CHAPTER - 5

Marketing Strategies of Tour Packages in Kerala with Special Reference to KTDC: Analysis and Evaluation

Tour Package is a newer method of destination marketing in worldwide and is one of the means which enable tourists to enjoy destinations and other tourism resources at lower prices. Tour Packages contributed far and away to the unexpected growth of the global and domestic tourism industries. The fastest growing tourist state in India, Kerala is recognised as a pioneer and trendsetter in the country and is now the number one upscale tourist destination due to the surge of tour packages and the other means of promotional efforts undertaken by the State Government, Department of Tourism, KTDC and other private sector groups and agencies. KTDC, the Government agency with largest hotel networks in Kerala, offers variety of tour packages to tourists to promote and market tourism resources and bring up the state to the foremost tourist destinations in Asia and the world as well. The Corporation has been formulating and implementing several promotional and marketing strategies for tour packages. For the accomplishment of the objectives of the present study, the investigator made an earnest attempt to analyse and evaluate strategies adopted by KTDC for marketing tour packages in the State through the present chapter.

In accordance with the marketing plans and policies adopted by KTDC for the development, promotion and marketing of tour packages, the present study will analyse these plans and policies systematically with special emphasis on what has been done, or what is in future prospects and what measures should be adopted for better results. This will be examined on the basis of the seven parameters (7 Ps) of marketing mix namely, product, price, place, promotion, people, process and physical evidence. Thereafter evaluation of these marketing strategies will be made by applying the various approaches of marketing strategies such as product/consumer oriented approach, price/competitor oriented approach,
distribution/trade oriented approach and promotion/communication oriented approach.

5.1 Marketing Mix Perspective Analysis of Tour Packages

The marketing mix perspective analysis of tour packages consists of product perspective analysis, price perspective analysis, place/distribution perspective analysis, promotion perspective analysis, people perspective analysis, process perspective analysis and physical evidence perspective analysis.

5.1.1 Product Perspective Analysis

Existence of a product is the basic prerequisite for implementing marketing function and product development is an important aspect of the strategic marketing process. The product component of marketing mix analysis is the tour packages of Kerala Tourism Development Corporation. The product perspective analysis remains to be ascertained; what are the different packages offered by the Corporation, how far these packages have been developed and what criterion they followed to develop these packages. The investigator will try to find out the answers to these questions in this session.

The myriad resource potentials of Kerala Tourism Industry make the tour operators in the State capable to develop and market innumerable number of varied tour packages. Certain form of tourism in the state being identified as most potential areas or attractions for designing tour packages. These include Nature Tourism, Pilgrimage or Religious Tourism, Health Tourism, Culture and traditional tourism, Heritage Tourism, Eco-Tourism, Adventure Tourism, Sports Tourism and Rural Tourism.

The Nature Tourism has always remained the backbone of tour packages in Kerala. The beautiful backwaters, beaches, waterfalls, hill stations, vegetations with wildlife and an abundance of flora and fauna etc. make the state an ideal destination for nature lovers. The Kerala is especially popular in the world for Health Tourism, Ayurveda is the main health conscious tourism in state which brings much foreign exchange to the country and Kerala is the only place in the World where the ancient form of science and the holistic system of medicine based on nature is practiced.
with its perfection. The culture and traditions of Kerala include folk-lore, performing arts (Kathakali, Koodiyattam, Mohiniyattom, Thullal, Theyyam etc.), martial arts (Kalaripayattu), Kerala cuisines and festivals (Onam, Poorams, Elephant Pageants etc). A trip through the backwaters in Kettuvalloms (Houseboat) is an indispensible part of any standard tour packages in the State as it gives an exotic experience for tourists. The historical monuments and buildings having architectural and cultural importance are the main ingredients of Kerala heritage tourism packages. Being the most eco-friendly state of India, eco-tourism resources play a crucial role in designing tour packages for adventure and nature lovers.

One of the most famous pilgrim centres in India, Sabarimala is situated on the mountain ranges of the Western Ghats at Pathanamthitta District in Kerala, which attracts thousands of pilgrims to the State by means of pilgrim packages in every year. The adventure seekers and sports lovers have a plenty of opportunities to feel and experience the zeal of adventure by climbing the high peaks in the state. Boat races and trekking are the important means of sports tourism in the State. This amplitude of resources have been utilised by KTDC and other tour operators to design varied tour packages in the state.

The product perspective analysis of the tour packages of Kerala Tourism Development Corporation reveals that, the corporation has been designing and marketing a number of tour packages such as Backwater tour packages, Beach tour, Hill Station Packages, Ayurveda Packages, Houseboat Packages, Honeymoon packages, Vacation packages, Family packages, Seasonal Packages, Deluxe tours, and Budget and Super Budget packages. In addition to these, the Organisation organises conducted tours to local places like Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alapuzha, Kumarakom, Kovalam, Cochin, Kanyakumari, Thekkady etc. and home stay packages at its properties all over the state. Moreover KTDC makes timely modifications of packages in various seasons and adds new packages to the existing mix of packages as per the market demands.

Some of the major tour packages which KTDC offered during the period 2009 - 2010 are Island holiday packages, Mystic holiday packages, Summer packages, Monsoon packages, Coast and Cruise packages, Periyar Eco-Tourism packages,
Jungle holiday packages, Jungle Monsoon packages, Discover Kerala Monsoon Premium packages, Discover Kerala Budget Holiday packages, *Utharayanam* (Northern) packages, *Dakshinayanam* (Southern) packages, *Sundara Keralam* (Beautiful Kerala) packages. The latest seasonal packages of KTDC ‘Monsoon 2009-10’ include; *Package-1* (4 nights /5 days) to Kochi - Munnar & Kumarakom, *Package-2* (5nights/ 6days) to Kochi - Munnar - Thekkady & Kumarakom and *Package-3* (7nights/ 8days) to Kochi- Munnar- Thekkady- Kumarakom- Kovalam & Thrivandrum. Each package includes Transportation, Accommodation/ lodging KTDC resorts/ hotels, Sightseeing, Transfers, Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner, Boating etc.

Beyond these wide range of readymade packages, KTDC has been constantly shown its willingness to accept and shoulder the demands of tourists by designing packages or trips to almost all destinations in the State in tune with the needs and expectations of customers. Suppose a customer wants Ayurvedic Massage and Houseboat cruise in addition to the attractions and services included in a package, the Corporation would modify the package by adding the additional components demanded by the tourist.

In order to attract health conscious tourists, KTDC offers Seasonal Ayurveda packages consists of Rejuvenation Therapy (Rasayana Chikilsa - Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes a day for 7 or 14 days), Body Immunization / Longevity Treatment (Kayakalpa Chikilsa - 1 ½ hour a day for 7 or 14 days), Body Sedation (1 hour a day for 7 days), Body Slimming (1 hour a day for 7 days) and Panchakarma (2 hours a day for 7 or 14 days) for both international and domestic visitors at its major resorts and Ayurveda centres.

It can be understand from the product perspective analysis that KTDC has been concentrating mainly on the nature based tour packages such as beach tours, backwater packages, hill station tours, forest and wildlife packages, backwater cruise and houseboat packages. Because Kerala is one of such rare destinations in Asia where the best nature based abounding tourism resource are available. Besides these packages, the Corporation has been given purposeful focus on the development of assorted and distinctive Ayurveda packages with the specific aim
of attracting foreign tourists into the State in varied seasons. Similarly the product mix of KTDC has given worthwhile prominence in designing seasonal group and independent Ayurveda packages for domestic as well as foreign tourists.

Although it may seem prudent in normal situations that a number of diversified packages have been designed and modified for foreign and domestic visitors, KTDC has simply failed to consider adventure and sports lovers by developing tour packages as per their tastes and preferences and thus completely neglected the Youth segment of the tourism market. Even Kerala is the state of temples, churches, mosques and other important holy centres like Sabarimala, Guruvayur etc. unfortunately KTDC has not been given any place or importance for pilgrimage packages in its product mix except the conducted tours to the holy centres such as Sabarimala, Guruvayur etc.

The Corporation has been given special focus to maintain quality services and tour packages to the tourists. KTDC has never faced difficulty in maintaining quality of its services and tour packages since it has more than 60 high quality accommodation units located at exotic theme locales across the State, large number of A/C and non-A/C Kettuvallams (Houseboats) and speed boats, plenty of Ayurveda centres, restaurants and beer parlours, own transportation services and professionally skilled and experienced human resources etc. The Corporation never compromised with its quality matters.

Even then Kerala is plentiful with tourism resources, KTDC seldom failed to utilise such resources completely to develop packages in tune with the tastes, preferences, likes and dislikes, expectations of tourists especially in developing adventure, sports and pilgrimage packages. Therefore, before going for the development, modification or diversification of any tour packages, the Corporation must have a thorough knowledge of the prevailing market conditions and as much they must emphatically be able to answer questions like: who are the customers; their country, region or state of origin; their social class, educational background and life style; amount of disposable income available with them for travel; most appropriate time of their visit; their age-group, gender and marital status; their motivations, likes and dislikes; their package preferences etc.
In Kerala KTDC has tried its best to exercise properly such plans and policies in developing tour packages. But, sometimes the development and diversification of many of the packages were made without any answers to the above mentioned questions. Such a kind of flawed attitude is harmful and the policy thus formulated to design packages is bound to flop. Thus devising packages without having proper classification of the target market is in no way advantageous for the overall development of the tourism products of the Organisation and of the State as well.

However, the product perspective analysis of KTDC shows that it has been succeeded in utilising the absolute tourism resources of the State in developing, differentiating, diversifying and specialising utmost tour packages, and maintaining higher level quality for tour packages and other services related with tour packaging. Along with a diversified group of various handsome tour packages to attract almost all segments of tourists, the Corporation has been designing and marketing differentiated packages with the special intention to attract a particular tourist group or segment such as honeymooners, health conscious tourists, nature lovers, foreigners, non-Keralites etc.

5.1.2 Price Perspective Analysis

In the tourism industry Pricing is an area where government has no or very little control. Although the department of tourism acts as a regulatory body in pricing decisions but pricing is an area that falls beyond the scope of regulatory mechanism. However in the recent times globalization and liberalization pattern have revolutionized the pricing systems and today consumer is stated to be the king. It has lead to the entry of more and more players into the market which has influenced the consumer, which in this case is the tourist who got a greater bargain when it comes to pricing a product. Pricing is particularly important in the tourism context because high degree of product intangibility often reduces the number of alternative available for comparison by customers. The pricing of tourism products also has to take into account the complexity created by seasonality of demand and the inherent perishability of the product.
Pricing is an absolute parameter that plays a vital role in determining the number of tourists purchasing a particular product or tourist inflow to a tourist destination. It remains at the back of all motivational factors and ultimately prevails as one of the crucial factors in the buying decision making process. It is on the basis of price of tour packages that helps tourists to decide upon their choice for a tour package.

Generally price of a tour or holiday package consists of:

- Transportation Cost
- Accommodation cost
- Resort or hotel agent’s handling charges
- Transfer cost (from terminal to hotels to tourist spot)
- Food and refreshment expenses (if itinerary specifically mention)
- Cost of sightseeing and entertainment facilities
- Gratuities, porterage etc
- Make up for agencies services
- Marketing Cost, (brochures, ticket, wallets) etc.
- Office administrative cost, and
- Profit

When it comes to determining the price a number of options exist. The key approaches to pricing for tour package are high pricing, differential or demand based pricing, cost-plus pricing, Price-bundling, Tactical pricing etc.

The tour package in Kerala are pricing comparatively higher rates since the state has ranked among the top most Indian states in terms of higher cost of living. Transportation system and hotels in the state are too costly. Since the ingredients of a tour package are mainly accommodation, attractions and transportation etc, KTDC also compelled to charge a higher price for its tour packages. Generally the Corporation is charging higher costs for its tour packages, hotels and other services compared to other organisations and tour operators. For example the 8 day seasonal package of KTDC charges Rs. 48565 for 2 persons. While the same package is offered by other two tour operators for Rs.40500 and Rs.38750. All these three packages include the same destinations, the same range of transportation and accommodation facilities.
KTDC is also plagued by the dual/differential pricing mechanism. The same types of packages and products have been charged differently from foreigners and Indian tourists. Most of KTDC holiday packages, hotels and resorts in Kerala have a dual tariff system with dollar tariff for foreigners and INR tariff for Indians. The pricing policies for Ayurveda and Houseboat Cruise packages of KTDC towards foreigners and Indians are the best example. The dollar tariff is always much higher than the Indian tariff and a huge difference is marked when dollar tariff is converted into Indian Rupees. The dual price technique was also exercised in season based packages. During the period of season the tourists will be charged high price but in off-season the same package will be sold for a low price to the same type of customers.

Seldom KTDC adopts Price-bundling approach to certain tour packages such as budget holiday packages, student packages, family packages and other tailor made packages. By adopting this typical approach KTDC decides the price of a package in accordance with the contents of the package (normally transportation, accommodation, attractions etc.) where one combined price is charged from the clients. In short-term situations and seasons KTDC often exercises tactical pricing measures which include a number of techniques like periodic price reductions, early booking discounts, group discounts to secure high volume and loyalty packages etc. During the off-seasons KTDC offers price discounts for certain packages such as Mystic Hill packages, Ayurveda Packages, House Boat Cruise, Natural Backwater packages, Coast and Cruise packages, Beach Holiday packages etc. and prepares special offer tariff for its homestay packages during the monsoon.

Sometimes the Corporation fixes its tariff for packages on the basis of demand and season. Basically there are three seasons in Kerala i.e. Peak Season, Moderate Season and Off-Season. Peak Season starts from 15th December to 15th January; the tariff will be high during this season. The tariff for Moderate Season, which is starting from 1st October to 14th December and 16th January to 30th May, will be an average. A normal rate will be charged during the Off-Season which is starting from 1st June to 30th September.
While examining the overall pricing policies and decisions, it is very decisively interpret that KTDC has been setting highest possible prices for its tour packages and conducted tours. It can be elucidated by making comparisons between the prices of KTDC offered packages and the prices of other tour operators who have the same or almost similar packages. Due to the higher price setting policies tourists having price considerations often hesitate to approach KTDC for its packages and services, consequently they may persuade to opt and accept the services of other tour operators or agencies. But certain tourists who give weightage to quality concerns always prefer to be with KTDC’s packages and services. Along with high pricing strategy KTDC also practices dual pricing, seasonal or demand oriented pricing, price bundling and tactical pricing strategies for tour packages.

5.1.3 Place/ Distribution Perspective Analysis

Place in essence is a relational term and it is a form of distribution network. In the tourism context, Godfrey and Clarke (2000) define the place element of the marketing mix as routes of exchange through which a tourist accesses, books, confirms and pays for a tourism product. An effective distribution of the tourism products is carried out through different considerations that involve policy matters as regarding the accessibility, local channels of distribution and distribution coverage area. However a tour package distribution channel usually consists of tour operators and brokers, travel agents and tourists.

An analysis of the current business practices in the travel industry will outline four types of sales distribution systems: one stage system, two-stage system, three-stage system and the four-stage system.

The one stage system provides sales from primary suppliers of tour packages. Here the tour operator directly selling a holiday package to clients through its own sales and reservation departments. The two-stage system involves a single middleman, for example, the travel agent between the tour operator and tourist. The three-stage system involved two middlemen, usually a retail travel agent and a wholesaler. A four-stage system is like the three-stage distribution system except that it has an additional middleman, generally a speciality channeller involved in the
development of a tour package. For instance, if a university decides to send a tour from India to Singapore, their office of overseas studies may also come into the picture. The middlemen in the distribution of tour packages, therefore, are travel agents, wholesale and retail tour-operators, and specialty channellers.

A tour package consists essentially of transportation, accommodation and attractions both natural and manmade. The producers of tourism services include air, rail, road and sea carriers; hotels, motels, guest houses and other forms of accommodations; and various attractions both natural and man-made designed to attract the visitors. Supplier puts together all these services and resources into a package and distributes them through various means of channels such as tour operators and brokers, travel agents etc.

The transportation component of packages has been made available to its clients by KTDC itself directly, through the Government or private travel agencies or brokers. The good network of roadways and railways in Kerala and the three international air ports at Trivandrum, Cochin and Calicut are helpful to reach the tourists to his/her destination easily. To provide better facilities for sight-seeing and enjoying the locales most of these destinations are being equipped with proper and necessary features so as to meet the demands of the visiting tourists. For this purpose Kerala Tourism Development Corporation has established its several Units at all important tourist destinations. These units provide accommodation, food and other necessary services. Moreover the Organisation has set up cafeterias and Tamarind Easy Hotels at different places throughout the highways leading to important tourist destinations or for that matter on the national highways to Trivandrum to Kasaragod. Beyond these units, the marketing agencies, marketing executives, general sales agents and KTDC’s own sales department actively involved in reaching tour packages and services of the Corporation to tourists.

The distribution of Tour Packages of KTDC is being carried out through the Marketing and Sales Division, Tourist Reception Centres, District Tourism Promotion Councils, Marketing Executives, Marketing Agents and General sales agents. For the proper and effective distribution mechanism KTDC have established a number of offices and help desks within and outside the state and
country. The Corporation has more than 60 accommodation units at almost all the major tourist destinations across the state. For a wide distribution coverage area it has set up offices in all the major cities of the country like Chennai, Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Kolkata, Ahmadabad, Goa, Chandigarh etc.

The Central Reservation Cell in Trivandrum and Tourist Reception Centres in Trivandrum, Cochin, Chennai and New Delhi are playing a significant role in the distribution of tour packages. In order to provide the best available packages and facility to the customers the CRC facility is available at any time. The Marketing Executives of the Organisation will go for a direct marketing with the Chief Officials of different organisations and provide them with suitable tour packages.

In addition to these units and offices, distribution of the tour packages is also carried out through various travel agencies and tour operators spread across the length and breadth of the country. Travel Agents are the primary sources, through which KTDC is being able to receive inbound and outbound customers at different locations of the state. A sub agent group is also working under the personnel sales agents in order to provide a clear guidance to the customers. Some multinational tourist organisations have also been vowed to carry out the distribution works. Beyond the Travel Agents KTDC has a number of Domestic Marketing Agents in almost all major cities in India and International Marketing Agents including UK, Germany, USA, Italy, Norway, UAE, Oman and Muscat for the distribution and promotion of its tourism products and packages.\(^2\)

The online marketing is another innovative strategy which KTDC has been adopted for distributing its tour packages directly to tourists. This has been carried out through the website of the Corporation and central reservation cell. Through this distribution strategy the tourists can directly contact with the Organisation and can opt packages as per his/her tastes and preferences.

KTDC has given focus on directing marketing techniques and has often depended on marketing agencies and tour operator. But the Corporation is commonly utilising the services of both government approved and private travel agencies for booking transport facilities. The services of guides private as well as government have been
utilising in distributing the tour packages and services to the tourists. Sometimes KTDC has received tourists as ‘Walk in Customers’ – the people who are not exactly guided by an agent or through direct marketing. They choose their destination or locale as they wish.

In its long history of Tourism services, KTDC has failed to take cognizance of its counterparts and as such no productive change can be visualised in terms of the accessibility, distribution network and distribution coverage area. Over the 40 years of experience in planned tourism products development such as designing and developing tour packages in the state, the distribution network of KTDC shows limited coverage area. Still there exist a number of states (Jharkhand, Uttaranchal, Orissa, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Assam, etc) and cities (Agra, Bhopal, Shimla, Darjeeling, Jaipur, Hyderabad, Amthaser, etc) in the country, where KTDC could not establish its tourist information centres, units or marketing agent. The tourists from such states have to either contact their private tour operators and agents from their location or the KTDC Office/ reception centres in Kerala or in other states. The technologically illiterate tourists do not have any channel to contact with the KTDC offices or units, until and unless the Corporation establish a well distribution network within the country and outside.

5.1.4 Promotion Perspective Analysis

It is true that among the elements of the marketing mix, it is the role played by promotion that has been instrumental to the growth of modern tourism. As with all elements of the marketing mix, however, integration with the other elements is imperative for success. This is also true in the case of marketing communications, which represents the promotional element of the marketing mix.

Promotion of the tourist product is carried out through various means such as advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, publicity and public relations. All these aspects of the promotional perspective play a vital role in the overall performance of the industry. These aspects are so intermingled with each other that it is often very difficult to distinguish between them.
The promotional efforts of KTDC have been carried out through the Marketing Department. The Marketing Department undertakes the marketing and promotional activities of the Corporation through various means. For the marketing campaigns of tourism products in the state Kerala Tourism Development Corporation has many slogans such as:

‘Official Host to God’s Own Country’

The slogan ‘God’s Own Country’ was first used in the context of Kerala Tourism in South India when the first webpage on Kerala tourism created in 1993. Later KTDC has been using this as its brand to conduct and regulate the tourism prospects of Kerala by adding the phrase ‘Official Host to’. The slogan now holds Global Super Brand status. In addition to this, KTDC has been followed by many slogans in marketing the tourism products in the State. Some of them are:

‘Ten Paradises of the World’ (by the National Geographic Traveller)

‘One of the Fifty Must See Destination of a Lifetime’
(By National Geographic Traveller after Two Years of Research)

‘One of the Hundred Great Trips for the 21st Century’ (by Travel and Leisure)

‘One of the Ten Hot Spots for the Millennium’
(By Emirates in Flight Magazine)

‘One of the Ten Love Nests in India’ (By Cosmopolitan)

KTDC has been undertaken extensive advertising campaigns, with all these and many more other slogans, for its varied products and packages in order to promote tourism in the state. Tour Broachers are available at all its units and tourist information centres throughout the state. These broachers give firsthand information about the packages and destinations, which encompasses all facts about the tour packages including places to see, where to stay, how to reach and what kind of activities to enjoy.

Another important publicity document for a package tour is Itinerary, as it contains details of a particular package such as the places and attractions to visit, hotels and
resorts to stay, mode of transportation, number of days (number of days and nights), date and time of visit, price of the package, all other information and schedule of the programmes. In addition to broachers and itineraries the publicity materials include maps, photo-cards and small but well informative booklets. Photographic exhibitions highlighting the natural and scenic beauty are proving to be successful promotional tools for natural based packages.

Another important medium used by KTDC for the promotion of the tour packages is its own Web Sites (Figure 5.1) and other Internet facilities, which yield very good result by increasing the inflow of both foreign and domestic tourists in the state. Mass media is also used for the promotion of KTDC tourism products. Advertising campaigns are carried out in leading newspapers, magazines and electronic media. Use of information technology, by way of production of films through CD ROMs and multimedia technology, has added another feather to the promotional process of KTDC. As an innovative technique KTDC has adopted mobile technology marketing through SMSs and MMs for local level promotion of tour packages. The SMSs and MMSs are enough capable to disseminate information about the newly added packages and products of KTDC through the small pictures and texts.

Figure 5.1: KTDC Website Home page
KTDC conducts road shows, Grand Kerala Tourism and Shopping Festivals and exhibitions during festivals and other occasions as a means of tourism promotion techniques in the state. The Corporation is a regular participant in International fair like International Trade fair held at Pragathi Maidan, New Delhi, ILTM France, FITUR- Spain, TTG Rimini, International Tourism Borse (ITB) Berlin, World Travel Mart (WTM) London and ATM Dubai etc; and national fairs such as Travel and Tourism Fair Bangaloru, Chennai, Kolkata; India International Travel Mart-Mumbai, India International Trade Fair- New Delhi and South Asia Travel and Tourism Exchange- New Delhi etc. KTDC has implemented a year-long umbrella package campaign called ‘Visit Kerala Year 2009’ for no-resident Keralites from January 20th, 2009 with the aim of wooing more domestic tourists to the state by focusing on Tier-II cities.

KTDC is promoting tour packages mainly through its own website, other internet sources, and advertisements through mass media and publicity documents. Advertising through the print and visual Medias helps in furnishing the information to the tourists and also helps in simplifies the process of information about their tour packages and hotels. Publicity is the most powerful technique for marketing of any tourist product. KTDC with its brand name and brand mark is promoting the most favourable and beautiful image through different hoardings which helps to identify the memorable, likeable, adaptable and protectable features of the Organisation in the minds of tourists.

Although Kerala Tourism Development Corporation has been carried out various promotional efforts efficiently by adopting all possible and available methods and techniques, they were not much effective in yielding result as expected by the organisation.

5.1.5 People Perspective Analysis

The people element of the marketing mix is significant because this aspect of the marketing contributes mostly to the variability of the tourism product in respect of service-encounter. This applies to the interaction and relationships between visitors or tourists, employees of tourism organisations and the host community/ the local
residents. Interactions and relationships between these three ‘people’ group will impact significantly on the quality of packages/ destinations and the level of product satisfaction experienced by the visitor, the satisfaction of employees and the degree to which tourism is either accepted or rejected in the host destination.

In tour package the tour operator and its interaction with tourist is a unique experience that is influenced by a large number of often unpredictable ‘human element’ factors. These include the mood and expectations of each participant at the particular time during which the service encounter takes place. A tourist in a restaurant, for example, may be completely relaxed, expecting that every whim will be satisfied, while the attending waiter may have high level of stress from overwork and expect the customer to be more reasonable in their demands. Such expectation incongruities are extremely common in tour package, given the tourist’s perception of this experience as a special out-of-the-ordinary (and expensive) occasion, and the waiters view that this is just a routine experience associated with the job.

The tour operator’s problem in this regard is that these incongruities can lead to unpleasant and unsatisfying encounters, and a consequent reduction in customer satisfaction level and deteriorating local attitudes towards tourists. Often, just one such experience can sour a tourist’s view about a particular package or destination, offsetting a very large number of entirely satisfactory experiences during the same package.

The importance of fostering tourist sensitivity and awareness was also stressed because of the inappropriate behaviour of a tourist can reduce the service quality of the tour package for all participants. For many tour packages, the local residents also fall into the ingredients of a package, since tourists may be attracted by the culture and hospitality of the resident population. In such cases the Corporation conducts tourism awareness programmes and campaigns to aware of the need of tourism developments among the local people

The people element of KTDC’s marketing mix for tour packages subsumes its employees, tourists and the various service providers such as hoteliers, transportation facilitators, and sightseeing guides. The employees in the
Organisation always take maximum care while interacting with its clients as they try to provide best services, utmost support and assistance in order to enhance maximum satisfaction to the visitors. The production and consumption of tourist services both occur at the same time and place and are inseparable, the organisation has to be very conscious and vigilant about the moods and expectations of the tourist. KTDC has been facilitating trained and expert people’s services in its all packages. It has been providing very good services in accommodating, transporting and sightseeing the tourists.

KTDC has been constantly showing its interest to provide unbounded services and utmost facilities to clients in order to maintain the quality of packages through which the tourists can entertain at a higher level of satisfaction. With this purpose, KTDC has been providing exclusive training facilities to its employees in order to enhance the hospitality skills. Similarly the Corporation has been taking special care in recruiting trained, professionally skilled and experienced employees for its hotels and resorts. Consequently a large number of tourists both foreign and domestic, are opting KTDC packages and properties to degust the attractions in the God’s Own Country.

Pertinent to the fact that people at the different destinations of Kerala are very hospitable and skilful in interacting with the tourists, their participation in the constant increase of the tourism products in the State is of paramount importance. The participation of local communities in tourism development remains a challenge with the tourism organisations and tour operators. This has been strongly associated with the growth and development of natural based tour packages in the state. These two characteristics make the people of Kerala an important instrument in the growth and development of tour packages in the State. This has encouraged the Corporation to design and develop innumerable number of tour packages and to engage an uninterrupted and unchallenged tourism trade in the State.

Although KTDC has been very vigilant in managing the people element of the marketing mix in order to provide quality services, it has often confronted with problems and complaints, because of the semi skilled and unskilled employees, in dealing with clients/ tourists. Still more than half of the employees in the
Organisation are either semi-skilled or unskilled. The trained employees also, sometimes, show their failure, because of flagging or unwillingness to serve tourists in tune with their moods and expectations.

The inappropriate behaviour of tourists seldom reduces the quality of the packages for all other participants in a particular tour. For many packages or destinations, the unfavourable attitude of the local residents also affected the packages badly, since tourists were attracted that particular package by the culture, tradition and hospitality of the resident population.

However, the overall performance of the people element in tour packages of KTDC shows very good performance. This adds more attraction and satisfaction to the tourists in the tour packages of the Organisation.

5.1.6 Process Perspective Analysis

The tourism experience is highly dependent on the quality of service delivery as perceived by the user. In most instances, this will involve the process element of the marketing mix. It has emerged as one of the very important P’s of tourism marketing mix as it accentuates such characteristics that have a incorporating effect on the overall tourism marketing planning process. It compiles all the characters in such a manner that their knowledge becomes essential in deciding about the planning process. In fact it is the study of all those procedural implications that are adopted in running the affairs of tourism marketing.

The process element is frequently instrumental in the final delivery of the service encounter. The process in tour packages marketing includes trip planning and anticipation, travel to the site/area, recollection, booking of hotels and trip planning packages etc. The trip planning include, maps, attractions en route and on site, information regarding lodging, food, quality souvenirs and mementoes.

The process element in Package Tour is the complete planning of the contents and events of a tour package from its idea generation to delivery of service/ experience. This include designing of package, booking system, payment system, visitor-flow techniques, delivery of services, planning for accommodation, booking of hotels,
transportation, sightseeing facilities and after sales services. The planning of a package includes the selection of a particular destination; estimation of time available with the visitor; planning, designing and developing a suitable package to the selected destination in tune with the availability of time; planning where to accommodate, means of transportation, availability of food, sightseeing spots and entertainment programmes; estimation of the cost and deciding pricing policies; preparation of tour itinerary and tour brochure, and how to deliver the package or experience with utmost satisfaction.

Generally, KTDC has been offering varied readymade packages that are planned and designed in advance by adding the inseparable element required for a particular package. It has also been, very often, developing tailor made tour packages on demand of tourists. While planning such packages, it has been taking special care to include best destinations, attractions and entertainment programmes to provide utmost satisfaction to the tourists. By going through the different packages already designed, the tourist may opts a particular package or demands to design a new package in accordance with his taste and preferences.

A tour package is the combination of several tourism products or services. When a tour package is developed, it means that has made many interlinks between several groups such as hoteliers, airlines, railway, travel agents and tour operators, restaurateur etc. When it sells, it makes interconnections between several processes as it is lengthy; it requires the conscious efforts, services and co-operations of all these interlinked parties such as airlines, hoteliers, travel agents etc to complete the selling process successfully.

In this regard the Marketing Department of KTDC is playing a very significant role in process of planning and delivering tour packages to its ultimate customer. The marketing department provides necessary information about the plans, policies and procedures for the marketing of tour packages. When KTDC deals with a foreign tourist, the travel division of the marketing department has to be undertaken the procedures required for issuing and stamping of visa, clearance of other documents required for international travel, reservation of air tickets, arrangements for local transportation and accommodation. As a part of this exercise the complete details of
the tourists must be collected and maintained which are important in the planning process of a tour package. The entry and exit of the all international tourists have to be registered, which will give a clear cut idea about the nationality, age-group and gender of the tourist. This will be helpful in maintaining the statistics of the international tourists.

KTDC holds a pioneering position in terms of the facilities it provides to tourists. The Central Reservation Cell in Trivandrum and Tourist Reservation Centres in Trivandrum, Cochin, Chennai and New Delhi provide multiple facilities to the tourists. The Various Units of KTDC which established throughout the state and the two travel divisions provide services of banks, post office, money exchanges, hotel reservation, air and train reservation, internet cafes, and other communication facilities which are very important in the processes element of marketing tour packages.

When it spelled out once the process involved in carrying out marketing of tour packages in Kerala, it become imperative to point out that the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation is running its tourism marketing process through its Marketing Department, District Tourism Promotion Councils, travel agencies, tour operators, marketing agencies and executives, CRC, TRCs and other units. Although this may be the very absorbent network of KTDC for carrying out the marketing efforts for tour packages effectively, at times it is impossible for these agencies, operators, councils, executives and units to come to terms with each other and act in integrity and unanimity. Seldom KTDC has lost its control over such travel agencies, tour operators and marketing executives, as they are non-government organisations and functioning independently. In the absence of any control or accountability, it will be an exaggeration of sorts to expect that these organisations will work in tandem with expectations of the Corporation.

Being tour package is a combination of several interlinked services its sales or transfer is not an easy process, as it interlinks several groups, to avail the tour packages or services to the ultimate tourists at maximum of level of satisfaction and gratification.
5.1.7 Physical Evidence Perspective Analysis

In many aspects of tourism physical evidence is the core component of tourism product. This is especially valid in the case of package tours. In the context of the tourism marketing, however, physical evidence refers to the design or layout of the tourism product or the built environment owned and controlled by an organisation. Due to the intangible nature of tourism products, the physical evidence aspect is more often than not used to tangibilise the offer away from the place of consumption especially at the point of sale to influence purchasing.

In tourism physical evidence is corroborated with those aspects of the tourism product whose existence gives a sense of wellbeing. In other words there are such things with a tourist destination or product, which gives tourists a sense of belongingness, freshness, joy, flamboyance and splendour. In essence these factors have a degree of tangibility associated with them. Their tangible nature when coupled with the intangible aspects of a tourist product gives the product an entirely different shape and value. It adds to flair and quality of the product and makes it more convenient and attractive.

Physical Evidence is significant in planning and marketing of tour package because of the underlying principle of simultaneous provision and consumption. This component of the mix in the context of tour package marketing is used to meet a variety of objectives such as: helps to contribute to the communication of messages about quality, positioning and differentiation; facilitates the process of service delivery; helps to facilitate desired emotional states of behaviour among tourist and communicate values relating to the organisation, brand and package.

In the planning process of a tour package, physical evidence is an important aspect as it can be related from an architectural marvel to the basic ingredients to a package. Thus while planning a tour package it become imperative to create a structure that fit best into the environs of the destination nature and the needs and expectations of the tourists. It can be attributed in the planning and development of the accommodation facilities, means and ways of transportation, sightseeing facilities at various locales, entertainments, food and refreshments, shopping, and
other amenities. The layout of all these components as a whole to a package should be attractive and enjoyable with special care for the utmost satisfaction of tourist.

Being the Government agency to promote tourism in the State, KTDC has been succeeded to provide a better physical environment to the destinations by constructing tourism infrastructure and other amenities. Resulting from this, KTDC has become well equipped to design tour packages with a better layout of the experiences, attraction, facilities and other services components of a package. Since KTDC itself has been engaged in constructing and maintaining hotels, resorts and restaurants throughout the state, it can provide quality stay, food and refreshment to the tourist with a sense of wellbeing. In most of the tour packages KTDC provides facilities for food, accommodation and other amenities at its own hotels and resorts located at the most picturesque destinations in the state. These hotels and resorts have been developed in such a manner to have a homely atmosphere to the tourist. The physical layout of their accommodation units and restaurants is taken special care to give a sense of belongingness and freshness to tourist.

KTDC has been taking special care in selecting destinations to be included in tour packages. The physical environment of such destinations and the amenities available give an exotic experience to the tourist. The key attractions and experiences of such destinations in the packages may include backwaters, hill stations, waterfalls, vegetations, wild life, heritage tourism, historical monuments, houseboat cruise, Ayurvedic massage, trekking etc. The intangible nature of the experiences provided by these attractions or products gives the tour packages an entirely different shape and value. It adds much to the package in terms of its flair, quality and beauty.

Although KTDC has been taking extra care to integrate various components of the tourism product to form quality tour packages, the quality of the packages seldom questioned because of the unsatisfactory conditions of means of transportation, sightseeing facilities and rarely the services provided at the accommodation units. However, in essence KTDC has been succeeded in establishing a sense of well being, belongingness, freshness, joy, flamboyance and splendour among the tourist
through its varied quality tour packages. That provides a physical evidence for their experiences and presence in the God’s Own Country by way of a tour package.

5.2 Marketing Strategies of Tour Packages of KTDC: Analysis and Evaluation

After the in depth marketing mix perspective analysis, now it is the turn to analyse and evaluate the marketing strategies of tour packages of KTDC. Since the hypothesis No.3 states on the grounds of the literature availed at the initial phase of the study that ‘Kerala Tourism Development Corporation has vague strategies for marketing tour packages in the State’, it is very convenient to adopt various approaches such as product/ consumer oriented approach, price/ competitor oriented approach, distribution/ trade oriented approach and promotion/ communication oriented approach to analyse and evaluate the marketing strategies adopted by KTDC for its tour packages in Kerala State. The application of these approaches will be helpful to identify whether KTDC has adopted any kind of marketing strategies for tour packages and if so, what type of marketing strategies are the Corporation adopted.

5.2.1 Product/ Consumer Oriented Approach

In the product/ consumer oriented approach KTDC can be adopted three core strategies, i.e. Undifferentiated (Diversification) Strategy, Differentiated (Specialisation) Strategy and Quality Growth Model Strategy.

5.2.1.1 Undifferentiated Strategy

The undifferentiated marketing strategy focuses on the average expectations of every segment of tourists and the marketing efforts concentrate on the common interest of the entire segments of tourists’ needs and behaviours rather than their variances. This strategic option concentrates on full product or market coverage without having any specialisation of products or markets.

By adopting a diversification/ undifferentiated strategy for marketing tour packages, KTDC can anticipate the average needs and expectations of more tourists
segments than a particular group by conceiving some varied tour packages. If the Organisation takes into consideration the varied and complex character of the State’s tourism potential, the organisation consider that the following could be particular tour packages that the Corporation can be offered. They are seaside/beach sojourn, backwater packages, mountain and waterfalls (hill station) packages, vegetation with wildlife packages, ethnic circuit packages, heritage tour packages, rural-farm tour packages, Ayurveda packages, cruise (house boat) packages, ecotourism packages, pilgrimage packages, sports and adventure packages etc.

It is intelligible from the product perspective analysis element of the marketing mix of the tour packages that KTDC has developed large number of tour packages with the aim to satisfy the average needs and expectations of almost all tourists segment in the tourism market. All such kind tour packages have been designed and developed by considering the average needs and expectations of all segment of tourists.

Beyond these readymade packages, assorted tailor-made packages also added width and length to the product mix of KTDC. The Corporation is adding more new packages and making timely modifications in the existing packages in order to attract the new market segments. By offering these diversified tour packages, KTDC wants to make an inflow of all tourist segments such as local tourists, domestic tourists, foreign tourists, family tourist, honeymooners, nature lovers, pilgrim tourists, adventure lovers etc. to the utmost destinations in the state. KTDC has given enough attention in carrying out the marketing efforts for almost all types of tour packages included in the product mix.

The above discussions and analysis helps to interpret that KTDC has no farfetched ardour towards a particular package or group of packages to indulge a particular group of tourists as per their special needs and demands. As a rule, the Corporation has been designing diversified tour packages by considering the average needs and expectations of the total tourist segments. The marketing and promotional efforts of KTDC for tour packages concentrate on the common interests of the target segments’ needs and behaviour rather than their variances.
5.2.1.2 Differentiated Strategy

This strategy aims to identify the characteristics of diverse consumer groups through the use of marketing instruments directed at specific targets in order to develop tourist products or services to satisfy the needs and expectations of a particular segment of tourists. By this strategic option the organisation concentrates in developing only a very limited number of tour packages that suits only few segments of tourists’ needs and expectations. It focuses on product specialisation, market specialisation or both product and market specialisation. Through the product or market specialisation the organisation can serve that particular segment of customers with absolute dedication.

Habitually, KTDC plans and develops certain tour packages with the specific aim to focus on particular tourist segments by considering their characteristics, interests, needs and expectations. The nature based packages such as hill station tour, beach tours, backwater packages, wildlife packages, cruise packages, etc. always aim to attract the nature lovers from within and outside the country. For those tourists who have genuine interest in health conscious tourism, KTDC offers multitudinous Ayurveda packages such as Ayurvedic rejuvenation packages and Ayurvedic therapy packages along with the beach and backwater tour packages. The Ayurveda packages with beach and backwater tours offered at different properties of the Organisation, especially at Kovalam and Kumarakom resorts, are often intended specifically to attract international tourists who have keen interest in Ayurvedic rejuvenations and therapies. The majority of the beach tour packages (Kovalam, Shankhumugham, Papanasham, Alappuzha, Cherai packages) of KTDC are designed to attract particularly the foreign tourists who have interested in sun-bathing at the sea shores, snorkelling, catamaran rides and other activities on the beach.

Similarly, in order to attract various social groups of tourists KTDC offers various readymade and tailor-made packages such as family packages, honeymoon packages, packages for particular age groups and other homogeneous social group packages. All these packages are helpful to provide utmost gratification to such social groups of visitors through the realisation of their interests, needs and
expectations. But all these readymade and tailor made packages have been planned and developed by considering average interest, attitude and expectations of each segments of the tourist.

Although there have been very less number of packages which are specifically designed to attract particular tourist segments having special characteristics, interests, needs, and expectations, KTDC has been often shown its keen interest to design and develop special tour packages for particular tourist segments as it wants to attract such market segments of tourists to the Organisation. But the organisation has been given focus to develop and market natural based tour packages and Ayurveda packages along with other diverse tour packages. Because Kerala has abounding nature based tourism resource potential and plenty of Ayurveda centres, which might be driven the organisation to tailor such kind of packages in accordance with the common characteristics, interest and attitude of varied tourist segments in order to have full market coverage.

Therefore, it is evident from the above discussions and marketing mix analysis that KTDC has not been stuck around a particular group of packages with the aim of satisfying particular groups of tourists. Although it focuses utmost all segments of tourists such as native tourists, domestic tourists, foreign tourist, nature lovers and health conscious tourists, adventure lovers, pilgrim tourists etc. by offering diverse tour packages, sometimes the Corporation also takes special care to satisfy such tourist segments who have special and varied interests, needs and expectations. It is true in the case of foreign and health conscious tourists that KTDC has a special in attracting them to the Organisation because of the better earnings in the form of foreign exchange. However, being a government agency to promote tourism in Kerala, KTDC has been supposed to undertake such marketing efforts or strategies which must serve full market or product coverage.
5.2.1.3 **Quality Growth Model Strategy**

Another strategy KTDC can adopt for marketing tour packages is Quality Growth Strategy. By adopting such a strategy the Corporation is capable to attract and satisfy every class or segment of tourists through the quality matters of tour packages.

Beyond the diversification and differentiation strategies, KTDC adopts quality growth strategy in order to have a significant difference and distinguished attraction in terms of the quality of the tour packages from other tour operators’ packages. Although there have been diverse tour packages, KTDC make them more attractive from other tour operators’ packages by maintaining a distinguished quality. In its history of marketing tour packages KTDC has never compromised with the quality of its tour packages. This can be also realised in the tourists satisfaction survey results discussed in chapter 6 of this study.

However, it is clear from the above product/consumer oriented strategies analysis that KTDC has been adopting mainly undifferentiated (diversification) strategy for marketing its varied tour packages in the state of Kerala. At the same time the Corporation has given special focus for foreign tourist segment by designing distinguished packages in accordance with their tastes, preferences and expectations. Moreover, KTDC has adopted ‘Quality Growth Model’ as the overall strategy along with other strategies for marketing tour packages.

5.2.2 **Price/ Competitor Oriented Approach**

With the peculiar characteristics of Kerala tourism industry KTDC has four core pricing strategies to determine the price of its tour packages i.e. cost/price leadership strategy, demand oriented pricing, high price strategy and differential pricing.

5.2.2.1 **Cost/ Price Leadership Strategy**

A cost/ price leadership strategy makes a tour operator competent in market by setting the possible lowest price for its packages by minimising the cost. By adopting this type of pricing strategy, KTDC can become the leader of the tourism
market in setting the prices of tour packages in the State by fixing the possible lowest price through minimum cost of production. But the price perspective analysis has not given any evidence for practicing cost/price leadership strategy by KTDC in marketing tour packages. As it is more concerned about the quality of packages than the cost or price, the Corporation has often failed to attract the common people who prefer the cost/price of packages with the quality factor.

5.2.2.2 High Price Strategy

The price perspective analysis of the tour packages unveils that KTDC has been practicing higher price strategy to determine the prices of its varied tour packages. Since the Corporation has been offering and marketing superior quality tour packages, it is enforced to fix higher prices for maintaining the standard and quality of the packages to be marketed.

The high price strategy can be applied for some of the tour packages having very good quality. Such packages include Houseboat Cruise, Natural Backwater packages, Beach Holiday package, Coast and Cruise packages, Mystic Hills Station packages, Island packages, Kerala Jungle packages, Ayurveda Rejuvenation and Therapeutic packages etc. In order to ensure the competitiveness of such type of tour packages a correlation between the high price and the superior quality of tour packages is imposed.

By adopting a high price strategy, KTDC may have to concentrate on the quality matters of tour packages. Hence, the Corporation can be easily achieved a competitive edge with a very good reputation and global super brand position in terms of quality matters and it can be helpful to attract those tourists who are more concerned about the quality of packages than the price.

5.2.2.3 Demand Oriented Pricing Strategy

The demand characteristics of the tourist segments represent factors such as seasonal variations etc. lead to the adoption of price differentiation strategies for determining the prices of certain tour packages.
Sometimes KTDC has been imposed to practice demand based pricing strategy for certain packages which have seasonal influence to attract tourist. The packages such as Ayurveda Rejuvenation and Therapeutic packages have a great demand during the monsoon season. Therefore the prices of such packages during the monsoon will be very high compared to other seasons. On the other side, the prices of Mystic Hill Holiday packages, Inland Holiday Packages, Natural Backwater packages, Houseboat Cruise Packages, Beach Holiday packages, Jungle Holiday packages etc. are comparatively less during the Monsoon.

5.2.2.4 Differential/ Dual Pricing Strategy

The price perspective element of the marketing mix analysis says that KTDC has often plagued by the dual/ differential pricing mechanism with regard to the foreign and domestic tourists. The same types of tour packages and products have been charged differently from foreigners and Indian tourists especially for Ayurveda Tour Packages, Houseboat Cruise packages and other premium packages.

Although KTDC has been adopting different pricing strategies for different tour packages at different times and situations, generally it adopts a high price strategy for its products and services as compared to other tourism organisations. Since the Organisation has been providing superior quality services and packages it has never practiced a cost/ price leadership strategy for its tour packages in its total service span in the tourism industry. The KTDC has rarely adopted the strategies such as price bundling and tactical pricing along with the demand oriented pricing and differential/ dual pricing strategies.
5.2.3 Distribution/ Trade Oriented Approach

The third approach to marketing strategy focuses on distribution channel, i.e. the uses of intermediaries who are particularly significant in the travel and tourism industry. The literature identified two main trade oriented strategies in marketing tour packages. They are By-Passing Strategy and Co-operation Strategy.

5.2.3.1 By-Passing Strategy

Through the adoption of a By-Passing Strategy KTDC or any other travel and tourism organisation can relinquish any collaboration with the distribution channels such as brokers, tour operator or agents etc. By adopting this type of marketing strategy tourism organisations can be directly involved in the distribution of tour packages to the ultimate consumers by way of direct marketing techniques.

As a rule, it has been practiced by KTDC for years that, the Organisation passes the tour packages to the ultimate customers directly through the marketing and sales department, marketing executives, KTDC’s accommodation units and the tourist reception centres located in different parts of the State. Here the tourist directly contacts organisation or the tourist reception centres or marketing department contact tourists directly through e-mails or other means and provide the service directly to them. The Central Reservation Cell, KTDC’s own website and other internet sources also play a pivotal role in attracting both domestic and foreign tourists directly to the Organisation and it helps to relinquish the intermediaries from the distribution system. Sometimes KTDC has received tourists as ‘Walk in Customers’ – the people who are not exactly guided by an agent or through direct marketing. They choose their destination or locale as they wish.

Although KTDC has been taking up direct marketing efforts for reaching its tour packages to the tourists, the insufficient facilities and resource potential, the semi skilled and unskilled sales force and people employed at the marketing department and tourism reception centres are often badly affected the direct marketing efforts. So in order to make the by-passing strategy more effective for the organisation, it can also practice database marketing for tour packages. The direct/ by passing marketing activities were often merely significant for establishing and/ or
maintaining a presence and visibility of KTDC’s tour packages in both domestic and international markets.

5.2.3.2 Co-operative and Collaborative Strategy

The Co-operative and Collaborative strategy is widely adopted for marketing tourism products at national and international levels by both public and private travel and tourism organisations with the co-operations and collaborations of the varied intermediaries in both the market places.

The place/distribution perspective analysis of marketing mix of tour packages reveals that the distribution network of KTDC consists of a number of intermediaries like marketing and sales agents, travel agencies and tour operators, District tourism promotional councils, the general sales agents within the country and abroad, and other public and private tourism organisations. The Corporation has been carried out the distribution of tour packages through the cooperative and collaborative networks of these various mediators and agencies.

Kerala Tourism Development Corporation has a large number of individual as well as organised sales and marketing agents both in domestic and overseas markets in order to maximise the inflow of tourists in the State. In addition to the sales and marketing agents, the Central Reservation Cell in Thiruvanthapuram, the Tourists Reception Centres located at the major cities in India, and the other units and offices of KTDC also play a very significant role in the distribution network of the organisation.

Although KTDC has a number of sales and marketing agents and executives to strengthen the distribution network, still the organisation is facing problems and difficulties in the timely distributions of tour packages due to the ineffective and insufficient marketing and distribution efforts undertaken by these intermediaries and agencies. Moreover, there are a large number of states and countries without having a single marketing or sales agent for the tour packages’ distribution. In India KTDC has only about 40 authorized general sales agents all of them are located in only 9 states namely Goa, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh,
Utter Pradesh, Rajasthan, West Bengal and Kerala. The number of foreign countries having the sales and marketing agents of the Corporation is very few.

However, the cooperative and collaborative distribution strategies adopted by KTDC are often yielding less result in marketing of tour packages. Because, the inefficiency of the distribution agencies to identify the expected tourists and to reach packages to them in time, and the insufficient number of intermediaries and agents. Still the Corporation does not have authorised mediators or agents except the general sales agents in many countries such as Australia, France, and Canada etc. where from the tourists inflow to the state is very high.

The success of the corporative and collaborative strategy is greatly depends on the efficiency of intermediaries’ networks. However, it is clear from the above analysis that KTDC has been more concentrated on the direct or by-passing marketing strategy even it has given emphasis and importance for the intermediaries and agents in distributing tour packages in a cooperative and collaborative manner.

5.2.4 Promotion/ Communication Oriented Approach

The promotional efforts of Kerala Tourism Development Corporation for marketing tour packages in the State can be structured and analysed on the basis of three level strategies. They are local/ State level promotional strategies, National level promotion Strategies and International level promotional Strategies

5.2.4.1 The Local/ Regional or State Level Strategies

In order to attract the local tourists (tourists within the state) KTDC has adopted local or regional level promotional strategies. The promotion element in the marketing mix analysis shows that the Marketing Department of the Corporation has undertaken several promotional activities and programmes for marketing tour packages in the State. Such promotional efforts and programmes include Road Shows, Exhibitions, Grand Kerala Tourism Festivals, Grand Kerala Shopping Festivals, and Special Promotional Campaign during festivals like Onam, Eid, and Christmas etc. All these activities and programmes have been carried out both at district and state levels and sometimes regional level as well.
The brochure, booklets, leaflets, pamphlets and tour itineraries, and the uses of information technology by way of production of films, CD ROMs and multimedia technology etc. also play a significant role in the local level promotion of tourism products in the state. Another important promotional technique adopted is the advertisements in local newspapers, TV channels and other electronic medias, magazines, KTDC’s own website, posters and notices etc. In addition to all these, the marketing and sales agents, marketing executives, tour operator etc. are also undertaking the promotional efforts for the Organisation at district and regional levels.

As an innovative technique KTDC has adopted mobile phone marketing by utilising SMSs and MMSs for local level promotion of tour packages. The SMSs and MMSs are enough capable to disseminate information about the newly added packages and products of KTDC through the small pictures and texts. Those who are interested in the packages can contact the Corporation directly or through the contact numbers given in the Messages. Although, KTDC has been conducting Shopping festivals for many years, the Grand Kerala Shopping Festival 2009 (Season 3) is entirely different from earlier festivals as it has given special emphasis to tourist destination promotion than the shopping of physical tourism products and other materials.

However, all the above mentioned means and modes of promotional techniques are playing a vital role in disseminating information about the tour packages of KTDC along with the other tourism products in the State. All these promotional techniques encourage tourists to visit the attractive destinations in Kerala by way of tour packages.

5.2.4.2 National and International Level Strategies

The major promotional strategy which KTDC has been adopted to attract national and international tourist to the State is by means of positively-aggressive promotion under the slogan ‘Official Host to God’s Own Country’. In all the promotional programmes and activities for marketing tour packages and other tourism products in the State, KTDC uses the slogan ‘Official Host to God’s Own Country’ that
provides a strong brand image for the Organisation and Kerala Tourism Industry. The Website and the Central Reservation Cell of KTDC also play a very significant role in bringing the tourists in the national and international markets close to the Organisation.

For the promotion of the tourism in the state by attracting the domestic and foreign tourists, the Corporation is a regular participant in International fair such as International Trade fair held at Pragathi Maidan, New Delhi, International Tourism Borse (ITB) Berlin, World Travel Mart (WTM) London and ATM Dubai, ILTM France, FITUR- Spain, TTG Rimini etc. and the national fairs which include Travel and Tourism Fair Bangalor, Chennai, Kolkata; India International Travel Mart-Mumbai, India International Trade Fair- New Delhi and South Asia Travel and Tourism Exchange- New Delhi etc. The promotional campaign Visit Kerala Year 2009 was aimed to woo more domestic tourists to the state by focusing on Tier-II cities. The national and international level marketing agents, executives and tour operators are also undertake intensive promotional efforts within and outside the country.

In addition to these, the traditional promotional strategies such as advertising, direct and personal selling, public relations, publicity, video clips and film strips, etc. and the new techniques such as database marketing, uses of information and multimedia technology, internet, CD Rom etc. also have a great influence in the inflow of national and international tourists to the State by means of KTDC’s tour packages and other tourist products. Website is very crucial in disseminating information about the varied tour packages of KTDC and in attracting domestic as well as foreign tourists to the God’s Own Country. At present website is the most effective and powerful promotional tool to attract national and international tourists to the Organisation.

However, it can be understood from the above discussions and marketing mix analysis that KTDC has been undertaken tourism promotional techniques and programmes effectively and efficiently at regional/ local level, national and international level. The Corporation has adopted different promotional strategies
and techniques and has made timely changes as per the changes of human attitude, tastes and preferences and information technology.

2.3 Tenability of Hypothesis and Conclusion

The above analytical evaluation of all planning processes and the marketing strategies of the tour packages of KTDC make it amply clear that the Corporation has been adopted different marketing strategies for different tour packages in different contexts and times. The marketing mix perspective analysis and overall marketing strategy analysis through the application of different marketing approaches could not find any reasonable evidence to support the Null Hypothesis (No.3) that KTDC has vague strategies for marketing tour packages in Kerala. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (KTDC has well structured strategies for marketing tour packages in Kerala) has been accepted.

The marketing strategies which KTDC has adopted in different contexts and times are different from package to package. During the peak (season) periods the Organisation adopts undifferentiated strategy with the intention to attract almost all tourists segments, but in off-seasons it adopts differentiated strategy for attracting a particular tourist group such as foreign tourists or health conscious tourists etc. Similarly KTDC adopts high pricing strategy in peak periods, but in off-season it adopts a low price strategy. Therefore the strategies adopted by KTDC for marketing tour packages are different from package to package, season to season, customers to customers and situation to situation.

The important strategies which KTDC has adopted for tour packages are: undifferentiated (diversification) and differentiated (specialisation) strategies; high pricing, differential/dual pricing and demand oriented pricing strategies; the distribution strategies such as by-passing (direct) and cooperative and collaborative (use of intermediaries) strategies; and regional, national and international level promotional strategies such as advertisements through print and electronic media, online and website advertisements, personal selling by using marketing executives and agents, use of brochures, booklets, leaflets, pamphlets and tour itineraries, production of tourism films, CD ROMs, use of multimedia technology, conducting
road shows, exhibitions, tourism festivals and festival celebrations, use of mobile technology in the form of MMSs and SMSs, participation in national and international fairs and festivals, global brand positioning etc. Although, the strategies adopted are different in various contexts and times, they have well designed structures and inter-linkages with each other, and thus the total marketing efforts and strategies for tour packages are controlled and incorporated by the overall strategy of ‘Quality Growth Model’.
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