select, serve travelers with well trained multilingual guides, provide information relating to destination, climate etc, sells packaged tours and sometimes escorting groups personally, provides information to travelers on hotels and accommodations, handles and advises on details of modern travel like currency exchange, health requirements sells tickets to travelers on all modes of travel, arranges transfer of passengers and luggage's between terminals and organizing music, serves as an intermediary between travelers and supplier's of services), are found significantly related to tourist satisfaction level on Performance dimensions of travel and tour operators at p< 0.05 (Table 1c), While 4 Performance dimensions of travel and tour operators are excluded for being less

Table 1b) Performance Dimensions of Travel and Tour Operators (ANOVA)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
16	Regression	109.502	10	10.950	41.963	.000(p)
	Residual	75.415	289	.261		
	Total	184.917	299			

Table 1 c) Performance Dimensions of Travel and Tour Operators (Regression Coefficients)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
16	(Constant)	3.745	.130		28.698	.000
	Uses Professional Experience On Schedules Of Train Connections, Religious Pilgrimages.	.347	.036	.897	9.515	.000
	Serves As An Intermediary B/Travelers & Supplier's Of Services	.306	.117	.338	2.611	.009
	Advises On The Type Of Itineraries Which Travelers Select	4.236	.409	5.032	-10.349	.000
	Serve Travelers With Well Trained Multilingual Guides	.503	.123	.571	4.078	.000
	Provide Information Relating To Destination, Climate Etc;	3.244	.373	3.218	8.688	.000
	Sells Packaged Tours & Sometimes Escorting Groups Personally	.669	.186	.923	3.599	.000
	Provides Information To Travelers On Hotels &Accommodations	.314	.126	.422	2.485	.014
	Handles & Advises On Details Of Modern Travel Like Currency Exchange, Health Req.	2.440	.288	2.432	8.475	.000
	Sells Tickets To Travelers On All Modes Of Travel	.281	.036	1.363	7.807	.000
	Arranges Transfer Of Passengers & Luggage's B/N Terminals & Organizing Music	2.221	.299	2.033	7.426	.000

Dependent Variable: overall satisfaction level of visiting Ethiopia

important at $p > .05$.

Type of Tour Package Schemes Used by Travelers

Type of tour package schemes (Table 2)used by travelers was classified into ten categories. Nearly 22 % of tourists used adventure tour package scheme, 15 % used wild life tour packages, a bit above 13 % equally used cultural tour packages and pilgrimage tour packages, nearly 12 % used study tour packages, nearly 8 % used camping tour packages, about 5 % equally used mountaineering tour packages, rafting tour packages and trekking tour packages independently while a bit above 3 % used special interest tour packages.

Table 2: Type of Tour Package Scheme

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Cultural tour packages	40	13.3	13.3	13.3
	Adventure tour packages	65	21.7	21.7	35.0
	Wild life tour packages	45	15.0	15.0	50.0
	Pilgrimage tour packages	40	13.3	13.3	63.3
	Study tour packages	35	11.7	11.7	75.0
	Mountaineering tour	15	5.0	5.0	80.0
	Rafting tour packages	15	5.0	5.0	85.0
	Trekking tour packages	15	5.0	5.0	90.0
	Special interest tour packages	10	3.3	3.3	93.3
	Camping tour packages	20	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Tourist's travel arrangements (Table 3) were classified into five categories. A bit above 43 % of tourists used self- travel arrangement, 35 % used tour operators, 13 % used their office or employer, a bit above 3 % used other methods of travel arrangements.

Nature of travel (Table 4) was categorized in to two broad categories. About 25 % of traveler's used packaged tours while the remaining 75 % used non-packaged tours.

Table 3: Type of Travel Arrangement Pattern by Tourists

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Self	130	43.3	43.3	43.3
	Office/employer	40	13.3	13.3	56.7
	Travel agent	15	5.0	5.0	61.7
	Tour operator	105	35.0	35.0	96.7
	Other	10	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Nature of Travel Used by Tourists

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Packaged	75	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Non-packaged	225	75.0	75.0	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Average cost of package tourists (Table 5) was classified based on some preliminary data from selected tour operator's relevant staffs and classified into six classes. A bit above 33 % expenditure lies within "" $7, 501-$ 10,800", a bit above 21 % estimated average expenditures falls within " $4, 000- $5, 500", 20 % of tourists spend within a range of ""$ 5, 501-$7, 500". The expenditure per tourist further reveals, nearly 11 % spend within "" $10, 801- $ 14, 000", about 8 % spends within a range of "" $ 14,001-$ 16,000"" and finally nearly 7 % spend over "> $ 16, 000 in Ethiopian birr.

Item wise- break -up of expenditures for package tourists were not possible to obtain, when the questionnaire was tested. Moreover, costs over and above package tours were not possible to obtain. The information summarized above give a grand picture of average cost of tour package expenditure incurred to different destinations within Ethiopia. Moreover,

the survey didn't reveal how much was spent for local transport in Ethiopia, accommodations, sight seeing, food and beverages, shopping expenses, cultural and recreational services, telephone services etc; in fact the question raised to extract this portion of information was dropped out after testing it on a limited number of tourists.

Average Cost of Non- Package Tour

The average cost of non-package tour (Table 6) in Ethiopia excluding pre-trip expenditures to and from Ethiopia. A bit above 33 % expenditure lies within "$ 5, 501- $ 7, 500", a bit above 25.2 % estimated average expenditures falls within " $7, 501 - $ 10, 000", 23 % of tourists spend within a range of " $4, 000- $ 5, 500". The expenditure per tourist further reveals, a bit above 10 % spend within "$10,001 - $ 12, 500, a bit above 5 % spend within a range of "$ 12, 501 - $ 15, 000" and finally about 3 % spend over "> $ 15, 000 in Ethiopian birr.

Table 5: Average Cost of Package Tourists

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	" $4, 000- $5, 500"	16	5.3	21.3	21.3
	"$ 5, 501-$7, 500"	15	5.0	20.0	41.3
	" $ 7, 501-$ 10,800"	25	8.3	33.3	74.7
	" $ 10, 801- $ 14, 000	8	2.7	10.7	85.3
	" $ 14,001-$ 16,000"	6	2.0	8.0	93.3
	"> $ 16, 000"	5	1.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	75	25.0	100.0	
Missing	System	225	75.0		
Total		300	100.0		

Table 6: Average Cost of Non- Package Tourists

Cumulative		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Per cent
Valid	" $4, 000- $ 5, 500"	52	17.3	23.0	23.0
	"$ 5, 501- $ 7, 500"	75	25.0	33.2	56.2
	" $7, 501 - $ 10, 000"	57	19.0	25.2	81.4
	" $10,001 - $ 12, 500	23	7.7	10.2	91.6
	" $ 12, 501 - $ 15, 000"	12	4.0	5.3	96.9
	" > $ 15,, 000	7	2.3	3.1	100.0
	Total	226	75.3	100.0	
Missing	System	74	24.7		
Total		300	100.0		

Item wise break up of expenditures for non-package tourists like package tourist was not possible to obtain, and dropped out when the questionnaire was tested among a limited number of tourists. Moreover, the survey didn't reveal how much was spent for local transport in Ethiopia, accommodations, sight seeing, food and beverages, shopping expenses, cultural and recreational services, telephone services, etc.

Estimated average duration of stay for a packaged tourist (Table 7) was classified into five categories. Nearly 36 % of traveler's estimated duration of stay was 15 nights, a bit above 27 % stayed 22 nights and more nearly 14 % stayed 17 nights, a bit above 12 % stayed 20 nights and about 11 % estimated duration of stay for a package tourist was 21 nights and more.

Table 7: Average Duration of Stay for Packaged Tourists

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	15 nights	26	8.7	35.6	35.6
	17 nights	10	3.3	13.7	49.3
	20 nights	9	3.0	12.3	61.6
	21 nights	8	2.7	11.0	72.6
	22 nights or more	20	6.7	27.4	100.0
	Total	73	24.3	100.0	
Missing	System	227	75.7		
Total		300	100.0		

Table 8:   Average Duration of Stay for Non-Package Tourists

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	15 nights	53	17.7	23.3	23.3
	17 nights	13	4.3	5.7	29.1
	20 nights	46	15.3	20.3	49.3
	21 nights	12	4.0	5.3	54.6
	22 nights or more	103	34.3	45.4	100.0
	Total	227	75.7	100.0	
Missing	System	73	24.3		
Total		300	100.0		

Estimated average duration of stay (Table 8) for non – packaged tourists was classified into five categories. A bit above 45 % of traveler's estimated duration of stay was 22 and more nights , a bit above 23 % stayed 15 nights, a bit above 20 % stayed 20 nights, Nearly 7 % stayed 17 nights, a bit above 5 %   preferred to stay 21 nights for a non- packaged tourist.

Conclusion

The relationship between performance dimensions of travel and tour operators and over all satisfaction of tourists was examined using a stepwise multiple regressions. The results of this research showed that travel and tour operators service dimensions such as use of professional experience on schedules of train connections, religious pilgrimages, advices on the type of itineraries which travelers select, serving travelers with well trained multi-lingual guides, providing information relating to destination, climate etc, selling packaged tours and sometimes escorting groups personally, providing information to travelers on hotels and accommodations, handling and advising on details of modern travel like currency exchange, health requirement, selling tickets to travelers on all modes of travel, arranging transfer of passengers and   luggage between terminals and   organizing music, serving   as an intermediary between travelers and   suppliers of services are found significantly related to tourist satisfaction level of tourists who visited Ethiopia. Further analysis of the study regarding performance dimensions of travel and tour operators revealed that all performance dimensions of travel and tour operators were not equally contributing to enhance the level of tourist satisfaction. For example, advises on the type of itineraries which travelers select, providing information relating to destinations, climate etc and handling and advising on details of modern travel like currency exchange, health requirement were carrying more weight respectively than other Performance dimensions of travel and tour operators in contributing to tourist satisfaction. The study also implies to, travel and tour operators to better organize themselves and build their human capital to serve the tourists. The tourism marketers are required to have sufficiently trained multi-lingual and professional guides to provide all the necessary information to tourists.

The study further examined the type of tour package schemes and average cost of package tourists and non-package tourist used by travelers. However, the survey didn't reveal item - specific expense break downs i.e., how much was spent for local transport, accommodations, sight seeing, food and beverages, shopping expenses, cultural and recreational services, telephone services etc; during their stay in Ethiopia. The result of the study implies that additional effort must be made to have a clear understanding of expenditure patterns of tourists

during their stay in the country.

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