

Consumer Behaviour on Tourism Intermediaries (Tour Operators and Travel Agents)-A Case Study of North Canara District of Karnataka State

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Abstract

Understanding consumer behaviour is a vital aspect of marketing. Consumer behaviour is the study of how people make decisions about what they buy, want, need, or act in regards to a product, service, or company. It is critical to understand consumer behaviour to know how potential customers will respond to a new product or service. It also helps companies identify opportunities that are not currently met. The dialogue on inclusive tourism is not all that new. Rather, it has been integral to responsible tourism formulations. It is an approach as well as movement aiming to provide and facilitate leisure and recreation opportunities to all those who are desirous of it. As for travel environment, documentations clearly suggest prevalence of many prohibitive elements for large sections of people. From above perspective, this study is a concrete step as first of its kind in North Canara. The main objective was to document all major issues and constraints of tourists with reduced mobility in their travel cycle and assess its potential as a market segment. But, we had to face many our less during investigation such as less frequent visitation of disabled tourists, economic recession etc. The draft report was reviewed by some of the leading scholars and practitioners from both State, India and abroad. Their comments/observations very encouraging. The content of the report should be used full for the Government, industry and other practitioners for the case of accessible and inclusive tourism in North Canara.

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour, Tourism, Tour, Travel, Influence.

I. INTRODUCTION

The First we review five key concepts: Consumer Behaviour, Tourism, Tour, Travel, Influence. For each concept, we critically examine definitional issues, its historical deployment in tourism research and our recommendations for where future research on these concepts should focus. We then review three topical influences that we have identified

as important contemporary factors impacting tourism CB: psychological, personal and social. We thus seek here to contribute to the literature a current review of tourism CB that establishes: (1) a state-of-the-art review of the key conceptual approaches used for understanding CB in the tourism field; (2) how recent critical external factors are influencing these topics; and (3) a future research in tourism CB as based on our analysis.

Our review begins by examining what we believe to be the key concepts in tourism CB research. Our coverage of the key concepts is therefore intentionally not exhaustive, but rather places emphasis on what we believe to be the most important conceptual dimensions of tourism CB research: Sample Size Surveyed, Country Origin of Tourists, State of Origin, Range of services offered, age, gender, background, culture, a person's social class, which involves income, living conditions, and education level, perception of a need or situation, the person's ability to learn or understand information, and an individual's attitude. We address these concepts sequentially, by teasing out definitional issues, tracing their historical use in tourism research and identifying research gaps. Table 1 shows that 70 respondents are foreigner and most number is domestic respondents i.e. 130 and 50 in tour operators and travel agent. So most number of percentages 43 is domestic tourist. Table 4 shows Most of the approved travel and tour operators provide the services like hotel booking, Ticket booking, and Package tours. Additional transport and tourist guide facilities are also arranged on special requests by most of them on chargeable basis as in most cases.

A tour operator typically combines tour and travel components to create a holiday. They prepare itinerary. The most common example of a tour operator's product would be a flight on a charter airline plus a transfer from the airport to a hotel and the services of a local representative, all for one price.

Niche tour operators may specialise in destinations, e.g. Italy, activities and experiences, e.g. skiing, or a combination thereof. The original *raison d'être* of tour operating was the difficulty of making arrangements in far-flung places, with problems of language, currency and communication. The advent of the internet has led to a rapid increase in self-packaging of holidays. Also, tour operators still exercise contracting power with suppliers (airlines, hotels, other land arrangements, cruises, etc.) and influence over other entities (tourism boards and other government authorities) in order to create packages and special departures for destinations otherwise difficult and expensive to visit.

A travel agency is a private retailer or public service that provides travel and tourism related services to the public on behalf of suppliers such as airlines, car rentals, cruise lines, hotels, railways, and package tours. In addition to dealing with ordinary tourists most travel agencies have a separate department devoted to making travel arrangements for business travelers and some travel agencies specialize in commercial and business travel only. There are also travel agencies that serve as general sales agents for foreign travel companies, allowing them to have offices in countries other than where their headquarters are located.

II. RESEARCH REVIEW

A. Consumer Behaviour

CB remains one of the most researched areas in the marketing and tourism fields, with the terms 'travel behaviour' or 'tourist behaviour' typically used to describe this area of inquiry. Few comprehensive reviews of the literature on CB concepts and models exist in the field of tourism. Exceptions include Moutinho (1993) who reviews the social and psychological influences on individual travel behaviour with the aim of developing a model of tourist behaviour and Dimanche and Havitz (1995) who review # 2013. Consumer behaviour (CB) involves certain decisions, activities, ideas or experiences that satisfy consumer needs and wants (Solomon, 1996). It is 'concerned with all activities directly involved in obtaining, consuming and disposing of products and services, including the decision processes that precede and follow these actions' (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, p. 4). The Author(s). Published by Taylor & Francis is an Open Access article. Non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly attributed, cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way, is permitted. The moral rights of the named author(s) have been asserted.

B. Tour Operator

Sheldon (1986) defined a tour operator as "a company which negotiates with hotels, transportation companies and other supplies of tourism services and later combines these components into a packaged tour" (p. 352). The travel agents on the other hand purchases tourist services from the tour operators and sells them to clients directly. The tour operators and the travel agencies are the only true tourism stakeholders who are responsible for connecting the tourism products with the individuals in the society (Tapper, 2001). Critically analysing the above classification, the tour operators and the travel agencies are categorised according to the types of clients they deal with. It is important to note that, the examples given above are not part of the report and I have used them to foster understanding of the concept. Apart from the above classification as given by the report, review of existing literature on the classification of tour operators and travel agencies by different scholars identified a different categorisation. Scholars such as Cavlek (2002), Dieke (1991) and Sinclair (1992) used the word foreign tour operators to mean outbound tour operators while Grosspietch (2004) referred to foreign tour operators as international tour operators.

1) Package Tour

A package tour or package holiday comprises transport and accommodation advertised and sold together by a vendor known as a tour operator. Other services may be provided such a rental car, activities or outings during the holiday. Transport can be via charter airline to a foreign country, and may also include travel between areas as part of the holiday. Package holidays are a form of product bundling.

2) Organised Tours

The first organised tours dated back to Thomas Cook who, on 5 July 1841, chartered a train to take a group of temperance campaigners from Leicester to a rally in Lough borough, eleven miles away. By 1872 he was undertaking world-wide tours, albeit with small groups. His company, Thomas Cook & Son (commonly called Thomas Cook or simply "Cook's"), grew to become one of the largest and most well known travel agents before being nationalized in 1948. With the gradual decline of visits to British seaside resorts after the Second World War, Thomas Cook & Son began promoting foreign holidays (particularly Italy, Spain, and Switzerland) in the early 1950s. Information films were shown at town halls throughout Britain. However they made a costly decision by not going into the new form of cheap holidays which combined the transport and accommodation arrangements into a single 'package'. The company went further into decline and

was only rescued by a consortium buy-out on 26 May 1972.

C. Travel Agency

1) Origins:

The modern travel agency first appeared in the second half of the 19th century. Thomas Cook, in addition to developing the package tour, established a chain of agencies in the last quarter of the 19th century, in association with the Midland Railway. The first ever tour organised was from Loughborough to Leicester carrying 500 passengers – 12 miles journey for 1 shilling. They not only sold their own tours to the public, but in addition, represented other tour companies. Travel agencies became more common place with the development of commercial aviation, starting in the 1920s. Originally, travel agencies largely catered to middle and upper class customers, but the post-war boom in mass-market package holidays resulted in the proliferation of travel agencies on the main streets of most British towns, catering to a working class clientele looking for a convenient way to book overseas beach holidays.

2) Operations:

A travel agency's main function is to act as an agent, selling travel products and services on behalf of a supplier. Consequently, unlike other retail businesses, they do not keep a stock in hand. A package holiday or a ticket is not purchased from a supplier unless a customer requests that purchase. The holiday or ticket is supplied to the agency at a discount. The profit is therefore the difference between the advertised price which the customer pays and the discounted price at which it is supplied to the agent. This is known as the commission. In many countries, all individuals or companies that sell tickets are required to be licensed as a travel agent.

3) Agency income

Traditionally, travel agencies' principal source of income was, and continues to be, commissions paid for bookings of car rentals, cruise lines, hotels, railways, sightseeing tours, tour operators, etc. A fixed percentage of the main element of the price is paid to the agent as a commission. Commissions may vary depending on the type of product and the supplier. Commissions are not paid on the tax component of the price. Travel agencies also receive a large variety of bonuses, benefits, and other incentives from travel and tourism related companies as inducements for travel agents to promote their products. The customer is normally not made aware of how much the travel agent is earning in commissions and other benefits. Other sources of income may include the sale of insurance,

travel guide books, public transport timetables and money exchange.

4) Insurance

The majority of travel agents have felt the need to protect themselves and their clients against the possibilities of commercial failure, either their own or a supplier's. They will advertise the fact that they are surety bonded, meanings in the case of a failure, the customers are guaranteed either an equivalent holiday to that which they have lost or if they prefer a refund.

5) Careers

A travel agent may work for a travel agency or work freelance. With many people switching to self-service internet websites, the number of available jobs as travel agents is decreasing. Counteracting the decrease in jobs due to internet services is the increase in the number of people travelling.

III. THEORITICAL BACKGROUND

A. Travel Agents and Tour Operators in India

1) Travel Agents in India

Travelling is one experience that each one of us has had in our life. If we take out time to notice we will realize that every time we travel certain factors remain constant and they have a very crucial part to play in the quality of our journey. Transport is one of them which brings in to the picture numerous travel agents and tour operators in India. Try imagining a situation where you have landed at your destination and you cannot find a cab or a taxi to reach at your preferred place of stay. Half your mood is spoilt at the moment and your journey has begun with a frustrated state of mind that will continue to bother you throughout.

2) Tour Booking in India

To help us deal with the problem, there are several travel and tour operators spread in different corners of the country for tours bookings in India. India is one country where there is no dearth of places to travel. Each Indian city has its own charm and every place has something to keep the visitors glued. But not everyone has the leisure time to visit all the significant places in the country. Moreover, to travel to a place and not exactly knowing what to explore is definitely a nightmare for a traveler. To help us deal with the problem, there are several travel and tour operators spread in different corners of the country offering various packages for family vacations, honeymoon, casual vacations and business trips.

B. Tourism Infrastructure Development

Augmentation of quality tourism infrastructure throughout the country is a key area of functioning of the Ministry. More than fifty per cent of the Ministry's expenditure on Plan schemes is incurred for development of quality tourism infrastructure at various tourist destinations and circuits in the District.

1) **Hotels**

Hotels are an important component of the tourism product. They contribute in the overall tourism experience through the standards of facilities and services offered by them. With the aim of providing contemporary standards of facilities and services available in the hotels, the Ministry of Tourism has formulated a voluntary scheme for classification of operational hotels which will be applicable to the following categories:

- Star Category Hotels: 5 Star Deluxe, 5 Star, 4 Star, 3 Star, 2 Star & 1 Star
- Heritage Category Hotels: Heritage Grand, Heritage Classic & Heritage Basic
- Human Resource Development

It has been the endeavour of the Ministry of Tourism to put in place a system of training and professional education with necessary infrastructural support capable of generating manpower sufficient to meet the needs of the tourism and hospitality industry, both quantitatively and qualitatively. As of now, there

are 29 Institutes of Hotel Management (IHMs), comprising 21 Central IHMs and 8 State IHMs, and 5 Food Craft Institutes (FCIs), which have come up with the support of the Ministry. These institutes were set up as autonomous societies with specific mandate to impart / conduct hospitality education / training in hospitality skills.

2) **Training Programmes**

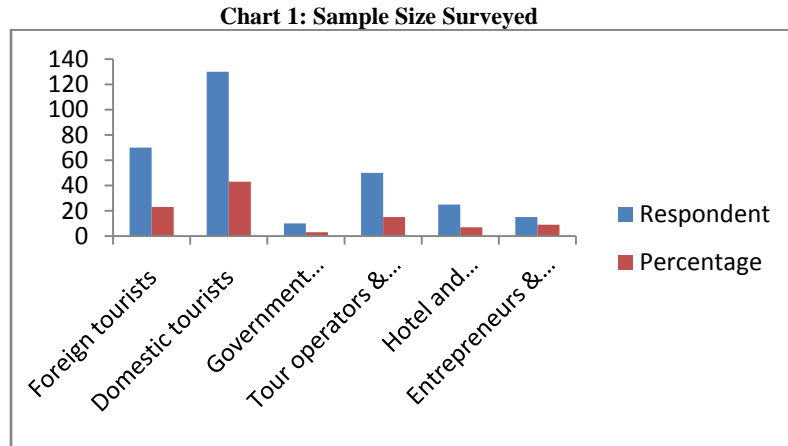
Training programmes in the field of Hotel Management, Catering and Nutrition were initiated by Government of India in the year 1962 under the Department of Food, Ministry of Agriculture. To begin with, four Institutes of Hotel Management, Catering Technology and Applied Nutrition were set up at New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata. For imparting training in hospitality related craft disciplines, 12 Food Craft Institutes were also set up at different places in the country. Consequent to transfer of the programme to the Ministry of Tourism in October 1982, format of the various training programmes was reoriented and remodeled keeping in view the professional workforce requirements of the country's fast expanding accommodation and catering industry. In order to harness the resources and also to provide a central thrust to the programme, Ministry of Tourism also established the National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHMCT) in the year 1982.

C. Analysis of Data

Table 1: Sample Size Surveyed

SL.No.	Stakeholders in North Canara	Respondent	Percentage
1	Foreign tourists	70	23
2	Domestic tourists	130	43
3	Government departments	10	3
4	Tour operators & Travel agents	50	15
5	Hotel and Restaurant industry	25	7
6	Entrepreneurs & Financial institutions	15	9
	Total	300	100

(Field survey in North Canara)

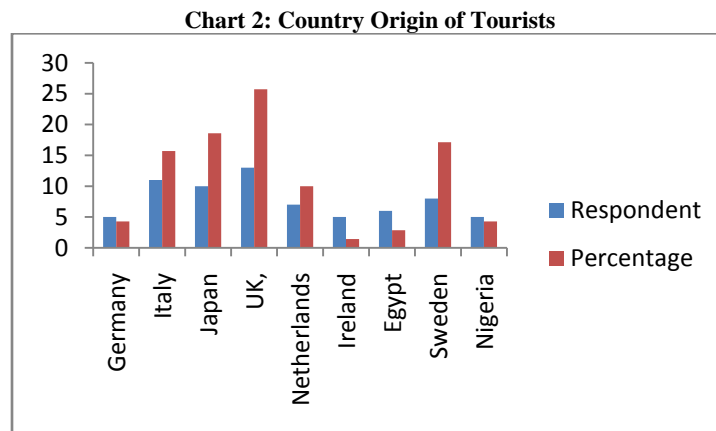


Note: Above table shows that 70 respondents are foreigner and most number is domestic respondents i.e. 130 and 50 in tour operators and travel agent. So most number of percentages 43 is domestic tourist.

Table 2: Country Origin of Tourists

Sl.no	Country	Respondent	Percentage
1	Germany	5	4.27
2	Italy	11	15.71
3	Japan	10	18.57
4	UK,	13	25.71
5	Netherlands	7	10
6	Ireland	5	1.42
7	Egypt	6	2.85
8	Sweden	8	17.12
9	Nigeria	5	4.27
	Total	70	100

(Field survey in North Canara)



Note: Above table shows that 11 respondents are Italy and most number is UK respondents i.e. 13 and 10 in Japan. So most number of percentages 25.71 is UK tourist

A. Attractions for Tourists at the Destinations

The major attractions for tourists at the destinations were:

- Cultural Heritage and the Architecture,
- Historically important places,
- Monuments, Forts and lovely temples and
- The natural beauty of beaches and the Indian Jungles or Forests.

B. Problems the Foreign Tourists

The problems the foreign tourists had to face while staying and travelling in the state were mainly pertaining to the following aspects:

- **Food:** Although the availability of choice foods for the domestic tourists has not been a problem these days, the foreign tourists were confronted with the problem. Very often, they had to search for cuisine satisfying their own taste.
- **Transportation:** The local transport or the conveyance was a problem for the tourists mainly in the small towns, villages or places located a bit away from the main town or district head quarters. They were not only costly but also inconvenient at times.
- Proper tourist **information** about the destinations and places of interests was reported to be inadequate.
- **Accessibility:** Accessibility to all the places of interest in the state was one of the major problems. Lack of proper transport connectivity to the places located in comparatively remote places, away from the main town and cities, was of main concern to them. A

lot of both time and money was reported to have been wasted to visit such places of importance.

- **Emergency Health Care** and instant medical facilities were another aspect that the tourists were concerned about. Practically, such facilities are not available in most of the places of tourist attraction. A few of the foreign tourists had to face a lot of inconvenience when they needed immediate medical attention. Resident or Doctor on Call service where not available at even the star hotels in the district.

- **Banking facilities:** The insufficient number of ATM facilities and foreign exchange dealers at the tourist destinations was another problem faced by the tourists. Non acceptance of Credit Card payment by majority of shops and other similar institutions was reported to be a major inconvenience.

- **Safety and Security:** Although the safety and security aspect have never posed major problems in the district particularly with respect to the tourists, a need for more number of security measures in places like beach and lonely hill stations was felt necessary by the foreigners. Harassment and cheating by the local miscreants, particularly to their female members, was a matter of concern to most foreign tourists.

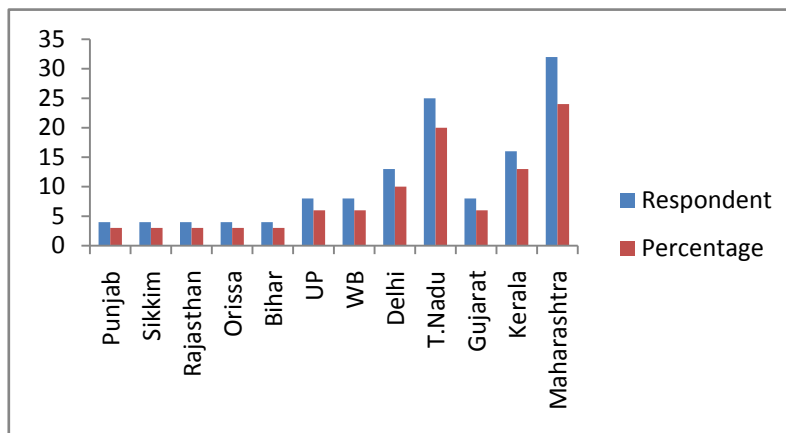
- **Pollution and cleanliness:** The increased pollution of the general environment and the need for cleanliness at many of the places of tourist interest was pointed out by many of the foreigners. They were particularly shocked and surprised to see the lack of maintenance at hotels and public facilities.

Table 3: State of Origin

Sl.No	State of Origin	Respondent	Percentage
1	Punjab	4	3
2	Sikkim	4	3
3	Rajasthan	4	3
4	Orissa	4	3
5	Bihar	4	3
6	UP	8	6
7	WB	8	6
8	Delhi	13	10
9	T.Nadu	25	20
10	Gujarat	8	6
11	Kerala	16	13
12	Maharashtra	32	24
	Total	130	100

(Field survey in North Canara)

Chart 3: State of Origin



Note: Above table shows that 25 respondents are Tamilnadu and most number is domestic respondents in Maharashtra is 32 and 10 in Delhi. So most number of percentages 24 is Maharashtra tourist

C. Attractions for Tourists at the Destinations

The major attraction for 76% or majority of the tourists at the destination was found to be:

- Cultural Heritage and the Architecture,
- Historical importance of the places,
- Monuments, Forts and lovely temples.

The rest 24% were attracted by the natural beauty of the beaches and the Jungles or Forests.

D. Problems the Domestic Tourists:

1. The problems the domestic tourists had to face while staying and travelling in the district were mainly pertaining to the following aspects.

2. **Transportation:** The local transport or the conveyance was a problem for the tourists mainly in the

small towns, villages or places located a bit away from the main town or district head quarters. They were not only costly but also inconvenient at times. The need for proper night Bus services was also felt.

3. Inadequate tourist **information** about the destinations and places of interests

4. **Safety and Security:** Although the safety and security aspect have never posed major problems in the state particularly with respect to the tourists, a need for more security measures in places like beach and lonely hill stations was felt. It was felt so as to get rid of harassment and cheating by the local miscreants particularly to their female members.

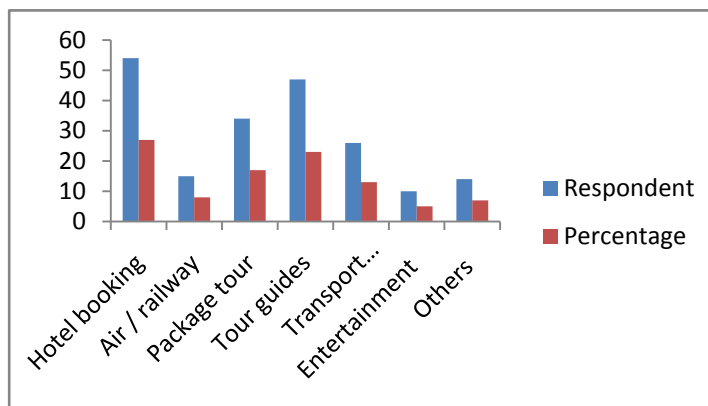
5. Poor hotel services.

Table 4: Range of Services Offered

Sl.no	Services offered	Respondent	Percentage
1	Hotel booking	54	27
2	Air / railway	15	8
3	Package tour	34	17
4	Tour guides	47	23
5	Transport transport facility	26	13
6	Entertainment	10	5
7	Others	14	7
	Total	200	100

(Field survey in North Canara)

Chart 4: Range of Services Offered



Note: Most of the approved travel and tour operators provide the services like hotel booking, Ticket booking, and Package tours. Additional transport and tourist guide facilities are also arranged on special requests by most of them on chargeable basis as in most cases.

E. Expectations of Tour Operators from the Government:

The expectations of tour operators from the government can be summarized as follows:

- More tourist related information and developments in the state.
- More tourist awareness programs.
- Approval from KSTDC to become authorized agents.
- Better transportation support and tie-up.
- Speedy clearance of various official documents and formalities.
- Stable power supply specially during the summer.

F. Problems Faced by the Tour Operators

According to the tour operators, the following problems are faced by the tourist in the tourist destinations of the state:

- Lack of tourist information about various destinations and places of interest.
- Inaccessibility too many places of tourist importance.
- Costly local transport and accommodation.
- Inadequate basic civic amenities and public facilities.
- Harassment by the local people and taxi/auto-drivers.

G. The Three Factors

To fully understand how consumer behavior affects marketing, it's vital to understand the three

factors that affect consumer behavior: psychological, personal, and social.

1) Psychological Factors

In daily life, consumers are being affected by many issues that are unique to their thought process. Psychological factors can include perception of a need or situation, the person's ability to learn or understand information, and an individual's attitude. Each person will respond to a marketing message based on their perceptions and attitudes. Therefore, marketers must take these psychological factors into account when creating campaigns, ensuring that their campaign will appeal to their target audience.

2) Personal Factors

Personal factors are characteristics that are specific to a person and may not relate to other people within the same group. These characteristics may include how a person makes decisions, their unique habits and interests, and opinions. When considering personal factors, decisions are also influenced by age, gender, background, culture, and other personal issues.

3) Social Factors

The third factor that has a significant impact on consumer behavior is social characteristics. Social influencers are quite diverse and can include a person's family, social interaction, work or school communities,

or any group of people a person affiliates with. It can also include a person's social class, which involves income, living conditions, and education level. The social factors are very diverse and can be difficult to analyze when developing marketing plans.

However, it is critical to consider the social factors in consumer behavior, as they greatly influence how people respond to marketing messages and make purchasing decisions.

IV. CONCLUSION

Travel plans to North Canara means a variety of options for the travelers. North Canara is a land of diversity and therefore it may not be possible to cover this big district in one trip alone. It is then important to decide the right time and right tour packages in order to make the best of your experience of a particular place and to make your trip to North Canara a memorable one.

A. *Tour Operators in North Canara*

A family vacation in the mountains, a beach holiday with friends or religious tour in a holy city, there are aplenty options for getaways from the monotony of routine lives. Holidays, whether they are with families, friends, or with yourself, are meant to rejuvenate you and uplift your spirits. However, arranging a vacation can be a bit stressful for a lot of people. Therefore, to help people avoid the stress of making endless bookings for travel, accommodation, as well as arrangements for sightseeing and other activities, a large number of tour operators have come up. From designing package holiday tours of a new destination, to contacting airlines, hotels and ground transport services, these travel operators offer various services. They also prepare itineraries for travelers such that they can enjoy the best a place has to offer. Numerous tour operators in North Canara have come up in the last few decades. A number of them are online travel agencies, which make it possible to arrange a trip with just a few clicks of mouse, from the comfort of your home. Yatra.com is one such leading travel operator in the country helping people enjoy happy holidays in various domestic and international destinations across the world. Planning your next vacation with one of the major travel operators in North Canara or availing their package tours is a good way to ensure you and your companions have a fun-filled and stress-free time during the getaway.

B. *Travel Agents*

Tour Travel World.Com is one of the largest portals in India which offers complete travel solutions to travelers and adventure seekers. At this

portal, you can find a vast database of reputed Travel Agencies & Tour Operators who aid travelers in organizing a comfortable tour. There is compiled information about these travel agents including their services, contact number, address and website. Apart from this, travelers can also send their queries through SMS and Email. You can also benefit from the country wise listing of travel agents at this portal. From the regularly updated list of the travel agents, travelers can choose the most reliable Travel Service Provider at Tour Travel World.Com.

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