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Tour Product Development: Reasons And Methods Tour Operators Use
To Incorporate Secondary Destinations In Tour Itineraries

by

Fanny Lawren

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Of

Doctorate in Business Administration

In the Robinson College of Business

Of

Georgia State University

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

ROBINSON COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

2024

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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the *FANNY LAWREN* Dissertation Committee. It has been approved and accepted by all members of that committee, and it has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration in the J. Mack Robinson College of Business of Georgia State University.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DMO:	Destination Marketing Organization / Destination Management Organization
FAM:	Familiarization tour/trip
FIT:	Free Independent Traveler
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
NTA:	National Tour Association
OTA:	Online Travel Agency
PBC:	Perceived Behavior Control
RTO:	Receptive Tour Operator
SD:	Secondary Destination
TA:	Thematic Analysis
TO:	Tour Operator
TPB:	Theory of Planned Behavior
USTOA:	United States Tour Operators Association
UNWTO:	United Nations World Tourism Organization
USDOC:	United States Department of Commerce
WTTC:	World Travel & Tourism Council

ABSTRACT

Tour Product Development: Reasons And Methods Tour Operators Use

To Incorporate Secondary Destinations in Tour Itineraries

by

Fanny Lawren

April 2024

Chair: Dr. Richard Baskerville

Major Academic Unit: Doctor of Business Administration Program

The tourism industry is a vital contributor to the global economy. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council, tourism accounted for 10.4% of global GDP in 2019 and employed one in every ten people worldwide. While popular tourist destinations have the infrastructure and support services to attract tourists, secondary destinations often struggle with limited resources. Tour operators can play a critical role in promoting sustainable tourism in these lesser-known destinations by providing a steady flow of visitors. Unfortunately, there is a lack of research on how tour operators develop tour products.

The study employs the Theory of Planned Behavior to identify factors influencing tour operators' choice of secondary destinations in their tour itineraries and explore interventions that destinations can make to positively impact their decisions. In addition, the study outlines four distinct models of tour product development: dialectic, teleology, life cycle, and evolution. This dynamic system is comparable to the process of organizational change. The findings not only shed light on the tour product development process but also provide valuable insights for destination marketers, tourism suppliers and government agencies. The information can help

them better strategize when and how to influence tour operators' decisions, ultimately boosting the local economy of secondary destinations and the neighboring areas

INDEX WORDS: attitude, DMO, destination, dialectic, evolution, life cycle, subjective norm, organizational changes, perceived behavioral control, primary destination, secondary destination, teleology, thematic analysis, theory of planned behavior, tour leader, tour operator, tour product, tourist

I RESEARCH OVERVIEW

I.1 Introduction

I.1.1 *Business Problem and Research Goals*

Tourism has a significant impact on a country's economy. UNWTO stated that tourism was the world's second-biggest export in 2019 (UNWTO, 2020). World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2021). reported that tourism generated 10.4% of global GDP in 2019. In addition, one in ten jobs worldwide is tourism-related (WTTC, 2021).

While popular destinations such as Paris, Dubai, Italy, and Bangkok received the most interest, lesser-known destinations struggle to attract tourists (McKercher, 2001). These *secondary destinations* are typically smaller, with fewer attractions and a weaker tourism infrastructure. Therefore, they do not have the pulling power to attract tourists (Ladplee, 2018; Liu, 1999). This affects not only the tourism businesses in secondary destinations but also other industries and the neighboring areas. By increasing travel to these destinations, local communities can benefit from a boost in their economy and employment opportunities (Faber & Gaubert, 2019; Kayar & Kozak, 2010; Phau, Quintal, & Tekle, 2014). However, secondary destinations often have limited resources to attract tourists, and the further away they are from major attractions, the less likely long-distance tourists will visit (Fung & McKercher, 2016; McKercher, 2023; Tobler, 1970)

Tour operators can benefit secondary destinations by bringing in a regular flow of tourists and catalyzing a destination's demand (Lumsdon & Swift, 1999). However, secondary destinations need to understand tour operator's perceptions of secondary destinations, how they select destinations for their tour itineraries, what they need from secondary destinations, and what secondary destinations can do to influence tour operator's decision.

Unfortunately, there is a lack of research on tour operators' decision-making process on secondary destination selection and product development and tour products and what they want from the destinations. This study addresses these gaps by outlining the tour product development process. It also analyzes the factors that influence tour operator's attitudes and perceptions of secondary destinations, ultimately impacting their decision on the destination selection for their tour itineraries.

I.1.2 *Dissertation Structure*

The paper is structured as follows:

Chapter One presents an overview of the research, discussing the business problem, research goals, and the definition of tourism, destination, and key players. It also outlines the research design.

Chapter Two is a manuscript for submission to a practitioner journal. Using the Theory of Planned Behavior, the research explores ways to positively change tour operators' attitudes toward adding secondary destinations, their subjective norms, and perceived constraints. The chapter also discusses the best practices for what destinations can do to increase their chances of being included in the tour.

Chapter Three is a manuscript that I intend to submit to an academic journal. The article proposes four models in the tour product development process: Dialectic, Teleology, Life Cycle, and Evolution. The framework is an expanded application of the typology of organizational change theories. I believe the tour product development process in the constantly evolving tourism market is similar to the organizational change process.

Chapter Four summarizes the research findings and provides the study's overall conclusion.

I.2 Background

I.2.1 *Definitions of Tourism and Tourists*

The *World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)*, a special United Nations agency, defines *tourism* as “a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes” (UNWTO, 2023). The *Tourism Society* declared that the movement of people in tourism is a “temporary short period” and that people go to destinations “outside the places where they normally live and work,” which include day visits and excursions (Camilleri, 2017).

These people choose the destinations and stay in the facilities that cater to their needs (Mathieson & Wall, 1982). Thus, tourism comprises activities in which they participate to satisfy their needs and interests while traveling and the systems within which the tourism industry operates (Chand, 2002; Chand, Kumar, & Kaule, 2016).

UNWTO calls the people who travel “*visitors*.” It specifies that a visitor (domestic, inbound or outbound) is classified as a *tourist* only if his/her trip includes an overnight stay. A same-day visitor is considered an *excursionist* (UNWTO, 2020). In this paper, we use the terms visitors and tourists interchangeably and do not differentiate between excursionists and tourists.

I.2.2 *Economic Impact of Tourism*

Tourism plays a vital role in contributing to humanity in numerous ways (Garg, 2015). It nourishes the global economy, creates job opportunities, stimulates development, conserves cultural heritage, and promotes international understanding (Chand et al., 2016).

The tourism industry includes many service sectors, including hotel accommodation, transportation, attractions, entertainment, recreational activities, retail, food and beverage, and travel management (Lerner & Haber, 2001). It also indirectly positively affects other industries, e.g., finance, insurance and real estate (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2007).

Tourism is a crucial component of the worldwide economy. UNWTO (2022b) reports that travel was the world's third-biggest export sector in 2019. The highly lucrative tourism industry can boost foreign currency earnings and job creation in many countries (Kayar & Kozak, 2010), not to mention tax income and GDP (Faber & Gaubert, 2019). According to the annual research by the *World Travel & Tourism Council*, the tourism industry accounted for 10.4% of the global GDP in 2019, making it one of the largest international economic sectors (WTTC, 2021). It also states that one in every ten jobs worldwide is tourism-related. In the United States, the Department of Commerce states that the tourism industry contributed a GDP of US\$1.9 trillion (8.6%) to the country's economy in 2019 (USDOC, 2022). In addition, it directly and indirectly, supports 9.5 million local jobs, i.e., one in every twenty jobs in the United States (USDOC, 2022).

Tourism has a profound and irreversible effect on many locations (Curtin & Busby, 1999). Not only does tourism support travel businesses, but it also impacts many other industries directly or indirectly. For instance, an increase in hotel occupancy leads to more usage of supplies, such as soaps, tissues, towels, and bedsheets. Not to mention the many fixtures, furniture, lamps, small appliances, fitness equipment, and more that hotels have. Research shows that when local hotel revenue increases by 10% in Mexico, local manufacturing GDP increases by 3.9% (Faber & Gaubert, 2019). Tourism catalyzes worldwide economic development and urban regeneration (F. Wang, Lu, Xu, Wu, & Wu, 2020).

I.2.3 Destination

From tourists' perspective, a *destination* is a place that attracts them to visit and stay. The "place" can be a country, a city, a resort, or an isolated island (Anjos, Pereira, & Tennenberg, 2017). It is a complex ecosystem in which stakeholders of the "place" (tourists, business entities, the public sector, and the host residents) collaborate to create economic, social, and environmental value (Boes, Buhalis, & Inversini, 2016; Fyall, 2011; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).

Rather than identifying a destination as a well-defined geographical, many researchers view a destination as a blend of space, products, services and public goods providing a holistic experience (Dmitrovic et al., 2009). Tourists may interpret their destinations differently based on their itinerary, purpose of visit and prior experience, etc. (Fuchs & Weiermair, 2003). Buhalis (2000) suggests that tourism destinations should include six A's: attractions, accessibility, amenities, available packages, activities, and ancillary services.

The attractions can be a place (geographic space) or an event (specific time), both playing a critical role in destination decisions (Botti, Peypoch, & Solonandrasana, 2008). Popular destinations are often known for iconic attractions, such as the Eiffel Tower and the Great Wall. Events and activities can also be intriguing attractions. Some examples are the Summer Olympic Games, the Mardi Gras Parade in Louisiana, skiing in Switzerland and surfing in Nazare, Portugal. These attractions also bring tourists to spend time and money outside the event/activity locations.

Undoubtedly, there is a "hierarchy of destinations" (McKercher, 2001). Some places are seen as *main or primary destinations*, while others are *minor or secondary destinations*. Primary destinations are more popular. They tend to be more accessible and have more hospitality

support (hotel, restaurant, retail, public services, etc.). Therefore, they can attract tourists to visit to satisfy their traveling goals (McKercher, 2001).

Secondary destinations are complementary or supplementary. They are an extension of the primary destination (Botti et al., 2008; Ladplee, 2018). According to traveler data from Mastercard (2019) and UNWTO (2022a), some primary destinations take the lion's share of the total number of visitors to a country. For instance, three-quarters of the overnight international visitors to Korea stay in Seoul only. If visitors also travel to secondary destinations in Korea, they are likely to spend more time in the country, generating more revenue.

Provided they have the resources, most tourists add more stops to their travel itinerary to minimize their time on the road (McKercher, 2001). Research shows that long-haul tourists are likelier to make *multidestination trips* than short-haul tourists (McKercher & Wong, 2004). The further people travel, the more places they tend to visit on their trips (Oppermann, 1992a). They have already invested substantial time and money into their journey. As a result, they want to make the most of their trip by seeing as much as possible. This desire is particularly true when the likelihood of returning in the near future is low, making it important to maximize their experience (Fesenmaier & Johnson, 1989).

In addition, tourists with limited time or who consider travel time as an opportunity cost may maximize the time spent at destinations and minimize travel time by including some secondary destinations along the routes. For example, Hong Kong serves as a popular *stopover destination* due to its position as a transport hub, making it an attractive short-stay destination for tourists on their way to or from China, Southeast Asia, and Australia (McKercher, Wong, & Lau, 2006). Note that Hong Kong could also be a primary destination for someone's trips; and may be chosen as secondary destinations even if it is not on the route as a stopover.

Tourists who want to or expect to encounter a variety of travel experiences would always prefer multideestination trips (Tideswell & Faulkner, 2002). Moreover, when a group of people travel together, each individual may have different travel desires or motives. It is not likely that one destination will satisfy everyone in the group. A multideestination itinerary could result from the multiple needs of multiple travelers (Fesenmaier & Lieber, 1985).

Visiting more destinations can also lower the risk of a poor trip (Lue, Crompton, & Fesenmaier, 1993; McKercher, 2001; Oppermann, 1992b; Tideswell & Faulkner, 2002). If a tourist is dissatisfied with one destination, other destinations in the itinerary may make their trip satisfactory overall.

I.2.4 Tour Product

Travel planning is important for people across all demographics, but some may find it difficult to review and evaluate different options due to time or resource constraints (Kemperman, Joh, & Timmermans, 2004). To make things easier, some travel agencies, *OTAs* (*Online Travel Agencies, e.g., Booking.com, Expedia, and Tripadvisor*), and resorts offer travel packages that include transportation, accommodations, tours, and activity charges. These packages are often presented as bargains (Kinberg & Sudit, 1979).

Travel packages are created by service providers, i.e. tourism suppliers, or *tour operators*, who plan, develop, and market them. They handle reservations and combine various services such as transportation, accommodations, dining, and attraction admission into a single package (Lumsdon & Swift, 1999). Some operators also provide advice, planning, and coordination services, often free of charge to customers (Kinberg & Sudit, 1979). They serve as

vital sources of information and distribution channels that significantly influence tourists' decisions.

There are two main types of group travel patterns: public and private. Public group tourists travel with strangers to explore their destinations through a tour package, typically including transportation, accommodation, meals, and various activities at a fixed price (Meng, 2010; Stratemeyer & Geringer, 2017; K.-C. Wang, Hsieh, & Huan, 2000; Yamamoto & Gill, 1999). These tours adhere to fixed schedules and predefined itineraries. Participants are usually accompanied by tour guides who provide information about the destination's attractions in an engaging and informative manner, aiding the tourists' understanding of the social and spatial context of the destinations (Curtin & Busby, 1999; Trunfio, Petruzzellis, & Nigro, 2006; Zátori, 2016).

Private travel groups encompass a wide variety of travelers and may include *Free Independent Travelers (FITs)*. These groups can range from a couple, a few friends, a 3-generation family, to a large affinity group like a church or school. Depending on the travelers' preferences, the packages can be tailor-made to include numerous or minimal services. For instance, a one-day trip to an event may only include admission, transportation with or without meals, while a sightseeing trip may also require tour guides to introduce the culture and history along the way. This study explores the tour products developed by tour operators for both public and private groups.

Following the global pandemic, there has been a notable shift in the purpose of travel, with a more pronounced emphasis on fostering connections (Elliott, 2023). Surveys conducted by tourism associations have shown that tour operators are noticing an increasing interest in smaller, more personalized group trips (GTM, 2023). Private group travel, including

multigenerational travel, has emerged as a prominent trend in 2024 (Elliott, 2023). Statistical findings indicate that 62% of Gen Z individuals express an interest in group travel, in contrast to 39% of Millennials, 25% of Gen X, and 17% of Baby Boomers (Statista, 2018).

Group tours have always played a significant role in the global hospitality industry, especially during non-holiday periods (Youssef, 2023). For many tourism suppliers, such as hotels, group travel is vital to their businesses (Youssef, 2023). Data indicates that hotels have seen a substantial increase in group quote requests in 2023, surpassing the levels observed in 2019. This suggests that more people are opting for group travel experiences (Youssef, 2023).

Tour operators can benefit destinations by bringing in a regular flow of tourist groups. They can also increase the destination's awareness, which may attract FITs as well. This is especially important to secondary destinations that need help with accessibility and visibility (Trunfio et al., 2006). Tour operators understand the market needs, direct the market trends, stimulate the tourist appetite, and influence the customers' choice of destinations (Trunfio et al., 2006). Collectively, they can determine the prosperity of destinations and suppliers.

Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) are key players in the tourism industry, responsible for facilitating partnerships among various authorities, stakeholders, and professionals in their defined geographic area (Y. Wang, Hutchinson, Okumus, & Naipaul, 2013). Its governance structures vary from a single public authority to a public/private partnership model (Elbe, Hallén, & Axelsson, 2009; Y. Wang et al., 2013).

DMOs' central role involves the coordination of activities such as the implementation of tourism policies, strategic planning, product development, promotion, and marketing activities (Ritchie & Crouch, 2010). They initiate, coordinate, and manage activities that facilitate the

development of a destination's tourism sector (Reinhold, Beritelli, & Grünig, 2019). DMOs act as gatekeepers and distributors of a destination's knowledge, enabling them to develop strategies to guide stakeholders and maintain competitiveness (Sheehan, Vargas-Sánchez, Presenza, & Abbate, 2016). Figure I-1 illustrates DMO's role in the information distribution between destinations and tour operators.

Given that DMOs do not own or produce tourism products, they can only develop voluntary cooperation with stakeholders and support this cooperation (Elbe et al., 2009). These stakeholders include small and large tour operators, private and public suppliers, government bodies, and tourists. Due to the involvement of multiple stakeholders in the development of the tourism product, it can be an incredibly complex and challenging task. However, the competitiveness and attractiveness of a destination ultimately rely on the balance of the different interests of stakeholders and coordinating cooperation within the territory (Meriläinen & Lemmetyinen, 2011).

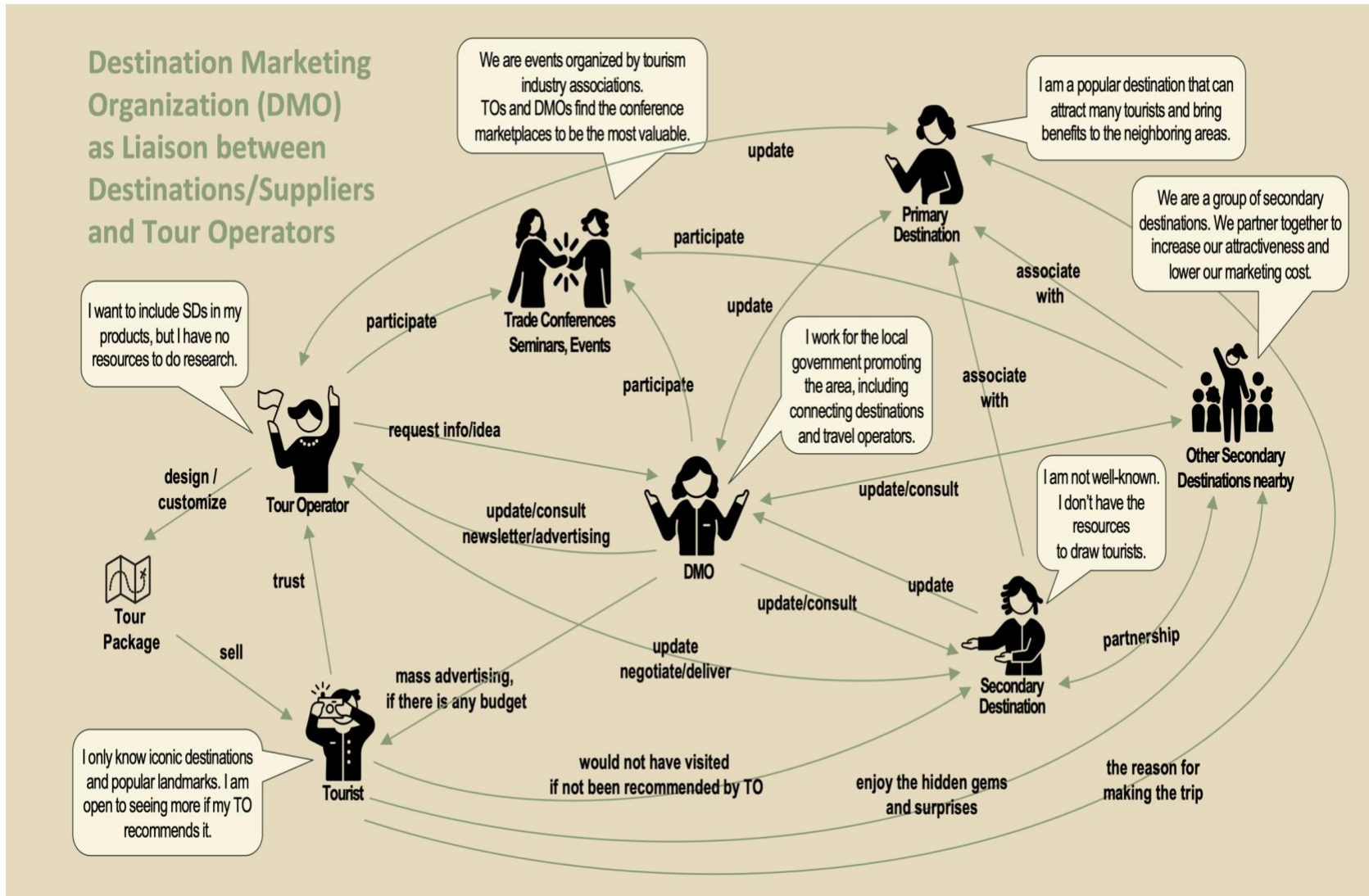


Figure I-1: DMO as Liaison between Destinations and Tour Operators

I.3 Research Design

I.3.1 Framework

Tourism is a multifaceted field that covers various domains such as marketing, economics, business, sociology, social psychology, anthropology, and geography (Ulker-Demirel & Ciftci, 2020). When selecting a destination, tour operators have to consider most, if not all, of these domains. The *Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)* is a framework for predicting and understanding intentions and behaviors in different research areas (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977), including tourism (Ulker-Demirel & Ciftci, 2020). The theory assumes human behaviors are rational (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977). People make decisions based on their knowledge from various sources, such as past experiences, media, and friends (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977).

TPB includes attitude, subjective norm, *perceived behavioral control (PBC)*, intention, and behavior as key concepts (Ajzen, 1985, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977; Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992). The theory argues that behavioral intention results from an individual's attitudes, which are driven by their beliefs about the behavior. These attitudes include the desire for the outcome of the behavior (internal) and the acceptance of the behavior by the social norms (external) (Ajzen, 1991; McKercher, 2001), with the influence of the PBC, which represents how individuals perceive their power to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1991; Madden et al., 1992).

In other words, TPB is about the concept that behavior is directly impacted by intention, which is formed by attitudes toward behavior and subjective norms, and indirectly by PBC (Ajzen, 1985, 1991; Madden et al., 1992). Through the use of TPB, the study aims to identify the specific beliefs tour operators hold that shape their attitudes and perceptions about adding or

replacing destinations in their tour itineraries. Additionally, the study investigates the various interventions that may positively influence these beliefs.

I.3.2 Data Collection

The study sent over 200 email invitations to members of the *National Tour Association (NTA)* and the *United States Tour Operators Association (USTOA)*, as well as referral requests to DMOs and travel journalists. Interested candidates were asked to finish an online screener to ensure they actively participate in the development of tour products, which could include research, designing, logistics planning, marketing, and evaluation.

Out of 41 invitees who started the screener, only 28 completed it. After a thorough evaluation, 23 candidates were found qualified, and 18 were selected for interviews. Unfortunately, five did not show up, and there was no response to follow-up emails. As a result, only 13 tour operator professionals participated in the study.

These 13 tour operator professionals were interviewed one-on-one, either through video meetings or over the phone. The interviews, which lasted 50 to 75 minutes, adopted a semi-structured format with open-ended questions.

All 13 participating tour operators design packages for group tours or customize itineraries for groups or FITs. Some operators specialize in different types of tours, such as women-only tours, religious groups, environmentally responsible travels, or international trips only.

The interviewees all have extensive experience in the tourism industry, with over 20 years each. Although all tour operators have offices in North America, two of the interviewees work in Japan and the UK. The diverse range of samples provided valuable insights into the

factors that influenced the tour operators' decisions to choose secondary destinations for their tour itineraries. This diversity in the geographic locations of the interviewees provides a broader perspective on the subject matter, contributing to the study's overall credibility.

The study employs a qualitative approach to investigating the tour product development process. Specifically, it explores tour operators' beliefs about incorporating secondary destinations into their tour itineraries. The theoretical framework TPB was used to underpin the investigation (Ajzen, 1985, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977; Madden et al., 1992). Additionally, the study inductively outlined the tour product development process.

The interview questions were anchored on the constructs of TPB, which encompassed behavioral beliefs for attitudes toward behavior, normative beliefs for subjective norms, and control beliefs for PBC, intentions, and behaviors (Ajzen, 1985, 1991; Madden et al., 1992). Interviewees were sent transcriptions to confirm accuracy, enhancing the study findings' validity and generalizability.

I.3.3 Data Analysis

Using the *Thematic Analysis approach (TA)* (Holton, 1988), the study aims to answer three crucial questions:

- What is the tour product development process?
- What factors influence tour operators' selection of destinations for their products?
- What are the best practices that can influence their decisions?

Initially, the transcripts were coded and meticulously categorized into three primary themes based on the TPB constructs: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived constraints. Each

of these themes was further divided into three subthemes to ensure a comprehensive and in-depth data analysis. See Table I-1 for details.

Table I-1: Thematic Analysis

Tour Operators'	Tour Operators' Belief	Destinations Should...	Suppliers Should...
Attitudes	<i>What do tour operators think about having secondary destinations on their tours?</i>	<i>Tour operators' expectations from destinations/DMOs</i>	<i>Tour operators' expectations from tourism suppliers</i>
Subjective Norms	<i>How do tour operators anticipate the market responding to itineraries that include secondary destinations?</i>	<i>Suggestions from tour operators on changes destinations/DMOs should make to impact the market</i>	<i>Suggestions from tour operators on changes tourism suppliers should make to impact the market.</i>
Perceived Constraints	<i>What restricts tour operators from including secondary destinations in their products?</i>	<i>Things tour operators believe destinations/DMOs can help them</i>	<i>Things tour operators believe tourism supplier can help them</i>

While these themes successfully address the last two questions—factors that influence tour operators' selection of destinations for their products and the best practices of destinations that can influence tour operators' decisions—the codes fail to identify the tour product development process. Therefore, the interview transcripts underwent a second round of coding under alternative themes by key players:

- Destinations: experience for tourists and services to tour operators
- Tourists: preferences before and reactions after the trips
- Market: market trends, relationships among tour operators and destinations

This time, the analysis focuses on the factors that lead to a possible change of secondary destinations in tour products. By understanding how tour operators incorporate secondary destinations into their tour itineraries, stakeholders in secondary destinations can develop better strategies to attract tour operators' attention and influence their decisions. However, it is important to note that this study primarily focuses on secondary destination selection, which is a crucial component but not the only aspect of tour product development.

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II FACTORS INFLUENCING TOUR OPERATORS' SECONDARY DESTINATION SELECTION FOR TOUR ITINERARIES & BEST PRACTICES

II.1 Abstract

Tourists are drawn to popular primary destinations but may also visit lesser-known places to enrich the trip experience. Many of these secondary destinations face challenges attracting visitors due to limited resources and support services. As a result, they depend on tour operators to bring in tourists regularly. However, there is limited literature on how tour operators identify, select, and incorporate these secondary destinations into their tour itineraries. The research employs the Theory of Planned Behavior to understand tour operators' attitudes and perceptions of working with secondary destinations. It also explores the factors that affect tour operators' product design and highlights some best practices to increase the chances of secondary destinations being included in tour products.

Keywords: secondary destination, tour operator, DMO, theory of planned behavior, tour design, itinerary

II.2 Introduction

Creating compelling and varied tour itineraries that balance the allure of popular destinations with the charm of lesser-known secondary destinations is a pivotal challenge for tour operators in the dynamic tourism industry. This balancing act not only enriches the tourist experience but also plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable tourism by diverting tourist flows away from overcrowded primary destinations, thus aiding in the economic development of secondary destinations. The primary research question guiding this inquiry is: What factors

influence tour operators' decisions on selecting secondary destinations when creating tour itineraries?

The tourism industry faces a paradox of popularity: while certain destinations draw an overwhelming number of visitors due to their renowned attractions, countless lesser-known places, replete with potential, remain under-visited. This uneven distribution of tourist traffic contributes to the degradation of natural and cultural assets in popular destinations, while secondary destinations miss out on the economic benefits tourism can bring. Despite the critical role of tour operators in shaping tourist flows, there is a noticeable gap in the literature regarding how they develop their tour products, particularly in selecting secondary destinations. The study research seeks to bridge this gap by delving into the decision-making processes of tour operators, offering fresh insights into the factors influencing tour operators' selection of secondary destinations.

Utilizing the *Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)* (Ajzen, 1985, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977; Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992) as the theoretical backbone and *Thematic Analysis Method (TA)* (Holton, 1988), the study offers a structured lens to examine tour operators' behavioral, normative, and control beliefs when developing tour products. Thirteen experienced tour operators were interviewed one-on-one with interview questions anchored to the TPB constructs to decipher factors influencing tour operators' destination choices. The study makes significant theoretical contributions by expanding the utility of TPB from a tool for understanding behaviors to a framework for shaping them. It demonstrates that a deep, qualitative understanding of TPB constructs can enable stakeholders to strategically navigate and influence the complex decisions underpinning tour product development.

The research findings reveal a multifaceted array of factors influencing tour operators' decisions, from the intrinsic appeal of secondary destinations to the practicalities of itinerary planning. They highlight the critical role of collaboration among the destinations, creating tourist experiences, and the essential flow of information communication. They also provide actionable recommendations for secondary destinations, outlining strategies to better engage with tour operators and attract tourists. These insights contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the tour product development process, illuminating the pathways through which secondary destinations can enhance their visibility and appeal.

II.3 Literature Review

II.3.1 *Primary and Secondary Destinations*

Without a doubt, there exists a “hierarchy of destinations” (McKercher, 2001, p. 433). Primary destinations are typically more popular due to their favorable image, accessibility, and abundance of hospitality services such as hotels, restaurants, retail, and public amenities. As a result, they tend to attract more tourists who are eager to fulfill their travel goals (McKercher, 2001). On the other hand, secondary destinations serve as an extension of the primary destination and offer supplementary experiences (Botti, Peypoch, & Solonandrasana, 2008; Ladplee, 2018). If they possess the necessary resources, most tourists will add additional stops to their itinerary (McKercher, 2001).

Tourists seeking a broad range of experiences often prefer trips that involve multiple destinations (Tideswell & Faulkner, 2002). Studies have found that long-distance tourists are more inclined to opt for such itineraries than those traveling shorter distances (McKercher & Wong, 2004). As people journey farther from home, their desire to see more places increases. They want to make the most of the time and money invested in the trip by exploring as much as

possible, especially if the likelihood of returning soon is low (Fesenmaier & Johnson, 1989; Oppermann, 1992). This makes maximizing their experience all the more important.

Moreover, when traveling in a group, each person may have unique travel desires or motivations. It's unlikely that one single destination will fulfill everyone's expectations. A multiple-destination itinerary can be customized to meet the diverse needs (Fesenmaier & Lieber, 1985). Furthermore, visiting more destinations can help reduce the risk of a disappointing trip (Lue, Crompton, & Fesenmaier, 1993; McKercher, 2001; Oppermann, 1992; Tideswell & Faulkner, 2002). If one destination falls short of expectations, other stops on the itinerary may make the overall experience satisfying.

II.3.2 Tour Operator

Planning trips can be overwhelming for many tourists (Kemperman, Joh, & Timmermans, 2004). To simplify things, travel agencies, tour operators, and *Online Travel Agencies (OTAs)*, such as Booking.com, Expedia, and Tripadvisor, offer travel packages that include accommodation, transportation, tours, and activity charges (Kinberg & Sudit, 1979).

Depending on the market and activities offered, the packages can be heavily or lightly bundled (Lumsdon & Swift, 1999). Bus tour packages are all-inclusive, and tourists only need to pay one price for all the activities along predefined itineraries . (Meng, 2010; Stratemeyer & Geringer, 2017; Wang, Hsieh, & Huan, 2000; Yamamoto & Gill, 1999). Optional activities may require an additional fee. In contrast, *Free Independent Travelers (FITs)* follow their own schedules and choose their itineraries and activities based on their budget and traveling style.

Most tour packages are developed by tour operators, whether public or private. Some tour operators design itineraries, make reservations and consolidate the services (transportation, hotel,

dining, attraction admission) into wholesale and retail packages for sale in public (Lumsdon & Swift, 1999). Some customize products for FITs, private groups, and other travel companies. They make the decisions or at least the recommendations on destinations (Trunfio, Petruzzellis, & Nigro, 2006). Collectively, they can determine the prosperity of destinations and suppliers (Lumsdon & Swift, 1999). This study exams the tour products developed by tour operators for both public and private groups.

Tour operators are known to play a significant role in influencing customers' choices. As a result, businesses that are based in a specific destination often face a disadvantage (Curtin & Busby, 1999). This is because tour operators typically demand bulk rates or commissions from several establishments, such as hotels, transportation providers, restaurants, and gift shops, making it challenging for destination-based businesses to compete in the market. However, businesses are not limited to working with a single tour operator. If they perform well and have high demand, they can have more options and bargaining power to negotiate better rates (Trunfio et al., 2006).

Given the ever-increasing number of destinations available to customers, tour operators must offer a wide selection of products to remain competitive. However, researching and developing new ideas is often resource-intensive. Consequently, many tour operators rely on recommendations from *Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs)*, aka Destination Management Organizations, to refresh their offerings and stay ahead of their competition.

II.3.3 *Destination Marketing Organization*

DMOs are entities that play a leading role in tourism partnerships. They encompass different authorities, stakeholders, and professionals and work towards a collective destination

vision. DMOs can be structured as a single public authority or a public/private partnership model that plays a key role in facilitating tourism sector partnerships (UNWTO, 2019).

Tourists perceive a destination as a complete experience rather than just a place to visit. Therefore, a destination is not just a “tourist place” but also a “tourist product” (Keller, 2000). It’s a system of goods and services that suppliers are ready to deliver and tourists are willing to consume (IȘToc, Mateescu, Muscalu, & BĂLeanu, 2021).

DMOs are responsible for promoting tourism and attracting visitors to their territories. They are often given a central role in marketing a destination. They carry out various activities, such as implementing tourism policies, strategic planning, product development, promotion, and marketing activities.

It is worth noting that managing destinations can be a complex task due to the involvement of multiple stakeholders in the development of the tourism product (IȘToc et al., 2021). These stakeholders include small and large tour operators, private and public suppliers, government bodies, and tourists (Elbe, Hallén, & Axelsson, 2009). Studies show the competitiveness and attractiveness of a destination stem from the use of efficient and sustainable strategies, which balance the interests of all stakeholders and coordinate cooperation within the territory (IȘToc et al., 2021; Meriläinen & Lemmetyinen, 2011).

In this context, DMOs are crucial to a destination’s success. Sheehan, Vargas-Sánchez, Presenza, and Abbate (2016) posit that a DMO’s effectiveness depends on its ability to gather, analyze, and disseminate information and knowledge about the destination. DMOs act as gatekeepers and distributors of a destination’s knowledge, allowing for the development of strategies to guide stakeholders and maintain competitiveness (Sheehan et al., 2016).

However, since DMOs do not produce or own tourism products, they can only develop voluntary cooperation with stakeholders and support the cooperation (Sheehan et al., 2016). Therefore, it can be argued that the success of a destination is hinged upon the ability of DMOs to facilitate collaboration among stakeholders and provide valuable information and knowledge to guide decision-making (Elbe et al., 2009; Sheehan et al., 2016).

II.4 Conceptual Framework

Tourism study is complex by nature. It covers marketing, economics, business, sociology, social psychology, anthropology, and geography (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977). Tour operators' decisions to select a destination include considerations of most or even all of the above domains. The *Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)* allows for predicting and understanding intentions and behaviors in various research domains, including tourism (Ulker-Demirel & Ciftci, 2020). The theory assumes human behaviors are rational (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977). People make decisions based on their knowledge from various sources, such as past experiences, media, and friends (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977). It is the same for how tour operators make their business decisions.

TPB centers around the concepts of *attitude*, *subjective norm*, *perceived behavior control (PBC)*, *intention*, and *behavior*. The theory argues that behavioral intention results from an individual's attitudes and perceptions, which are driven by their beliefs about the behavior. These attitudes and perceptions include the desire for the outcome of the behavior (internal) and the acceptance of the behavior by the social norms (external) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977), with the influence of the PBC, which represents how individuals perceive their power to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). In other words, TPB is about the concept that behavior is directly predicted by the intention formed by attitudes toward behavior and subjective norms and indirectly by PBC.

According to TPB, a specific behavior is assumed to develop in 4 stages:

- [1] Individuals gain and interpret knowledge from their surroundings to form personal beliefs, which include behavioral beliefs (beliefs about the consequence of the behavior), normative beliefs (beliefs about the general expectation from others), and control beliefs (beliefs about the ability to perform the behavior) (Ajzen, 2006a; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977).
- [2] Personal beliefs form the attitude toward the behavior (by behavioral beliefs), subjective norm concerning the behavior (by normative beliefs), and perceived behavioral control (by control beliefs) (Ajzen, 1985, 1991, 2006b; Ajzen & Driver, 1991).
- [3] These three constructs determine the strength of the intention to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1991).
- [4] The behavior occurs if the intention and the actual behavioral control are sufficiently favorable (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977; Zhou, Thøgersen, Ruan, & Huang, 2013).

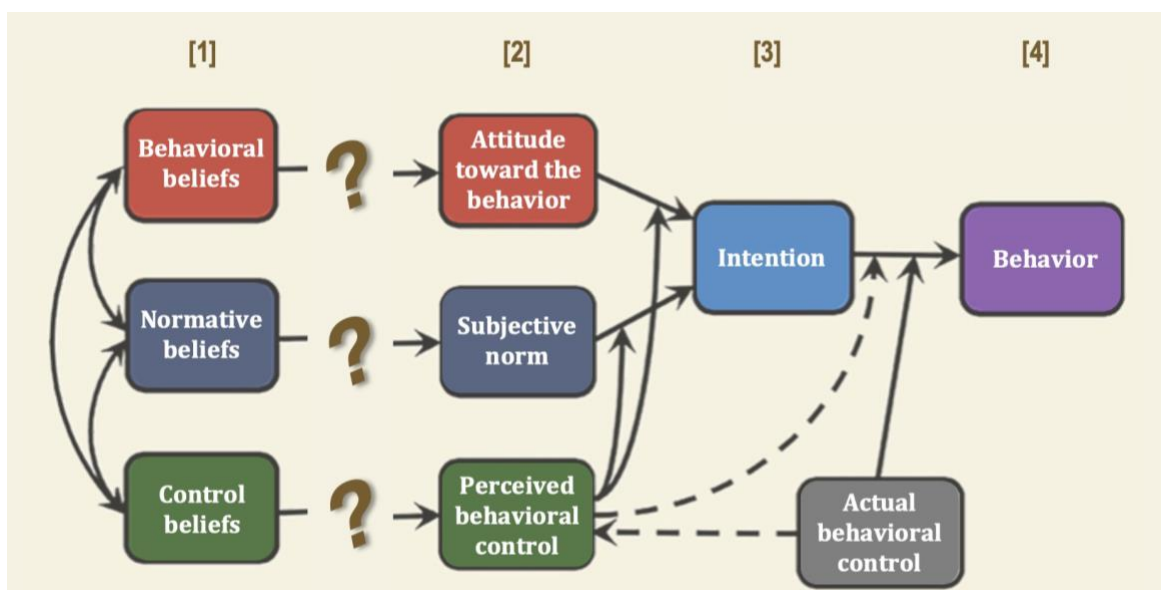


Figure II-1: Research Framework

Adapted from the Theory of Planned Behavior ©2019 Icek Ajzen (Ajzen, 2019)

Figure II-1 illustrates the overall research design. Through the use of TPB, the study aims to identify the beliefs (labeled as [1] in the diagram) held by tour operators that influence their

decisions regarding adding or replacing destinations in their tour itineraries. Additionally, the study explores the various factors (labeled as “?”) that can impact these beliefs to create favorable components (labeled as [2]), leading to positive intention (labeled as [3]) and eventually desired behavior (labeled as [4]).

II.5 Methodology

II.5.1 Procedures

The study adopted a rigorous qualitative approach to explore the attitudes of tour operators towards secondary destinations, their subjective norms, and any potential constraints they may face in incorporating or replacing secondary destinations in their tour itineraries (Thomas, 2006). The study sent out over 200 email invitations to members of the National Tour Association (NTA) and the United States Tour Operators Association (USTOA), as well as referral requests to DMOs and travel journalists. Interested candidates were asked to finish an online screener to ensure they actively participate in the development of tour products, which could include research, designing, logistics planning, marketing, and evaluation. See Table II-1 for the number of candidates at each step of the collection process.

Table II-1: Data Collection Process

Invitation emails sent	200+
Started screeners	41
Completed screeners	28
Qualified candidates	23
Interviews scheduled	18
Completed interviews	13

Thirteen participants were interviewed one-on-one, either online or over the phone. Each lasted 50-75 minutes. The interviews followed a semi-structured format with open-ended questions designed to encourage the participants to share their thoughts and experiences related to the studied topic. They were grounded in TPB constructs, which include behavioral beliefs for attitudes toward behavior, normative beliefs for subjective norms, and control beliefs for PBC, intentions, and behaviors. To ensure the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the study results, the transcripts were sent to all 13 interviewees for verification. This approach was effective in enhancing the validity and generalizability of the study findings (Decrop, 1999).

After verification, the transcripts were analyzed using the Thematic Analysis Method (Holton, 1988). Data was categorized into three main themes: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived constraints. Each theme has three subthemes: beliefs, expectations from destinations, and expectations from suppliers. See Table II-2 for details. The study aims to utilize this approach to answer the following questions: What factors influence tour operators' destination selection for their products? What are the best practices to influence their decisions?

Table II-2: Thematic Analysis

Tour Operators'	Tour Operators' Belief	Destinations Should...	Suppliers Should...
Attitudes	<i>What do tour operators think about having secondary destinations on their tours?</i>	<i>Tour operators' expectations from destinations/DMOs</i>	<i>Tour operators' expectations from tourism suppliers</i>
Subjective Norms	<i>How do tour operators anticipate the market responding to itineraries that include secondary destinations?</i>	<i>Suggestions from tour operators on changes destinations/DMOs should make to impact the market</i>	<i>Suggestions from tour operators on changes tourism suppliers should make to impact the market.</i>
Perceived Constraints	<i>What restricts tour operators from including secondary destinations in their products?</i>	<i>Things tour operators believe destinations/ DMOs can help them</i>	<i>Things tour operators believe tourism supplier can help them</i>

Although participants have different experiences, their beliefs and expectations of secondary destinations are similar. Surprisingly, there are no conflicting opinions among the participants except on tourist behavior change after the COVID-19 pandemic, which does not directly impact how tour operators select destinations or suppliers and, therefore, is not included in the analysis.

II.5.2 Samples

As shown in Table II-3, the business size of the participating tour operators ranges from less than 10,000 to 100,000 tourists. All thirteen of them design or customize tour itineraries for group tours or FITs. All except two operate their own escorted tours. Some specialize in women-only tours, religious groups, environmentally responsible travels, international trips or luxurious FITs. The information provides valuable insights for researchers and practitioners in tourism and related industries.

Table II-3: Profile of Participating Tour Operators

Business Function		
<i>Design and wholesale public group tours</i>	7	53.85%
<i>Design and retail public group tours</i>	12	92.31%
<i>Customize tour itineraries for preformed/affinity groups</i>	8	61.54%
<i>Customize tour itineraries for FITs/private groups</i>	5	38.46%
<i>Operate its own escorted tours</i>	11	84.61%
<i>Inbound</i>	9	69.23%
<i>Outbound</i>	10	76.92%
<i>Domestic</i>	11	84.61%

Tour Size		
<i>Bus tours (typically 35+)</i>	10	76.92%
<i>Large groups (typically 16+)</i>	9	69.23%
<i>Small tours (typically 4-16)</i>	10	76.92%
<i>FIT tours (typically 1-6)</i>	5	38.46%

Office Location		
<i>USA</i>	12	92.31%
<i>Canada</i>	2	15.38%
<i>Outside of North America</i>	4	30.77%

Business Size in 2019		
<i>10,000 or less tourists</i>	6	46.15%
<i>10,001 to 50,000 tourists</i>	4	30.77%
<i>50,001 to 100,000 tourists</i>	3	23.08%

Using fictitious names, Table II-3 provides a summary of the interview profiles. It is noteworthy to highlight that all interviewees possess an extensive background in the tourism industry, with each having over 20 years of experience. Moreover, a notable proportion of the current CEOs or presidents, amounting to seven out of nine, are also the founders of their respective companies. While all tour operators have offices in North America, it is pertinent to mention that two interviewees operate from Japan and the UK. This diversity in the geographic locations of the interviewees offers a broader perspective on the subject matter, enhancing the study's overall credibility.

Table II-4: Study Interviewee Profile

Fictional Name:	Aaron	Betty	Charlie	Derek	Emma	Freddy	George	Henry	Ivy	Jenny	Katie	Lisa	Michael		
Business															
Design public tours	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		12	92.31%
Customize for preformed groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓					8	61.54%
Customize for private groups		✓	✓			✓						✓	✓	5	38.46%
Operate Escorted Tours	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			11	84.62%
Inbound	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	9	69.23%
Outbound	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	10	76.92%
Domestic	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	11	84.62%
Personal															
Tour Guide Experience	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9	69.23%
Direct Contact with DMO	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		9	69.23%
Tourism Experience															
40-49 yrs								✓						1	7.69%
30-39 yrs	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓		8	61.54%
20-29 yrs			✓			✓				✓			✓	4	30.77%
Gender															
Female		✓			✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		6	46.15%
Male	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓					✓	7	53.85%

II.6 Results

II.6.1 *Overview of the Findings*

The study's results are succinctly encapsulated in Figure II-2. All the featured findings are supported by the interviews conducted with the 13 tour operators who participated in the research. The first column comprises three boxes, reflecting tour operators' behavioral, normative, and control beliefs. The second column outlines the expectations of tour operators from destinations and suppliers, representing the best practices that can be used to positively influence their destination selection decisions.

The three forthcoming subsections delve into the findings presented in the result diagram, offering a thorough analysis of each TPB constructs with quotes from the interviews. These statements, although not exhaustive, serve as representative examples of the overall data set. Each statement is associated with participants' fictitious names per Table II-4 and specific identifiers corresponding to the elements delineated in Figure II-2. To elaborate, the notation "Michael (f, 2)" indicates that Michael's statement is related to the belief identified as "f" in the first column of the result diagram in Figure II-2 and supports the finding labeled "2" in the second column of Expectations/Recommendation. This attribution approach ensures confidentiality while enabling the tracing of connections between individual statements and the corresponding findings and themes presented in the result diagram.

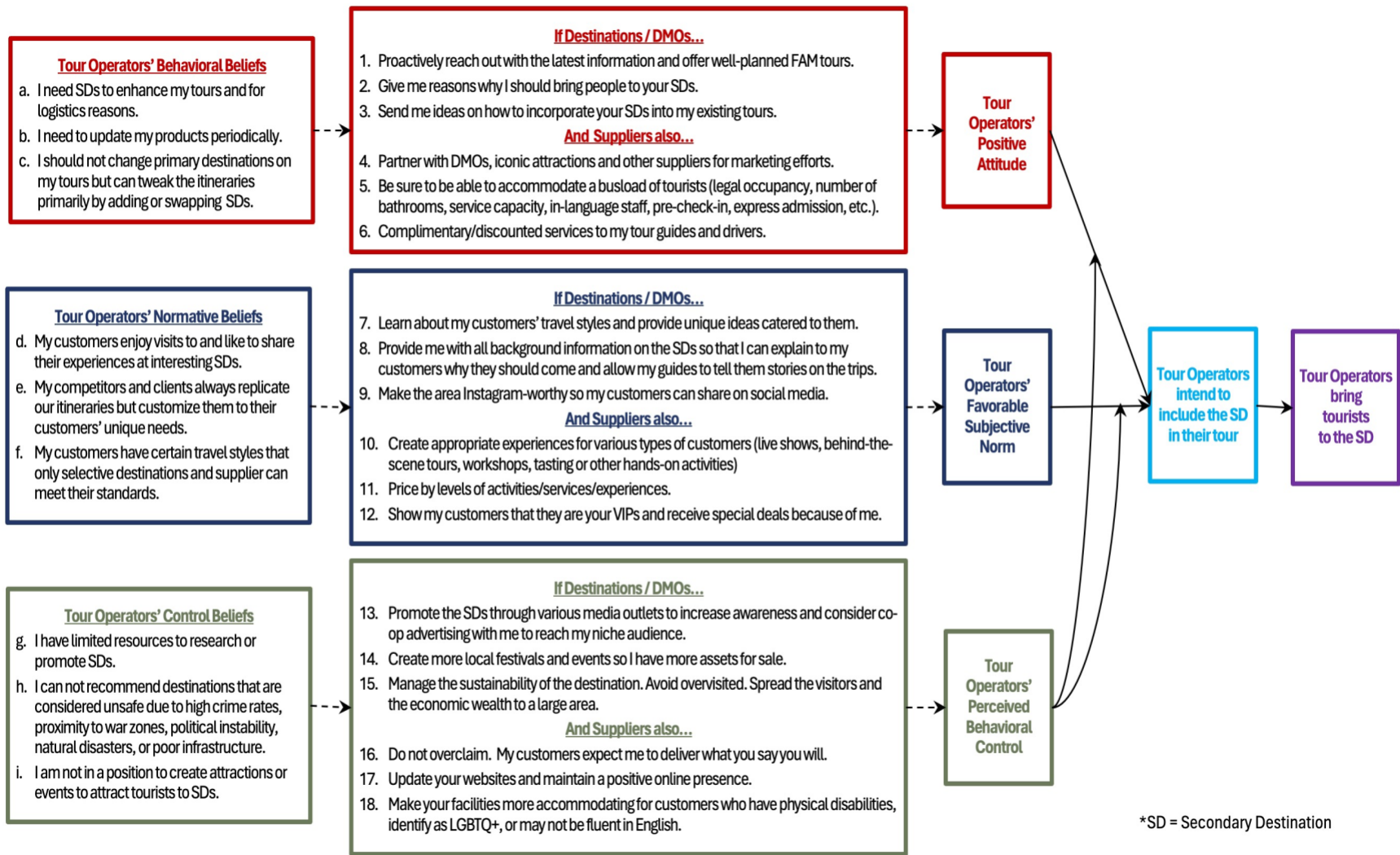


Figure II-2: Research Result

Adapted from the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) ©2019 Icek Ajzen (Ajzen, 2019)

II.6.2 *Tour Operators' Attitudes*

The research shows that the symbiotic relationship between secondary destinations and tour operators is paramount for tour product development. Secondary destinations need tour operators to attract tourists, while tour operators need secondary destinations to provide a comprehensive itinerary.

"I always look for great stops or opportunities to enhance my itinerary.

I want to add those little nuggets that make it a complete experience." –

Henry (a)

When designing tour itineraries for groups or individual tourists, tour operators must consider the distance and timing between major destinations. They often include stops for meals and overnight stays and may even arrange escorted tours or allow tourists free time to explore and shop during long travel times.

"There are a lot of different reasons and factors that go into picking a

destination. A lot of times, it's logistical." – *Charlie (a)*

Tourists often don't have prior knowledge or familiarity with the secondary destinations they encounter during their trips. Although these stops may not be the primary reason for tourists selecting a particular tour, they are important additions that help connect the destinations they do plan to visit. These visits can significantly impact the economy of the secondary destination.

"[Secondary destinations] can get good business, but you're the residual sale... If you start adding that up, it can greatly benefit your community to be a residual sale, but not necessarily the reason people open their wallets to buy the trip." – *Aaron*

The research and development of tour products is a crucial aspect of tour operation, especially for those who customize tours for groups and FITs. However, it is a time- and resource-intensive process that poses challenges for many tour operators. As a result, tour operators often turn to DMOs for information and ideas because they possess extensive knowledge of their territories and can provide valuable insights into asset availabilities and the latest activity updates. Such collaboration between the two facilitates the creation of unique and attractive tour products for tourists.

“We are regional experts; however, there are some areas like those I mentioned that we might not be fully aware of anything new going on. So, that’s where we rely heavily on the DMOs.” – Betty (1)

Every tour operator has a unique business model, target audience, and area of specialization. They only pay attention to selective destinations based on their specific interests. Most other destinations would not get their attention. For example, a tour operator specializing in hiking tours will unlikely offer tours to metropolitan cities. Similarly, a receptive operator in Japan would only focus on destinations within Japan. Moreover, some destinations may give tour operators the impression that they lack the necessary infrastructure to meet their customers’ expectations. For instance, tour operators catering to upscale clients would not consider a destination if there is no 5-star hotel around.

“[We] don’t operate everywhere. We don’t want to operate everywhere. We choose to promote the destinations we think work for our client base. But it’s important that these destinations share their strengths and weaknesses. We go out and visit them and explore them as well. So, we know some of the benefits of traveling around [destination x] and what we

can offer as opposed to [destination y], and we will push that through to our clients.” – Michael (f, 2)

To be included in tour packages, destinations must have unique and compelling offers. Tour operators are expected to provide their customers with an engaging and meaningful travel experience, and therefore, they carefully select destinations that meet these criteria. Thus, it is crucial for destinations to continuously develop and promote their distinctive features to remain competitive.

“We do try to incorporate some off-the-beaten-path destinations. But again, the key is that they have some kind of offering... As long as they have something unique, different, and special to offer, they will be golden. That’s what changes up stale itineraries in tours. I say stale, meaning that they’re repetitive.” – Betty (2)

Many DMOs organize *FAM (familiarization)* tours for tour operators, media, and influencers to offer them a more comprehensive understanding of their locales. However, merely escorting them to facilities is insufficient. As per the findings of a study, well-conceived FAM tours can serve as a source of inspiration and idea generation for participants. Nonetheless, many FAM tours fall short of expectations. Therefore, FAM tours must be strategically planned, with detailed information about each supplier, including their respective backstories. Each supplier must provide tour operators with compelling reasons to bring their customers there, and it is equally vital to let them experience how the customers will be treated. Mere demonstration and explanation are inadequate.

“FAM trips... are, of course, about learning. But I think the important thing is that you build an emotional contact connection. So, I was hosted in [destination p]. I talk to [person q] and get to know what’s happening and some of the subgroups there. I would have no idea if it weren’t that FAM trip. I met people on the ground, and I have connections now. I feel for them, and I feel the responsibility to help them develop tourism.” – George (1, 2, 4)

When a tour is well received, tour operators are usually reluctant to make major changes. Instead, they make minor adjustments by adding or replacing secondary destinations for various reasons. These could include the unavailability of a facility, overcrowding of an attraction, price increases, or service changes.

“We don’t get major changes normally as long as it’s all going okay. If the [customers] enjoy it, we keep the status quo. But if things are not working, we’ll change them. Over the years, the tours just get tweaked a little bit... Instead of going to [attraction u], we go to [attraction v]. It is because [attraction u] closed after October.” – Katie (c)

Even when the primary destinations remain the same, changing secondary destinations can refresh the tour experience. This may encourage customers who have already been on the tour to visit again.

“The new product only represents less than 10% of what I do every year. Because... I have to do a ton of work to put up a new tour. [As] a tour operator that’s been in business for a number of years, we’ve got our tried

and true tours. We would tweak them based on new things that come on line... We're not going to mess with them a whole lot." – Jenny (c)

Since tour operators often prefer to modify existing tour products rather than create new ones from scratch, the study shows it would be advantageous for destinations to proactively suggest ways to seamlessly integrate them into tour operators' existing tour itineraries. By doing so, destinations can effectively showcase their unique experiences and services while also helping tour operators enhance the appeal of their existing tour packages. This approach is mutually beneficial for both parties.

"Somebody can come to us and look at the itinerary that I've already built and say, 'You could easily slip this in on Day 3 and add this experience for your clients.' If I think it's a good fit for my clients, I will do it. And I think most tour operators will tell you the same thing." – Jenny (b, c, 3)

Such an effort requires effective collaboration between tourism suppliers. Multiple study participants urge tourism suppliers to work with DMOs and other suppliers in close proximity, ideally including those considered iconic attractions. Such partnerships facilitate the sharing of resources, knowledge, and expertise, which is often necessary for addressing the complex challenges faced by secondary destinations. No single tourism supplier can achieve optimal results alone, necessitating a coordinated effort to create a tourism ecosystem that benefits all stakeholders.

"You have to partner and collaborate with the other destinations around you to make yourself appealing because no one's coming to the small destination just for a small destination. Collaboration is huge. You don't

look for one destination to stand out. A rising tide raises all boats. It's not about you standing out from everyone else. It's about all of you looking good. You'll get more business because more people are coming." –

Henry (4)

Tour operators who cater to large groups must limit their destinations to those that can accommodate a busload of people. The destinations and suppliers must have the capacity to handle a large number of tourists, including ensuring that the legal occupancy, number of bathrooms, and service capacity are adequate. Ideally, they have staff who are fluent in the language of the tourists they are serving. It's also important that the local communities are supportive of tourism. Not all communities welcome large groups of tourists due to concerns about traffic, land conservation, and other potential issues.

"Most importantly, [suppliers] have to understand group travel. We're bringing 40 to 45 people on a big motorcoach. There needs to be so much thought into it. I mean, it's as simple as restrooms. Although there are lavatories on the coaches, they still need to be able to have lavatory facilities for the group. So, it's all those sorts of things that we have to take into consideration when we go to any destination, big or small. The key is that they know how to accommodate a group, and they want to accommodate a group... [DMOs] should go out to meet with their suppliers, attractions, restaurants, and hotels and educate them. To dig a little deeper into that question, that's what we expect of them, especially the smaller secondary destinations. It's not our job." – Betty (5)

It is pertinent to note that escorted groups necessitate additional logistical arrangements. Tour operators are confined to select hotels that enable them to conduct pre-checks of their customers and coordinate with their tour leaders. This is important as it allows for a more efficient check-in process, thereby reducing customer wait time. Additionally, tour operators can only work with restaurants that offer group menus and have the capacity to accommodate 40-50 individuals in close proximity while also ensuring prompt service. This ensures the group can dine together and move on to their next scheduled activity without delays. Similarly, they prefer attractions that can admit them without having to wait in lines with the general public. These logistical arrangements are critical to ensure the seamless execution of escorted group tours.

“[The museum] arranges an in-language tour guide for our groups when we request. We don’t have to wait in the general admission area. All these come into play, which makes the stopover more successful.” – Derek (5)

Furthermore, when bringing in a large group, tour operators often expect suppliers to provide complimentary or discounted services to their tour leaders and drivers. Tour leaders play a pivotal role in escorted tours, acting as both guides and caretakers for the group. Given their crucial responsibilities, suppliers must establish and maintain a close relationship with them, not solely with tour developers. Doing so will enable suppliers to better understand the specific needs and preferences of the groups and, in turn, tailor their services to meet the market demands more effectively. As such, effective collaboration and cooperation with tour leaders are necessary for suppliers seeking to succeed in the competitive field of escorted tours.

“But a lot of [suppliers] don’t see the value in [tour leaders]. We don’t do it on purpose, but when we are treated poorly, [our customers] are fed off it. I don’t expect special treatment. I expect to be treated the same as the

guests. Please don't treat me worse because my room is free, my lunch is free, or my admission is free. The happier and more positive the [tour n leader] is, the happier the [group] will be.” – Katie (6)

In short, the relationship between secondary destinations and tour operators is mutually beneficial and essential for the success of both businesses. Secondary destinations rely on tour operators to draw tourists, while tour operators depend on secondary destinations to offer a complete itinerary. This interdependence is crucial for the optimal utilization of tourism resources and the generation of economic benefits for both parties.

II.6.3 Tour Operators' Subjective Norms

All of the participants in the study have stated that while their customers may not be familiar with the secondary destinations they are taken to, they tend to enjoy these visits. These secondary destinations are often hidden gems of the tours, and they usually provide customers with a pleasant surprise.

“Those hidden gems of the attractions that we call fillers are usually the most memorable. [People] usually turn and say, ‘I didn't even know this existed. I didn't even know this was a thing.’ It became a very important part of the program, where it was a filler, but it became a main component of that product.” – Emma (a, d)

Tour operators believe some tourists may eagerly anticipate visiting lesser-known places, even if they are unaware of the specifics when they book.

“People like to go because they have been to a lot of places already. Secondary destinations are something new to them.” – Lisa (a, d)

Participants experienced tourists deliberately select a tour that includes a secondary destination they have been eager to explore for some time. While these destinations may not be mainstream enough to attract a large number of tourists, they are still known and intrigue the interest of those who encounter them via promotional materials.

“Movies and pop culture definitely pique their interest, but also history and family history. They may live on the West Coast now, but they have a lot of family who grew up [near the destination].” – Katie (d)

Given the relatively unexplored and enigmatic nature of these secondary destinations, tourists are more likely to share their experiences both offline and online. This presents a valuable opportunity for tour operators and destinations to promote themselves. Therefore, it is crucial for destinations to provide picturesque environments, immersive activities, and unique experiences that tourists can capture and share on social media. In light of the abundance of popular destinations on the internet, tourists tend to seek out more distinctive locations that can enhance their personal brand image.

“[Experiences in secondary destinations] are the things that will create a wow effect. People come back and brag about it. Our business is built on referrals, so it’s really important that our [customers] come back and tell 10 people. We turn them into a commercial.” – Emma (a, d, 9, 10)

More than half of the participants in the study expressed that post-COVID, people are more interested in not just visiting more places but also learning and exploring new experiences. Rather than simply sitting on a bus and looking out the window, tourists want to be more active and engage in experiences they may not have considered before the pandemic. For example,

when visiting a pottery museum, tourists want to learn the stories behind the pieces and participate in a pottery wheel workshop. Tourists prefer to be more involved in their travel.

“When we’re having dinner, have the chef or somebody else come out and speak to the group, greet them, and then talk about the menu and how they source things. It gives them a connection to the meal much more than just good food.” – Henry (d, 10)

Tour operators also noticed a shift in the way people choose their travel destinations. Rather than selecting a place to visit based on its sightseeing opportunities, many tourists are now more interested in the activities they can participate in. This means that they may choose a destination based on the availability of certain activities rather than the location itself. In other words, they prioritize the quality of their experience in a particular activity, regardless of where they are.

“I think people are purchasing the overall experience. I’ll use New England as an example. People want to see fall foliage. So long as we’re creating and providing the experience for them that they want everything they envisioned New England in the fall to be, they don’t necessarily need to know every one of those secondary destinations.” – Betty (d, 10)

Thus, providing unique experiences to tourists is crucial for destinations seeking to attract tourists. Such experiences may include live shows, behind-the-scenes tours, workshops, tastings, and other hands-on activities. To create exceptional experiences, destinations must display creativity. Even seemingly ordinary establishments such as cookie shops have the potential to become tourist attractions if they provide tourists with a glimpse into the kitchen, offer a

knowledgeable guide to explain the intricacies of cookie-making, provide samples, allow children to play with the dough, and invite adults to create and taste their own cookies. By providing such unique experiences, destinations can attract more tourists and establish themselves and the surrounding area as premier travel locations.

“[The Corning Museum of Glass] has all these demonstrations. You can buy glass from artisans at the end of the tour. You can make your own frame out of glass. They’ve got a lot of things to offer there. There’s no other reason to stop in Corning except the Corning Museum. But it’s a good enough reason. What Corning gets out of that from us is not just the visit to the Corning Museum. Because of where they’re located and where we need to go, we stay in Corning for a night... [Our customers also] have a little bit of free time, which means they get to go into the downtown area and poke around a little bit. So, there’s a tremendous amount of economic benefit... the Corning Museum was not the only benefactor of our stopping.” – Jenny (d, 10)

There is no one-size-fits-all tour experience. Tour operators must take into account every tourist’s unique needs and travel style when selecting destinations. For instance, a group of college students may prefer a different experience from seniors but might share similar interests with adventure tourists. Similarly, religious groups have specific activities they want to do and avoid. Budget tourists have different hotel and dining expectations than those on luxurious tours. Tour operators expect destinations to research their clientele before offering any recommendations. Ultimately, the travel experience should be customized to each individual or group’s specific requirements.

“We have to be selective and choose what we want to promote. By association, our clients will look upon us if we sell a certain type of trip at a certain type of destination... We would expect [destinations] to have done some research on our business. You should know what type of travel we do. There’s no point in you coming to me and trying to sell [x] if, straight away, I know I don’t want to sell [x]. So, it’s about how you pair your products and destinations with the type of travel that we offer.” – Michael (f, 7, 8)

In fact, not only the experience but also the pricing should be customized. Destinations must understand that tour operators are unlikely to have customers participate in all the experiences they offer. This could be due to varied interests, timing constraints, and mobility limitations. Hence, it is necessary to price each experience based on the activity level, involvement, length of time, and number of people participating. This will ensure that the pricing is fair and reasonable for all groups.

“[Tourism suppliers] have to realize that this is an hour or an hour and a half a bus tour coming in. [There are] 50 people walking through the door at one time. They should have a price for those quick visits. When you’re an attraction, you have people coming there just for you, and people that are just filling in, just stopping by. Not that you have to have different pricing for everybody, but different experiences. If you’re just coming to shop, maybe there’s no charge. There might be a little gate fee for something. If you’re adding on a step-on guide or a little bit more information, it’s an experience. If you’re doing a little bit longer behind

the scenes, that's another program. So, you'd have to really cater to it and not say this is the price, and that's it. As tour operators, we can steer our customers in a certain way.” – Emma (11)

While tour operators have a big influence on tourists' destination decisions, it is challenging for them to persuade customers to choose a destination that evokes negative feelings, such as poor hygiene, cultural discrimination, high crime rates, political instability, or natural disasters. Tour operators generally avoid conducting business in unsafe areas. Negative feelings towards a destination could also stem from misinformed subjective perceptions.

“Think about Columbia, for example. It has a reputation for Pablo Escobar and drug wars, and it is not safe. But it's an absolutely gorgeous country. It's super safe. It's very interesting. Of course, they want the tourist dollars, but they also want to change their reputation.” – George (h, 8)

Destinations must furnish tour operators with comprehensive background information about the place, including its history, people, culture, and cuisine, among other aspects. Such information enables tour operators to effectively communicate the unique selling points of the destinations to their customers and prospects. Moreover, it is essential for tour guides to be equipped with the requisite information to narrate engaging stories to customers during their trips. Hence, destinations should prioritize providing accurate and detailed information to tour operators to bolster tourism.

“Many [DMOs] are very good at ensuring we have what we need when we need it. At the conventions, they will at least give us a profile sheet—

we call it our Bible. They'll give us a thumb drive of anything that we need. They'll send us any collateral and material that we need... They'll keep us informed... We have a lot of DMO partners that are very savvy. If we need a quick itinerary for a client, they'll pull it together for us. Some of our smaller clients need help selling, so we'll put together videos for them. And we'll ask DMOs for those really beautiful pictures of the area. When we meet with [them], they'll ask what else you need from us.” – Betty (a, 1, 8)

One of the distinctive characteristics of tour products is their composite nature, which involves a blend of services provided by several entities, such as transport, accommodation, and entertainment. However, the tour operators responsible for creating these products do not possess any ownership over these constituent services. Such services are not proprietary and are widely available to other tour operators, their business clients, and the general public. Consequently, tour products are susceptible to imitation, and tour operators are powerless to prevent such replication. Tour operators must be committed to continuous innovation and improvement of their tour itineraries to remain competitive in this market and differentiate themselves from their rivals.

“They steal my stuff all the time. But there is no way to copyright a tour. Any tour operator will tell you this. I can say this unequivocally. When a tour operator is going out to do research on a new destination, they're going to look at what other tour operators are doing in the area... Anybody could do that. But then I've got to dig deeper. I've got to dig for what my clients want to do. So, at the end of the day, even though I share

the basic nuggets of that tour, once you drill down into the specifics of the days and what we're doing, that's where we deviate because they built it for their [student travelers], and I built it for my [specific group].” – Jenny (e)

Though it is imperative to treat all customers equally, tour operators would greatly benefit from exclusive deals or privileges offered by destinations to their customers. This approach can imbue customers with a sense of value and significance, thereby strengthening the relationship between the tour operator and the destination. Providing unique experiences to tour operators' customers can potentially provide a significant competitive advantage to both the tour operators and the destinations and contribute to overall service quality enhancement.

“... make sure our [customers] feel special and important. For example, I go to a lot of places that say that for our guests, they offer a 15% discount. This little extra thing ‘just because they’re our guests,’ they love that so much. So... recognizing them as individuals and as VIPs. They love that stuff. They eat it up.” – Katie (12)

Tour operators rely heavily on destinations to provide exceptional service and offer their customers a unique and personalized experience. Destinations must also provide the necessary support to help them promote effectively. The essence of a successful partnership between tour operators and destinations is reliant upon mutual efforts and cooperation. As such, destinations must strive to meet the needs and expectations of tour operators to ensure a mutually beneficial and sustainable relationship.

II.6.4 Tour Operators' Perceived Behavioral Constraint

The primary objective of the tour operator business is to offer tourists a delightful and memorable experience. It is easier to sell tours of where the destinations are known and loved by the tourists. Nonetheless, sustainability is a crucial factor to consider, and tour operators are well aware of it. Popular destinations are often overrun with tourists, leading to negative consequences, such as congested airports, overpriced lodging, crowded restaurants, lengthy queues at attractions, and heavy traffic. Therefore, it's prudent to distribute tourism more equitably, ensuring that tourists are dispersed to lesser-known destinations to mitigate these problems.

"It's just too many people. We have to find a way to spread that out. It's not that you're not going to Paris to see the Eiffel Tower, or you're not going to France. Of course you are. But we could find a way for you not to spend all 8 days in Paris. You spend 4 days in Paris, and we get you outside the city. So that you can go to other places and have other experiences that take the burden off of Paris, and it shares the wealth and the financial gain with these other smaller communities, and they have a lot to offer." – Jenny (15)

However, the study reveals that tours solely with lesser-known destinations are not practical for business since they won't sell. All participating tour operators accentuated the significance of maintaining a balance between more popular and lesser-known attractions to ensure the success of a tour package.

“Our goal in designing a tour is to hang our hat on a couple of things that people already know, that you don’t have to educate them on. And then, the rest of the tour, the stuff in the middle, you have to describe to them why they should go see this place. You have to find one thing and make it sound so special. That they’re like, my God, of course, I want to go see that. If I build a tour that only talks about these smaller locations that they’ve never heard of, they will never buy it because there are 99 other tours they can choose from.” – Jenny (13, c)

People want to know what they’re buying. Education is critical when promoting lesser-known destinations. It would be helpful if these destinations were more familiar to tourists or if information about them was easily accessible online. Tour operators cannot be expected to promote unknown destinations on their own. Instead, this task falls to the DMOs of the country, region, or county.

“Tour operators will not have sufficient funding to do that. We can’t spend too much money to promote a place that doesn’t guarantee a return, or it may take a long time to break even. Not to mention, we don’t own the places. We will be technically promoting other businesses, and our competitors can take advantage of our investment. That doesn’t quite make sense. It’s only logical and reasonable for the DMOs and their local government to support the businesses in their destinations. And they can do it. They have more resources compared to one tour operator.” – Derek (g, 13)

As previously mentioned, tour operators rely heavily on destinations to provide them with marketing materials to promote their products. Therefore, the information provided by the destinations must be accurate and reliable. Any false claims or misrepresentations can lead to customer dissatisfaction and create problems for the tour operators, who will be held accountable by their customers. This can negatively impact the reputation of both the tour operator and the destination. Hence, it is vitally important to ensure that all information provided is truthful and authentic to avoid any miscommunication or misunderstandings.

“Having your websites up to date... and accurate. We use that information to sell our trip. For example, a secondary attraction says visitors are going to take a little rail ride, and it shows this picturesque railroad when, in reality, they’re going behind people’s backyards. Of course, you’re not going to say that. But don’t sell something you’re not. Be realistic. Because then [my customers] will come to me saying, ‘You told us that we were going to see picturesque. I saw this guy’s backyard; he had garbage up to here. Then we went by political signs.’ So, it’s really important that they sell their attraction or facility as what it is.” – Emma (16, 17)

It is also imperative that destinations maintain a positive online presence, given that a significant number of tourists conduct online research prior to making travel plans. Tour operators, who are instrumental in promoting destinations and services, stand to gain from favorable reviews. While tour operators can proactively manage reviews of their own business, the onus of safeguarding their online reputation lies with destinations and suppliers. Notably, a negative review of a highly recommended destination can cause customer mistrust, proving detrimental to the business interests of both the destination and tour operator. Hence, all

stakeholders must take adequate measures to manage their online presence and garner favorable reviews.

“If someone asks, how’s that food or how’s that restaurant, they say, it is ok. It’s not really a review. It doesn’t really help you make a decision. If you say it was terrible, do not go there, or it’s the worst ever, then it is effective. Or if they can say unbelievable best trip, you got to do this, that’s useful. So that’s all we use. We don’t use those in the middle because it doesn’t help. What we try to do is we try to turn the 1s into 5s. The 1s are terrible. Most companies just ignore the 1s, or they just get rid of them if they can. But we aim to turn them into 5s because if you can turn a 1 into 5, you have a super 5. You have a super ambassador because they would be like, I thought you guys were terrible, but now, I think you’re the best. They are generally the most active in the public. On the review sites, he’ll be like, oh, I had a terrible trip, but it has been fixed, and now I’m going to book them again.” – George (17)

As much as tourists may have their hearts set on visiting certain destinations, there are instances where these locations may no longer be suitable or safe to visit when they are ready to embark on their journey. This could be due to various factors, such as their proximity to war zones, the impact of natural disasters, or other travel advisory warnings. Furthermore, due to climate change, the destinations may have changed significantly from what the tourists had imagined. For example, the body of water in the Dead Sea has lost one-third of its surface area, the reef system in the Great Barrier Reef, Australia, is dying from heat stress and bleaching

events, and the Maldives is slowly sinking. Tour operators must take them into consideration when planning tours.

“We have to plan for uncertain weather, diseases, and political factors. My clients wanted to go to Turkey, but there was an earthquake. Then, they wanted to go to Israel, but it was at war. Then, they wanted to go to China, but they didn’t have the visas. There are also other economic and technical factors that may make them unable to go.” – Lisa (h)

According to research by [Nyaupane and Andereck \(2008\)](#), time and cost are the most significant factors that limit people's ability to travel, whereas location-based constraints such as distance, traffic and weather are less important. People may still go to their desired destination even if it means overcoming these challenges. Participants in the study acknowledged that time and finance are the primary constraints for traveling, but they also emphasized the importance of the capacity limitation of destinations and the challenges related to tourist mobility or access.

“There could be challenges with availability at certain destinations at certain times of the year. You do find real pinch points in accessing exactly what they want. And some of our clients won’t want to compromise. So, the capacity constraint is a limiting factor. There could be some challenges around the style of trip that they wished to do. So, there might be a mobility or access challenge. Certain sites may require a certain level of mobility in order to fully experience them. Depending on the clients, that might be a limiting factor.” – Michael (15, 18)

In addition, participants underscored the paramount importance of inclusivity in the tourism industry. They advocated for destinations to exhibit greater sensitivity and hospitality towards tourists who may face physical limitations, identify as LGBTQ+, or possess limited proficiency in English. This inclusive approach would enable more individuals to embark on leisure travel, thereby generating substantial benefits for tour operators, destinations, host communities, and the broader tourism industry.

“You’re doing group touring, and you have to have standardized activities for the masses. For example, in [destination z], we are one of the only companies that offer a choice in a couple of boat tours. One boat tour takes 45 minutes to walk in and 45 minutes to walk out...[but] many people can’t walk that 2-hour distance. So, we hire a separate bus and guide to... drive up to the parking lot, [let the people] get off, get on the boat, have the experience, and then get off and get back on the bus. So, both are great experiences.” – Aaron (18)

During the research interviews, there was a recurring statement, “You have to give me a reason to go,” from various tour operators. It is noteworthy that tour operators are primarily focused on selling destinations, but they require a compelling reason to convince their customers to visit such destinations. Hence, destinations must provide unique and engaging experiences to motivate tourists to make a stopover. These experiences could be from local events or festivals, such as the International Dragon Boat Races in Hong Kong, the Oktoberfest in Munich, Germany, and Halloween at Salem, Massachusetts in the U.S.A. These events give tour operators more assets to sell and give customers unforgettable experiences. Therefore, tour operators’ success directly relates to the destination’s ability to provide engaging experiences and events.

“Let me give you one example: the Christmas light in Virginia Beach during Christmas. Before we first promoted it, people didn’t know what it was. It was a mystery for them. However, when the bus drove on the boardwalk, they saw the wonderful Christmas lights displayed on the beach and the wall, and they loved it. It was so fabulous. And they would tell their friends and the word spread. People want to come to see it either with the tour or drive themselves down to Virginia Beach to experience the Christmas light display.” – Derek (14)

Tourism is a dynamic industry that requires constant innovation to meet customers’ evolving needs. As such, tour operators often have unique travel experience ideas based on their customers’ interests. However, the implementation of these ideas rests with the destinations themselves. Although DMOs are typically responsible for this task, they lack the authority to enforce their recommendations. Instead, DMOs must rely on their persuasive abilities to collaborate with other key stakeholders, including tourism suppliers, host residents, government agencies, and other parties involved in the tourism industry. Through such collaboration, DMOs can effectively implement new and innovative travel experiences that meet customers’ needs and contribute to the growth of tourism in the destination.

“Let’s say a tour operator gives [a destination] an idea, say, love locks. If they can find a place to put the love locks and work with each other to promote that, it will be a win-win for everyone: the tourists, the tour operators, the destination areas, the DMO and the local tourism board. But that’s the DMO’s job because a tour operator cannot dictate where to put the love lock. Only the DMO has the local connections to make it

happen. It may have to be approved by the town or the county. It may also involve maintenance and insurance.” – Derek (i)

The establishment of a household brand and iconic attraction requires a significant investment. This sentiment was echoed by several participants in one-on-one interviews, citing the example of Iceland’s transformation from a mere stopover to a thriving tourist destination in recent years. While there were varying opinions on the factors that led to Iceland’s success, all participants agreed that it involved the active participation of multiple stakeholders. One participant expressed confidence that this model could be replicated for other destinations, highlighting the importance of collaborative efforts in achieving sustainable tourism growth.

“So, things can be changed quickly. You just got to tell the stories. And you need a lot of different people to contribute. For example, you need airlines that can get the flights in there. You got the best destination, but people can’t get there. Visas aren’t allowed, and that doesn’t help either. So, you start with it’s a place we can get to and talk to.” – George (13)

To some extent, tour operators act as intermediaries, promoting and selling products created by tourism suppliers and destinations, adding their own value, of course. As a result, they often have limited control over the quality of the product delivery, leaving them vulnerable to negative feedback from dissatisfied customers. Therefore, secondary destinations must comprehensively understand the tour operators’ operations and requirements to effectively tailor their approach to meet tour operators’ needs. Doing so will help enhance tour products’ overall quality and appeal to tourists.

II.7 Discussion & Conclusion

II.7.1 *Theoretical Discussion*

In deploying TPB, the study offers a granular dissection of the cognitive mechanisms underlying tour product development decisions (Ajzen, 1985, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977; Madden et al., 1992). The qualitative analysis reveals how TPB's constructs—behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and perceived behavioral control—can be intricately deconstructed to allow stakeholders, particularly third parties, to devise strategic interventions influencing tour operators' decisions.

Behavioral beliefs are explored in depth, providing insight into the intrinsic motivations of tour operators when considering secondary destinations—these are the catalysts that either spur the inclusion of these destinations into tour products or serve as deterrents. The study exposes the crucial business imperatives that drive such decisions, such as the quest for uniqueness in a saturated market and the desire to offer comprehensive tour experiences that differentiate one's offerings from the competition.

Normative beliefs are dissected to understand the social and market pressures influencing tour operators. The study reveals how perceptions of customer preferences, industry standards, and competitive positioning guide operators' inclinations to include or exclude secondary destinations. Here, the subjective norms reflect an amalgamation of external expectations and internalized industry benchmarks, indicating that decisions are not made in isolation but are responses to the wider tourism ecosystem.

Control beliefs are scrutinized to uncover the extent of tour operators' perceived influence over the inclusion of secondary destinations. The findings here are revelatory,

indicating that operators often feel their choices are bounded by the actions and initiatives of destinations' stakeholders. This suggests that while tour operators are the architects of their tour products, the building blocks of these products are often supplied by and contingent upon the collaborative efforts and resources of these stakeholders.

With its qualitative depth, this investigation provides a strategic understanding of how third-party stakeholders can leverage the TPB constructs to influence tour operators' decisions. It proposes that by knowing precisely what shapes tour operators' attitudes (behavioral beliefs), what pressures they perceive from the market (normative beliefs), and what they consider can facilitate (control beliefs), interventions can be tailored to suit these dimensions, enhancing the prospects of secondary destinations in the competitive tourism market.

The study elucidates how the TPB framework can be harnessed to navigate and influence complex business decisions, offering a blueprint for strategic interventions in tour product development and, potentially, other realms of business decision-making. This qualitative interpretation of TPB not only contributes to the academic discourse by expanding the theory's applicability but also provides actionable insights for practitioners aiming to shape tour operators' product development strategies.

II.7.2 Practical Implications

The symbiotic relationship between secondary destinations and tour operators is fundamental to the success of both businesses. Secondary destinations depend on tour operators to attract tourists, while tour operators rely on secondary destinations to offer a complete itinerary. This interdependence is crucial for the optimal utilization of tourism resources and the generation of economic benefits for both parties.

The study shows secondary destinations must provide tour operators with compelling reasons to visit. They should offer high-quality information and materials for promotional use. In addition, they need to be creative in offering tourists exceptional experiences and Instagram-worthy moments. They should also learn about the travel style and preferences of tour operators' customers to cater to their interests.

Collaboration is key. Study participants stress that suppliers in secondary destinations should work with DMOs, partner with other suppliers in proximity, and collaborate with nearby iconic attractions. DMOs must take an active role in trade conventions, such as NTA. FAM tours must be strategically planned and targeted. It is not enough to just bring tour operators to the facilities; they should experience how their customers will be treated and be fed with ideas.

Destinations must be equipped to accommodate tour operators' customers, particularly bus tourists and those with special needs. They should provide pre-check-in, express admission, fast service, and more restrooms for group tours. Fair pricing by experience and complimentary services for guides are expected. Suppliers that are more inclusive and environmentally conscious would likely receive more inquiries.

The study reveals that tour operators frequently update their tours without changing the primary destination. It is important that secondary destinations be able to identify what and how they can offer tour operators to seamlessly integrate into existing tours. Destinations should organize local festivals and events to give tour operators more assets and reasons to sell.

Marketing creates primary destinations. Although secondary destinations may have limited resources to promote themselves to tourists, participants in the study emphasize destinations should maintain a decent online presence, especially reviews on third-party

platforms. This is crucial as tourists research travel ideas and destination selections and verify tour operators' recommendations.

The essence of a successful partnership between tour operators and destinations is reliant upon mutual efforts and cooperation. As such, destinations must strive to meet the needs and expectations of tour operators to ensure a mutually beneficial and sustainable relationship. Doing so will help enhance tour products' overall quality and appeal to tourists.

II.7.3 Limitations and Future Research

The study's focus on tour operators who are active members of NTA and USTOA may limit the generalizability of the findings. These participants are likely to be more experienced and proactive, which could skew the insights toward a specific subset of the industry. Future research could broaden the scope by including relatively new tour operators and those that operate in areas that do not have a strong presence of DMOs to verify and enrich the current findings. Incorporating the views of destinations, tourists, host residents and other stakeholders may offer a more holistic understanding of the tour product development process and shed light on the diverse preferences and motivations of different tourist segments.

While the research design effectively identifies the issues, involved parties, and possible solutions, it does not establish direct cause-and-effect relationships. Future studies could adopt an action research approach, collaborating with various stakeholders to implement, verify, and measure the impact of the recommendations. Such research could lead to the development of evidence-based strategies for integrating secondary destinations into tour itineraries more effectively.

Looking forward, the study invites further investigation into the application of TPB across different facets of decision-making, especially in contexts where third-party intervention is desired. Future studies could explore the interactions between various stakeholders in various settings, considering the impact of diverse market conditions and considerations of conflict of interest.

II.7.4 Conclusion

Using the TPB framework, the study identifies the factors that influence tour operators' decision-making process when selecting secondary destinations for creating tour itineraries. The study findings reveal that tour operators' selection decisions are impacted by their attitudinal, normative, and control beliefs. Firstly, the attitudinal beliefs of tour operators suggest that they need secondary destinations and suppliers to collaborate in creating cohesive products that can enhance the attractiveness of their tour itineraries and accommodate logistics. Secondly, the normative beliefs of tour operators suggest that they require secondary destinations to offer engaging and memorable experiences that cater to their customers' interests and needs. Lastly, the control beliefs of tour operators suggest that they need secondary destinations to provide more support for research and marketing to tourists.

The study delineates practitioners a clear pathway for strategic interventions. Understanding the detailed factors that shape the decisions of tour operators enables DMOs and suppliers to tailor their approaches, ensuring to provide tour operators with compelling reasons and logistical support for including secondary destinations in their tours. This strategic alignment between the destinations' efforts and tour operators' needs can lead to more diversified tourism flows and an enhanced tourist experience.

Moreover, the study demonstrates that TPB can be effectively utilized to guide product development processes, which is a novel application of the theory. By dissecting the considerations of TPB constructs, the study sheds light on how secondary destination can influence tour operators' product development decisions. The strategic implications extend beyond the scope of tourism, suggesting a broader applicability of TPB in various business decision-making processes. Thus, the contribution of the study lies not just in using TPB to understand the development process but in leveraging it to actively shape that process.

Overall, this study serves as a testament to the evolving nature of tourism research, bridging the gap between theory and practice, and laying the groundwork for future academic inquiry and industry application. It challenges researchers and practitioners alike to look beyond traditional models and consider the broader implications of their work on the sustainable development of tourism and other industries.

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III AN INTERPLAY OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE THEORIES

III.1 Abstract

Tour products offered by tour operators are a complex combination of services provided by various tourism suppliers, over which tour operators have no control. Despite the importance of tour products to tourism, there is a significant dearth of literature on the subject. This study investigates the reasons and mechanisms by which tour operators select secondary destinations for their tour products. Secondary destinations often have limited resources to attract visitors and rely on tour operators to bring customers. The study also identifies four models in the tour product development process: dialectic, teleology, life cycle, and evolution. These models are distinct from the motors in the typology of Theories of Organizational Change. By identifying these models, the study provides a deeper understanding of the intricate development and dynamic evolution of tour products. The findings of this study can be used to influence the development of tour products and ultimately contribute to a more equitable redistribution of tourism's economic wealth.

Keywords: secondary destination, tour operator, itinerary, product development, product design, organizational change

III.2 Introduction

The tourism industry is a complex and multifaceted sector that offers unique tour products aimed at providing tourists with an unforgettable experience. These products are created by combining components offered by various tourism suppliers, and no one has complete control over them (Trunfio, Petruzzellis, & Nigro, 2006).

Tour operators play a pivotal role in developing travel packages for groups or independent tourists (Kozicka & Szopa, 2016). They are responsible for designing itineraries, making reservations, and consolidating services such as transportation, hotel, dining, and attraction admission into packages for wholesale and retail (Lumsdon & Swift, 1999). In addition, some tour operators customize tours for private groups, FITs, and other travel companies. Secondary destinations are often added to a tour product to enhance the travel experience and logistics. These destinations rely on tour operators to bring in visitors, as they do not have many resources to do so.

Despite the complexity of tour product development, there is a lack of literature on the subject. The dearth of research on the tour operators' process of developing tour products is a matter of concern, given that destinations could potentially gain valuable insights by comprehending their decision-making approach. To address this gap, this study aims to use the Thematic Analysis Method (Holton, 1988) to identify the factors that impact tour operators' decisions regarding the selection of destinations for their tour itineraries, particularly the triggers that lead tour operators to change their tour itineraries.

The study identifies four models in the tour product development process: dialectic, teleology, life cycle, and evolution. These models are distinct from the motors in the typology of Theories of Organizational Change (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Using all four models to outline the complex nature of tour products is a novel application of the theories. By identifying these models, the study provides a deeper understanding of the intricate development and dynamic evolution of tour products.

Moreover, the study provides practitioners with valuable insights into the factors that trigger tour operators' decisions to change their tour products, specifically the change of secondary destinations and experiences on the itineraries. Though secondary destination is not

the sole aspect of tour product development, it is a crucial component. This information can assist destination stakeholders in better strategizing their approach towards tour operators and considering their inclusion in tour products. The findings of this study can be used to influence the development of tour products and ultimately contribute to a more equitable redistribution of tourism's economic wealth.

III.3 Literature Review

III.3.1 Primary and Secondary Destinations

From the tourists' perspective, a *destination* is a place that attracts them to visit to stay. The "place" can be a country, a city, a resort or an isolated island (Anjos, Pereira, & Tennenberg, 2017). It is a complex ecosystem in which stakeholders of the "place"—tourists, business entities, the public sector and the host residents—interact to create economic, social and environmental value (Boes, Buhalis, & Inversini, 2016; Fyall, 2011; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).

Rather than identifying a destination as a well-defined geographical location, many researchers view a destination as a blend of space, products, services, and public goods that provide a holistic experience (Dmitrovic et al., 2009). Tourists may interpret their destinations differently based on the itinerary, purpose of visit, and prior knowledge, among others (Fuchs & Weiermair, 2003). Buhalis (2000) suggests that tourism destinations should include six A's: attractions, accessibility, amenities, available packages, activities, and ancillary services. In this research, the destination is considered as a combination of all the tourism products, services, and experiences provided in a specific area.

Tourists who travel long distances often prefer to visit multiple destinations in order to make the most of their trip (McKercher, 2001). Since they have invested significant time and

money into traveling, they tend to visit more places, especially if the chances of returning soon are low (Oppermann, 1992a). In addition, tourists who desire diverse travel experiences often prefer multi-destination trips, especially when traveling in a group where each member may have different travel desires or motives (Fesenmaier & Lieber, 1985; Tideswell & Faulkner, 2002). Visiting multiple destinations can reduce disappointment by balancing out any unsatisfactory destination (Lue, Crompton, & Fesenmaier, 1993; McKercher, 2001; Oppermann, 1992b; Tideswell & Faulkner, 2002).

When planning their travels, tourists often aim to visit one or more primary destinations that are popular, easily accessible, have a superior destination image, and offer a wide range of hospitality services. These features make it easier for primary destinations to attract tourists and meet their travel goals (McKercher, 2001; Tideswell & Faulkner, 2002). In addition, they stop over at secondary destinations when traveling between major destinations (McKercher, Wong, & Lau, 2006). These minor or secondary destinations are supplementary to primary destinations and serve as extensions (Botti, Peypoch, & Solonandrasana, 2008; Ladplee, 2018). They tend to have a weaker tourism infrastructure and fewer resources to promote (Fesenmaier & Lieber, 1985; Oppermann, 1992b).

From the tourism economy perspective, it is in the destinations' best interest to collaborate their marketing efforts to create a desire to visit multiple complementary destinations in one trip. The "cumulative attraction" idea by Lue et al. (1993) claims that destinations will have more business if they are packaged into a single travel itinerary. This is because a series of compatible destinations in a single itinerary tends to be more attractive to tourists than those marketed in isolation (Lue et al., 1993; Tideswell & Faulkner, 2002).

To take advantage of the cumulative attraction effect, secondary destinations in reasonable proximity may collaborate to attract a wider variety of tourists to its region by highlighting complementary attractions within the area. Moreover, pooling together multiple destinations' financial and other resources can create economies of scale (Tideswell & Faulkner, 2002). Not only can they leverage each other, their marketing effort is likely to be more cost-effective.

III.3.2 Tour Product

Planning trips can be overwhelming for many tourists (Kemperman, Joh, & Timmermans, 2004). Some tourists do not want to or are not able to seek, review or evaluate the options. To simplify things, travel agencies, tour operators, and *Online Travel Agencies (OTAs)* offer travel packages that include accommodation, transportation, tours, and activity charges.

Depending on the market and activities offered, the packages can be lightly or heavily bundled (Lumsdon & Swift, 1999). A light package could be a hotel plus transportation (Mok, Armstrong, & Go, 1995). This is commonly offered when people book their hotel or transportation. Many of these packages are presented as a bargain (Kinberg & Sudit, 1979).

Other packages that require more planning are developed by tour operators. Some tour operators design itineraries, make reservations and consolidate the services (transportation, hotel, dining, attraction admission) into wholesale and retail packages for sales in public (Lumsdon & Swift, 1999). Some customize private tours for *Fee Independent Travelers (FITs)*, affinity groups, and other travel companies. Some operators also offer counsel, planning and coordination services (Kinberg & Sudit, 1979). They make the decisions or at least the recommendations on destinations (Trunfio et al., 2006). They are the influential information

sources and distribution channels that affect tourists' decisions. This study investigates both public and private tour products developed by tour operators.

Tour operators can benefit destinations by bringing in a regular flow of tourists. They can also increase the destination's awareness, catalyzing its demand (Lumsdon & Swift, 1999). This is especially important to the secondary destinations that need help with accessibility and visibility (Trunfio et al., 2006). Tour operators understand the market needs, direct the market trends, stimulate the tourist appetite, and influence the customers' choice of destinations (Trunfio et al., 2006). Collectively, they can determine the prosperity of destinations and suppliers. Therefore, it is crucial for secondary destinations to understand tour operators' decision process when developing tour products.

Despite the intricacies involved in the development of tour products, the existing literature on the subject is limited. The paucity of research on the tour operators' process of creating tour products is a matter of concern, given that destinations could potentially derive significant benefits by comprehending the operators' decision-making approach. Therefore, there is a need for further research to explore the complexities of tour product development and to provide valuable insights into the development process for tour operators and destination managers alike.

III.4 Methodology

III.4.1 Data Collection

The study employs a qualitative approach to investigate the tour product development process inductively (Thomas, 2006). Over 200 email invitations were sent to members of the *National Tour Association (NTA)* and the *United States Tour Operators Association (USTOA)*. A

dozen referral requests were also sent to *Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs)* and travel journalists. Prospective candidates were required to fill out an online screener to confirm their eligibility and that they actively participate in the development of tour products, which may include research, designing, logistics planning, marketing and evaluation. See Table III-1 for the number of candidates at each step of the collection process.

Table III-1: Data Collection Process

<i>Invitation emails sent</i>	200+
<i>Started screeners</i>	41
<i>Completed screeners</i>	28
<i>Qualified candidates</i>	23
<i>Interviews scheduled</i>	18
Completed interviews	13

Thirteen participants completed one-on-one interviews, either online or over the phone. Each interview lasted 50-75 minutes. The interviews followed a semi-structured format with open-ended questions designed to encourage the participants to share their thoughts and experiences related to the studied topic. All participating tour operators design packages for group tours or customize itineraries for groups or FITs. These operators differ in business size, ranging from less than 10,000 to 100,000 tourists, and specialize in various types of tours, such as women-only tours, religious groups, environmentally responsible travels, or international trips. See Table III-2 for details. The broad range of samples provides valuable insights into the factors that influence tour operators' decisions to select secondary destinations for their tour itineraries.

Table III-2: Profile of Participating Tour Operators

Business Function		
<i>Design and wholesale public group tours</i>	7	53.85%
<i>Design and retail public group tours</i>	12	92.31%
<i>Customize tour itineraries for preformed/affinity groups</i>	8	61.54%
<i>Customize tour itineraries for FITs/private groups</i>	5	38.46%
<i>Operate its own escorted tours</i>	11	84.61%
<i>Inbound</i>	9	69.23%
<i>Outbound</i>	10	76.92%
<i>Domestic</i>	11	84.61%

Tour Size		
<i>Bus tours (typically 35+)</i>	10	76.92%
<i>Large groups (typically 16+)</i>	9	69.23%
<i>Small tours (typically 4-16)</i>	10	76.92%
<i>FIT tours (typically 1-6)</i>	5	38.46%

Office Location		
<i>USA</i>	12	92.31%
<i>Canada</i>	2	15.38%
<i>Outside of North America</i>	4	30.77%

Business Size in 2019		
<i>10,000 or less tourists</i>	6	46.15%
<i>10,001 to 50,000 tourists</i>	4	30.77%
<i>50,001 to 100,000 tourists</i>	3	23.08%

As shown in Table III-3, all interviewees, with fictitious names, possess 20 or more years of experience in the tourism industry. Nine of them are current CEOs or presidents, and seven are the founders or co-founders of their respective companies, showcasing their invaluable

expertise in the tour product development process. Moreover, several participating tour operators also have operations outside of North America, and two interviewees were stationed in London, U.K. and Kyoto, Japan, providing an international perspective to the research. The diversity of experience and geographical representation of the interviewees ensures a comprehensive insight into the factors that influence tour operators' decisions to select secondary destinations in their tour itineraries.

III.4.2 Data Analysis

Tourism products are a unique combination of services provided by different entities, such as transportation, accommodations, and entertainment. Tour operators who create these products do not possess any ownership of any of the individual services that are included. These services are non-exclusive and can be utilized by other tour operators or the general public. Tour operators act as intermediaries by promoting and selling tour products created by tourism suppliers and destinations while adding their values. This arrangement makes the products tour operators offer highly vulnerable to imitation, and there is little they can do to prevent such replication.

Thus, tour operators must continuously innovate and improve their itineraries to remain competitive and stand out. This involves providing top-quality services and engaging experiences. However, tour operators have limited control over the generation and provision of these services. They can only facilitate the creative and delivery process.

Table III-3 Study Interviewee Profile

Fictional Name:	Aaron	Betty	Charlie	Derek	Emma	Freddy	George	Henry	Ivy	Jenny	Katie	Lisa	Michael		
Business															
Design public tours	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	12	92.31%
Customize for preformed groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓					8	61.54%
Customize for private groups		✓	✓			✓						✓	✓	5	38.46%
Operate Escorted Tours	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			11	84.62%
Inbound	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	9	69.23%
Outbound	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	10	76.92%
Domestic	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	11	84.62%
Personal															
Tour Guide Experience	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	69.23%
Direct Contact with DMO	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		9	69.23%
Tourism Experience															
40-49 yrs								✓						1	7.69%
30-39 yrs	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓		8	61.54%
20-29 yrs			✓			✓				✓			✓	4	30.77%
Gender															
Female		✓			✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		6	46.15%
Male	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓					✓	7	53.85%

To account for the autonomous nature of tour products in a complex and dynamic tourism market, the study utilizes the *Thematic Analysis Method (TA)* to categorize interview transcripts based on themes represented by three main stakeholders (Holton, 1988). Specific attention was placed on identifying triggers that might lead to potential changes in secondary destinations in tour products.

- Destinations: experience for tourists and services to tour operators
- Tourists: preferences before and reactions after the trips
- Market: market trends, relationships among tour operators and destinations

Before the analysis, the interview transcriptions were sent to the participants to confirm their accuracy and enhance the credibility of the analysis. It is important to note that the study primarily focuses on secondary destination selection, a crucial component but not the sole aspect of tour product development. (Decrop, 1999).

III.5 Findings

III.5.1 Tour Product Development

The study reveals that the relationship between secondary destinations and tour operators is critical in tour product development. Secondary destinations rely on tour operators to attract tourists, while tour operators depend on secondary destinations to provide a feasible itinerary.

The selection of secondary destinations involves multiple factors, with logistics being the primary consideration. When designing tour itineraries, tour operators must take into account the travel distance and timing between major destinations. Many countries have regulations restricting bus drivers' driving hours, and tour operators must account for washroom breaks, meals, and overnight stays. Additionally, tour operators often include escorted tours or allow customers to explore and shop during long travel times. Choosing locations and activities at

these secondary destinations is an iterative process, with tour operators experimenting to find the most suitable options.

“An escorted tour will visit the main cities in each country. They may stop in certain smaller towns along the way because of logistics.” – Charlie

Tour operators aim to provide their customers with a comprehensive travel experience, and therefore, they strive to identify the best secondary destinations. Although customers may not be familiar with these destinations, they often enjoy them, as they are often the hidden gems of the tour and provide a unique and pleasant surprise.

“Those hidden gems of the attractions that we call fillers are usually the most memorable. [People] usually turn and say, ‘I didn't even know this existed. I didn't even know this was a thing.’ It became a very important part of the program.” – Emma

To be included in tour packages, destinations must have unique and compelling offers. Tour operators are expected to provide their customers with an engaging and meaningful travel experience, and therefore, they carefully select destinations that meet these criteria. The study finds that tour operators frequently add or replace secondary destinations and suppliers to improve customer experience and reduce costs. Continuous development and promotion of distinctive features are essential for destinations to remain competitive.

“We do try to incorporate some off-the-beaten-path destinations. But again, the key is that they have some kind of offering... As long as they have something unique, different, and special to offer, they will be golden.

That's what changes up stale itineraries in tours. I say stale, meaning that they're repetitive." – Betty

The study reveals that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a shift in the way people choose their travel destinations. Previously, many people selected a location based on sightseeing opportunities, but now more tourists are interested in activities they can participate in. They prioritize engaging experiences that allow them to be involved in their travel. In some cases, they may choose a destination based on the availability of certain activities rather than the location itself. Tour operators must adapt to this shift in demand and provide their customers with a range of engaging activities.

"When we're having dinner, have the chef come out, or somebody else come out and speak to the group, greet them, and then talk about the menu and how they source things. It gives them a connection to the meal much more than just good food." – Henry

"People want to see fall foliage. So long as we're creating and providing the experience for them that they want everything they envisioned New England in the fall to be, they don't necessarily need to know every one of those secondary destinations." – Betty

However, tour operators must also consider their customers' unique needs and travel styles when selecting destinations. For example, religious groups may have specific activities they want to do or avoid, and budget tourists may have different hotel and dining expectations than those on luxurious tours. Tour operators expect destinations to research their clientele

before offering any recommendations. Ultimately, the travel experience should be customized to each individual or group's specific requirements.

“We have to be selective and choose what we want to promote... We would expect [destinations] to have done some research on our business... it's about how you pair your products and destinations with the type of travel that we offer.” – Michael

Tour operators catering to large groups have to limit their destination options to those that can host busloads of people. The destinations and suppliers should be able to handle a considerable number of tourists, ensuring that the legal occupancy, number of bathrooms, and service capacity are adequate. Alongside this, logistical requirements include pre-check-in by groups at hotels, express group admission at attractions, group menus, and prompt service at restaurants. In addition, the local communities should support tourism, as not all communities welcome large groups of tourists due to concerns about traffic, land conservation, and other potential issues.

“We're bringing 40 to 45 people on a big motorcoach. Although there are lavatories on the coaches, they still need to be able to have lavatory facilities for the group. So, it's all those sorts of things that we have to take into consideration when we go to any destination, big or small. The key is that they know how to accommodate a group, and they want to accommodate a group.” – Betty

“[The museum] arranges an in-language tour guide for our groups when we request. We don’t have to wait in the general admission area. All these come into play, which makes the stopover more successful.” – Derek

Participants of the study have emphasized group rates and pricing by experience, as group tours often spend less time at attractions than regular visitors. For bus tours, suppliers should provide complimentary or discounted services to the tour leaders and drivers.

“If you’re just coming to shop, maybe there’s no charge. There might be a little gate fee for something. If you’re adding on a step-on guide or a little bit more information, it’s an experience. If you’re doing a little bit longer behind the scenes, that’s another program. So, you’d have to really cater to it and not say this is the price, and that’s it. As tour operators, we can steer our customers in a certain way.” – Emma

“But a lot of [suppliers] don’t see the value in [tour leaders]. We don’t do it on purpose, but when we are treated poorly, [our customers] are fed off it.” – Katie

Tour operators expect destinations to treat their customers like VIPs, regardless of whether they travel in large groups or as FITs, giving them a sense of value and significance. This is particularly important to tourists who have physical limitations or identify as LGBTQ+. It is imperative that suppliers be inclusive, and providing great personalized experiences to tour operators’ customers can potentially offer a significant competitive advantage to both the tour operators and the destinations, contributing to overall service quality enhancement.

“For example, in [destination x]... one boat tour takes 45 minutes to walk in and 45 minutes to walk out...[but] many people can’t walk that 2-hour distance. So, we hire a separate bus and guide to... drive up to the parking lot, [let the people] get off, get on the boat, have the experience, and then get off and get back on the bus. So, both are great experiences.” – Aaron

To stay competitive, tour operators must adjust their products to better suit the needs of their target customers. When a product underperforms, the tour operator may choose to discontinue it altogether or modify the itinerary to better appeal to their intended audience. Conversely, when a product is successful, tour operators will often create multiple versions of the tour with minor experiential tweaks to cater to a wider range of groups. This approach is particularly critical when providing customized tours for various travel agents, private tours, or FIT clients, as each group may have different interests, travel styles, budgets, and timelines.

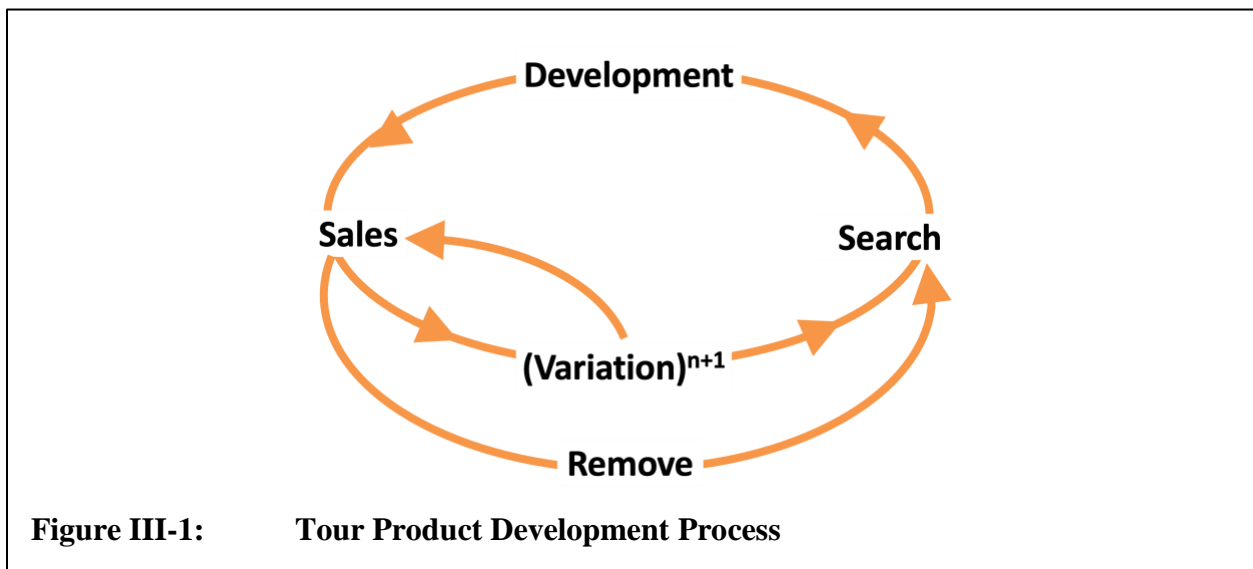
“We don’t get major changes normally as long as it’s all going okay... But if things are not working, we’ll change them. Over the years, the tours just get tweaked a little bit... Instead of going to the Adirondack Museum, we go to Fort Ticonderoga. It is because the Adirondack Museum closed after October.” – Katie

The process of secondary destination selection in tour product development is practically a combination of research and development, coupled with trial and error. Tour operators strive to provide the best experience to their customers and, as such, engage in extensive research to identify the most appropriate secondary destinations, taking into consideration a range of factors. Once these destinations have been identified, tour operators make arrangements with suppliers

before putting the tours on the market or, for customized tours, sending them to clients for approval.

“A lot of times, it’s just logistical. Maybe some places are easier to include than others... it’s trial and error. We may include something, and then we will get enough complaints about it that we drop it and add something else instead.” – Freddy

It is imperative to acknowledge that the travel itineraries of some products may require revision for a plethora of reasons, including supplier closure, seasonal changes, and road closures, among others. Consequently, it is indispensable for tour operators to manifest flexibility and adaptability in their approach to product development and modification, ensuring continued success and customer satisfaction.



This phenomenon bears resemblance to software application releases. After undergoing extensive research, development, and testing, the product is officially launched. If the product garners favorable reception, the developer may discontinue it. If it accomplishes its goals, the

app developer may create various versions for different platforms - namely, laptops, tablets, and mobiles. The developer must update the product with bug fixes, new device compatibility, additional features, and so forth. Consequently, over time, various users may be utilizing different versions of the app, consequent to some users updating the app and some abstaining from doing so.

III.5.2 Tour Product Life Cycle

The study reveals that tour businesses drive high loyalty through trust and customer satisfaction. Tour operators and agents often have loyal customers who keep coming back to them. If the customer is happy with their first vacation, they tend to trust and stick with the same operator or agency. This is similar to finding a good barber – once you find one you like, you tend to go back. You may even adjust your schedule based on their availability. Because of brand loyalty, tour operators must continuously create and change their products to keep their customers interested.

“The travel businesses drive a high level of loyalty. I think there needs to be trust. If the arrangements go well for that first vacation, it instills trust between the customer and the operator or the agency. The advice, the value for money, and the trust that it brings, I think, are very powerful... [If they are] satisfied with what’s been offered. They would not want to jeopardize that... [They] want to get it right.” – Michael

“It is a habitual thing... If a tourist is happy with his last trip with this tour operator, he will continue to use them unless they don’t offer what he

wants. And that's why tour operators must create and change their products continuously. They are selling to the same customers.” – Derek

The process of creating an entirely new product is a multifaceted endeavor that demands a considerable amount of effort. When a tour is well received, tour operators tend to avoid making significant changes to it. Nonetheless, they frequently substitute secondary destinations or experiences in existing packages, according to the participants in the study. This is often necessitated by circumstances such as the unavailability of a facility, overcrowding of an attraction, price increases, or service changes. Moreover, it is imperative for tour operators to refresh their product offerings periodically to remain competitive and relevant.

“The new product only represents less than 10% of what I do every year. Because... I have to do a ton of work to put up a new tour. [As] a tour operator that's been in business for a number of years, we've got our tried and true tours. We would tweak them based on new things that come on line... We're not going to mess with them a whole lot.” – Jenny

“Sometimes customers want to go back to that area, but they don't want the same exact trip. Different secondary options are very important to make them interested in the destinations. So, it's very important to us.” – Emma

One of the distinctive characteristics of tour products is their composite nature, which involves a blend of services provided by several entities, such as transport, accommodation, and entertainment. However, the tour operators responsible for creating these products do not possess any ownership over these constituent services. Such services are not proprietary and are widely

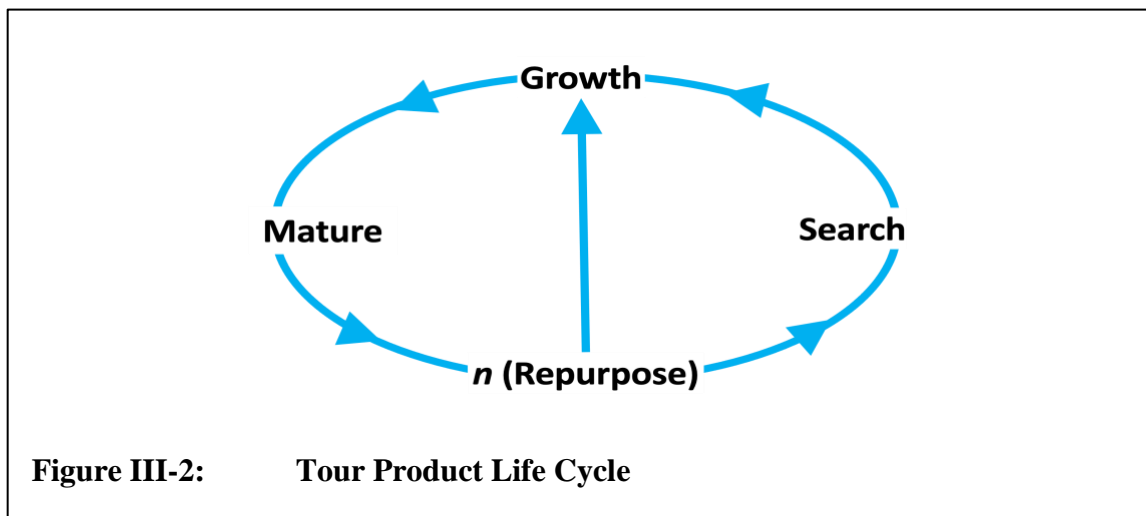
available to other tour operators, their business clients, and even the general public.

Consequently, tour products are susceptible to imitation, and tour operators are powerless to prevent such replication. Therefore, tour operators must be committed to continuous innovation and improvement of their tour itineraries to remain competitive in this market and differentiate themselves from their rivals.

“When multiple tour operators take the same route, their offers tend to have slightly different itineraries. But the main attractions are always the same. From Los Angeles to Las Vegas, it would always be the Grand Canyon. The difference could be activities in Las Vegas for customers to choose from. So, it is a competition for creativity.” – Derek

“So, you have competition from your direct competitors, and... from your own clients, which is sad. They’re using you to search the resources to put things together because they don’t know. Then they go around and try to use your supplier.” – Charlie

Efficient product management is essential for tour operators to ensure profitability and viability throughout the life cycle of their products. Changes in consumer demand, destination options, and market competition may require removing a tour product from the shelf. However, with the addition or replacement of secondary destinations or experiences, tour products can be refreshed and given a new lease of life. This makes the life cycle of a tour product different from the standard model, which comprises four stages: Start, Grow, Harvest, and Terminate.



However, life cycles may be perceived differently, depending on the product type. For instance, a mobile phone has a distinct life cycle, and each model has its own life cycle. Similarly, most tour products tweak the itineraries of the scheduled bus tours every year. Nevertheless, when a tour is stagnated, or there is a new market trend, tour operators may completely change the secondary destination to another location. This would refresh products to attract even the customers who have taken the "outdated" tours with the same primary destinations.

Nevertheless, even when a tour operator decides to retire a product from their scheduled tours, they would still offer it to customers of customized groups. The product may also be repositioned for different geographic markets or target different tourists with different interests, budgets or such. It is noteworthy that a tour product is never entirely obsolete unless one of its constituent components—primary destinations—is no longer available.

III.5.3 Dialectic Relationship among Tourism Entities

The development of tour products is an integral aspect of tour operations, particularly for those specializing in customizing tours for groups and FITs. However, this process is often

resource-intensive and time-consuming, presenting challenges for many tour operators. The vast number of suppliers in the market can be overwhelming, and it may be challenging to find the right products that meet the specific needs of their clients. As such, tour operators often turn to DMOs for guidance and ideas, as they possess a significant amount of knowledge about the destinations they represent, including asset availabilities and the latest activity updates.

“We are regional experts; however, there are some areas like those I mentioned that we might not be fully aware of anything new going on. So, that’s where we rely heavily on the DMOs.” – Betty

Destinations must provide tour operators with comprehensive background information about the place, including its history, people, culture, and cuisine, among other aspects. This information enables tour operators to communicate the unique selling points of the destinations to their customers and prospects and for their tour guides to narrate engaging stories during the trip. False claims or misrepresentations can lead to customer dissatisfaction and create problems for the tour operators, who will be held accountable by their clients. This can negatively affect the reputation of both the tour operator and the destination.

“Having your websites up to date... and accurate. We use that information to sell our trip... Be realistic. Because then [my customers] will come to me saying, ‘You told us that we were going to see picturesque. I saw this guy’s backyard... [and] political signs.’ So, it’s really important that they sell their attraction or facility as what it is.” – Emma

DMOs play a crucial role in the tourism industry by facilitating partnerships among various authorities, stakeholders, and professionals in their defined geographic area. In the study,

participants urge tourism suppliers to work closely with DMOs and other suppliers, including iconic attractions, to share resources, knowledge, and expertise. This is necessary for addressing the complex challenges faced by secondary destinations and the tour operators' planning. Partnerships among multiple DMOs can also be beneficial by joint efforts to make larger areas more attractive to tour operators.

“[The Corning Museum of Glass] has all these demonstrations. You can buy glass from artisans at the end of the tour. You can make your own frame out of glass. They’ve got a lot of things to offer there. There’s no other reason to stop in Corning except the Corning Museum. But it’s a good enough reason. What Corning gets out of that from us is not just the visit to the Corning Museum. Because of where they’re located and where we need to go, we stay in Corning for a night... [Our customers also] have a little bit of free time, which means they get to go into the downtown area and poke around a little bit. So, there’s a tremendous amount of economic benefit... the Corning Museum was not the only benefactor of our stopping.” – Jenny

The business of tour operators is to sell destinations, which requires providing unique and engaging experiences to motivate tourists to visit. Local events or festivals, such as the Taiwan Lantern Festival, the Carnival in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and the Coachella in the Colorado Desert of Southern California, United States, can give tour operators more assets to sell and give customers unforgettable experiences.

“Let me give you one example: the Christmas light in Virginia Beach during Christmas. Before we first promoted it, people didn’t know what it

was. It was a mystery for them. However, when the bus drove on the boardwalk, they saw the wonderful Christmas lights displayed on the beach and the wall, and they loved it. It was so fabulous. And they would tell their friends and the word spread. People want to come to see it either with the tour or drive themselves down to Virginia Beach to experience the Christmas light display.” – Derek

Tour operators often have unique travel experience ideas based on their customers' interests, but implementing these ideas requires the involvement of multiple key stakeholders. Through collaboration, destinations can effectively implement new and innovative travel experiences that meet customers' needs and contribute to tourism growth in the destination.

“Let’s say a tour operator gives [a destination] an idea, say, love locks. If they can find a place to put the love locks and work with each other to promote that, it will be a win-win for everyone: the tourists, the tour operators, and the destination... But a tour operator cannot dictate where to put the love lock. Only the DMO has the local connections to make it happen. It may have to be approved by the town or the county. It may also involve maintenance and insurance.” – Derek

Tourism products are essentially a combination of third-party offerings organized strategically to provide convenience to tourists. Despite the existence of dialectical conflicts among destinations, it is essential that none should suppress the other. Through collaboration between destinations and suppliers, tour operators can be provided with more comprehensive options that are both attractive and convenient. The effective amalgamation of tourism products

can result in the creation of a more holistic tourism experience for tourists, thereby contributing to the growth and development of the tourism industry.

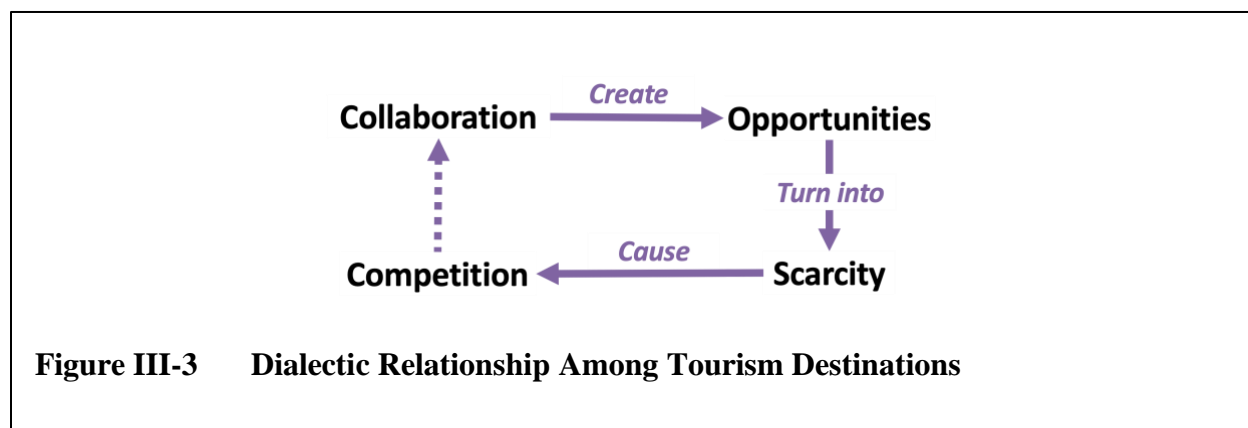
“You have to partner and collaborate with the other destinations around you to make yourself appealing because no one’s coming to the small destination just for a small destination. Collaboration is huge. You don’t look for one destination to stand out. A rising tide raises all boats. It’s not about you standing out from everyone else. It’s about all of you looking good. You’ll get more business because more people are coming.” –

Henry

While there may be conflicts between destinations and among suppliers as they compete for their spot on tour itineraries, it is vital for them to collaborate to create a more comprehensive package for tour operators. For example, a tour operator might organize a one-day trip that includes hiking, a cooking workshop or wine tasting at lunch, a museum visit that ends at souvenir shops, dinner with a live show, and an optional dance or painting class afterward. The package may offer a choice of various suppliers who provide similar activities but different experiences for tour operators to mix and match. Such programs require extensive coordination, which is typically initiated and managed by DMOs.

“Somebody can come to us and look at the itinerary that I’ve already built and say, ‘You could easily slip this in on Day 3 and add this experience for your clients.’ If I think it’s a good fit for my clients, I will do it. And I think most tour operators will tell you the same thing.” – Jenny

A rising tide raises all boats. When the general economy is doing well, everyone benefits. Partnering with nearby destinations can improve the appeal of the entire area. It's similar to how a company team works together to attract business externally, but they still compete internally for power and resources.



It is worth noting that the inter-organizational dynamics in the tourism industry are complex. Not only are destinations and suppliers in collaboration-competition relationships with each other, but tour operators also operate in a similar manner. Tour operators are not only competitors but also clients of each other. By collaborating, they can pool resources and share knowledge to offer their customers more comprehensive and attractive packages. This not only benefits the tour operators themselves but also enhances the overall destination experience for tourists.

For instance, if a tour operator based in Las Vegas wants a Spain tour for their customers, they would typically ask a Spain-based *Receptive Tour Operator (RTO)* based in Spain for an itinerary. The Spanish operator would then take care of the group under the Las Vegas operator's brand name when they arrive in Spain. Similarly, suppose a Spanish tour operator has a client visiting Las Vegas for a convention and wants to set up independent seminars and a tour. In that case, they may reach out to a Las Vegas RTO for recommendations.

In conclusion, the tourism industry relies heavily on collaboration between destinations, suppliers, and tour operators. Such cooperation fosters innovation, offers more holistic packages, and ultimately leads to tourism growth in a destination. By acknowledging dialectical conflicts and working together to resolve them, stakeholders in the tourism industry can create a positive-zero effect, benefitting everyone involved.

III.5.4 Evolution of Tour Products

The tour operator business aims to provide tourists with an exceptional and unforgettable experience. Although it may seem easier to focus on selling tours to popular destinations that are well-known and loved by tourists, sustainability is a crucial factor that tour operators must consider. Overcrowding at popular destinations can lead to negative consequences such as congested airports, overpriced lodging, crowded restaurants, lengthy queues at attractions, and heavy traffic. Therefore, it is imperative to distribute tourism more equitably, ensuring that tourists are dispersed to lesser-known destinations to mitigate these problems.

“It’s just too many people. We have to find a way to spread that out. It’s not that you’re not going to Paris to see the Eiffel Tower... But we could find a way for you not to spend all 8 days in Paris. You spend 4 days... [on] other experiences that take the burden off of Paris, and it shares the wealth and the financial gain with these other smaller communities, and they have a lot to offer.” – Jenny

“We’re trying to get people to go to central Italy, such as Umbria. It’s beautiful... But people don’t know Umbria... People know Sicily, Rome, and Venice, which are great destinations. But we can start in Rome, travel

to Umbria, and spend time there. So, this secondary destination is as beautiful as or more beautiful than Rome, but we still need people to come through Rome because that's what they know.” – George

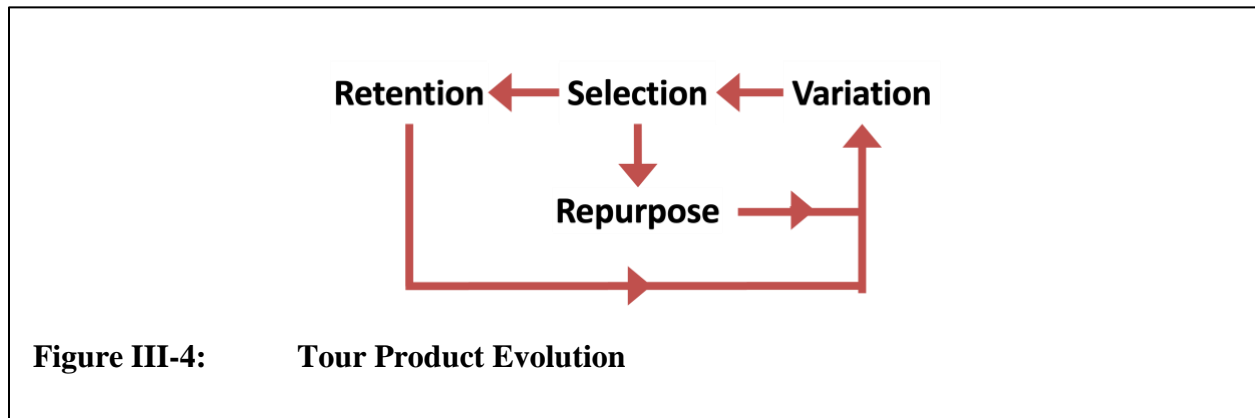
There are also destinations that tourists may have their hearts set on visiting but may no longer be suitable or safe to visit when they are ready to embark on their journey. This could be due to their proximity to war zones, the impact of natural disasters, or other travel advisory warnings. Furthermore, climate change has significantly affected some destinations in recent years. For instance, the Maldives is slowly sinking, the body of water in the Dead Sea has lost one-third of its surface area, and the reef system in the Great Barrier Reef, Australia, is dying from heat stress and bleaching events. Hence, tour operators must consider these factors when planning tours.

“We have to plan for uncertain weather, diseases, and political factors. My clients wanted to go to Turkey, but there was an earthquake. Then, they wanted to go to Israel, but it was at war. Then, they wanted to go to China, but they didn't have the visas. There are also other economic and technical factors that may make them unable to go.” – Lisa

In addition to sustainability, market trends, aging population, economic stress, and events such as the COVID-19 pandemic change the tourism industry dramatically, tour products certainly would be impacted. Together with the product life cycle, tour products evolve over time.

A regular evolution process involves variations, selections, and retention among entities in a population due to competition for scarce resources. In the context of tour products, they also

go through a selection process. However, each product has countless variations that can be repurposed for different markets. Over time, some secondary destinations learn and grow, and even turn to a must-go stopover. Some even turn into primary destinations. Iceland is one of the examples that multiple study participants brought up during their interviews.



Tour products are unique and complex, combining others' tourism products with a revitalizable life. Components are offered by competing destinations that collaborate for better opportunities. Tour products can be created, sold to, and delivered by tour operators, as tour operators can be clients of each other depending on their business type in different geographic locations. This makes the product evolution extremely complicated. Ultimately, it evolves based on market trends based on tourists' interests and product offerings.

III.6 Discussion

III.6.1 *Tour Product Development vs Organizational Changes*

The study shows that developing a tour product involves a complex interplay of various change models, including teleology, dialectic, life cycle, and evolution. Although these models may seem similar to the Typology of Theories of Organizational Development and Change, they are actually distinct from it (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995).

The teleology theory (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995) perceives development as a cyclical process that involves goal setting, implementation, evaluation, and adjustment. In the context of tour product development, the primary objective is to create a profitable tour product. The tour operator conducts extensive research on potential destinations, creates the product, launches it in the market, and evaluates its performance. If the tour sales fail to achieve the desired objective, the tour operator must repeat the entire cycle. On the other hand, if the itinerary is successful, the tour operator is likely to create more versions tailored to different tourist groups.

The life-cycle model depicts the process of change as progressing through a necessary sequence of stages, including start, growth, harvest, and termination. The research findings indicate that tour products undergo the same basic stages: product launch, sale growth, and stagnation; however, tour operators do not terminate their well-received products. Instead, they repurpose them for other markets and groups. They would continue to do so as long as there is still demand for the core component of the product.


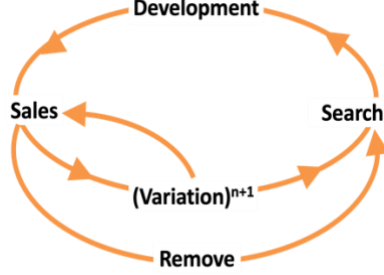
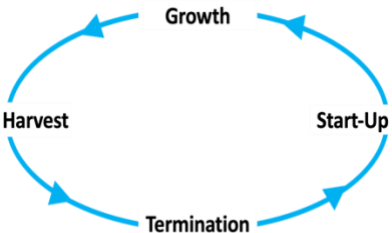
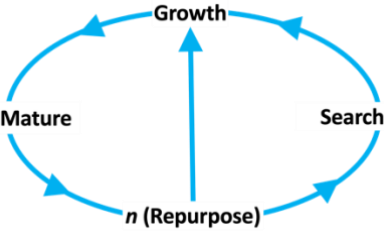
Hegel's dialectical theory entail conflicting views between different entities lead to a synthesis that becomes the primary argument for the following cycle of dialectical progression (Forster, 1993; Hegel, 1997; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). This cycle continues as opposing views collide, generating new ideas through confrontation and conflict. In the context of tour product development, destinations and suppliers collaborate as a group for opportunities (thesis), and they compete (antithesis) for a piece of the opportunities if there is not enough for every group member to have a fair piece. Technically, synthesis causes conflict in this process, not the other way around as in Hegel's model (Hegel, 1997).


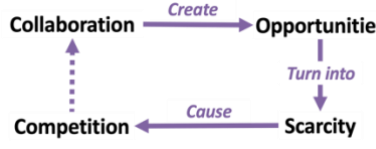

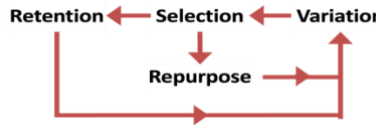
The evolutionary model is a process that involves variation, selection, and retention among entities in a population, which is driven by competition for scarce environmental

resources (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Similarly, tour products compete for tourists and offer a wide range of products tailored to different interests and requirements. There is no single tour product that is universally considered the best. The best fit for a tourist depends on their individual needs and specifications. Tour products will continue to evolve at varying degrees and speeds in different markets.

Table III-4 provides a summary of the variances between organizational change theories and tour product development models.

Table III-4: Organizational Changes vs Tour Product Development

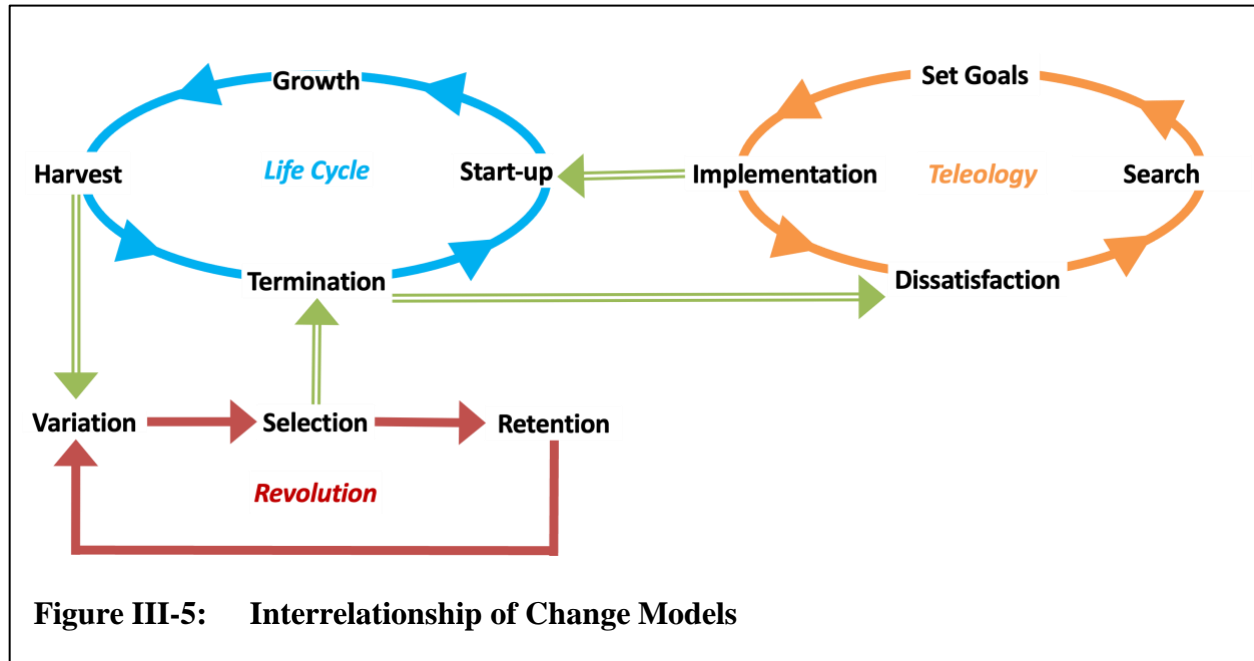
Typology of Theories of Organizational Changes (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995)	Cause of Deviation	Tour Product Development & Evolution
<p>Teleology</p> 	<p>Tour products are updated regardless of its performance. Changes are made to cater to different travelers.</p>	
<p>Life Cycle</p> 	<p>When tour products stagnate in the mass market, they could be used in other markets or for other travelers.</p>	

Typology of Theories of Organizational Changes (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995)	Cause of Deviation	Tour Product Development & Evolution
<p>Dialectic</p>  <p>The diagram shows 'Thesis' at the top right, 'Antithesis' at the bottom right, and 'Conflict' in the center. Arrows point from Thesis and Antithesis towards Conflict. From Conflict, an arrow points to 'Synthesis' on the left. A feedback loop arrow goes from Synthesis back to Thesis.</p>	<p>Destinations collaborate to create opportunities for all. Conflicts arise when opportunities become scarce.</p>	 <p>The diagram shows 'Collaboration' on the left and 'Opportunities' on the right, connected by a solid arrow labeled 'Create'. Below 'Opportunities' is 'Scarcity', connected by a solid arrow labeled 'Turn into'. Below 'Scarcity' is 'Competition', connected by a solid arrow labeled 'Cause'. A dashed vertical arrow points from 'Competition' up to 'Collaboration'.</p>
<p>Evolution</p>  <p>The diagram shows 'Retention' on the left, 'Selection' in the center, and 'Variation' on the right. Arrows point from Selection to Retention and from Variation to Selection. A feedback loop arrow goes from Retention back to Variation.</p>	<p>Tour itineraries are replicated, modified and repurposed by tour operators worldwide.</p>	 <p>The diagram shows 'Retention' on the left, 'Selection' in the center, and 'Variation' on the right. Arrows point from Selection to Retention and from Variation to Selection. A feedback loop arrow goes from Retention back to Variation. Below 'Selection' is 'Repurpose', with a solid arrow pointing from Repurpose to Variation.</p>

III.6.2 Interrelationship of the Four Models

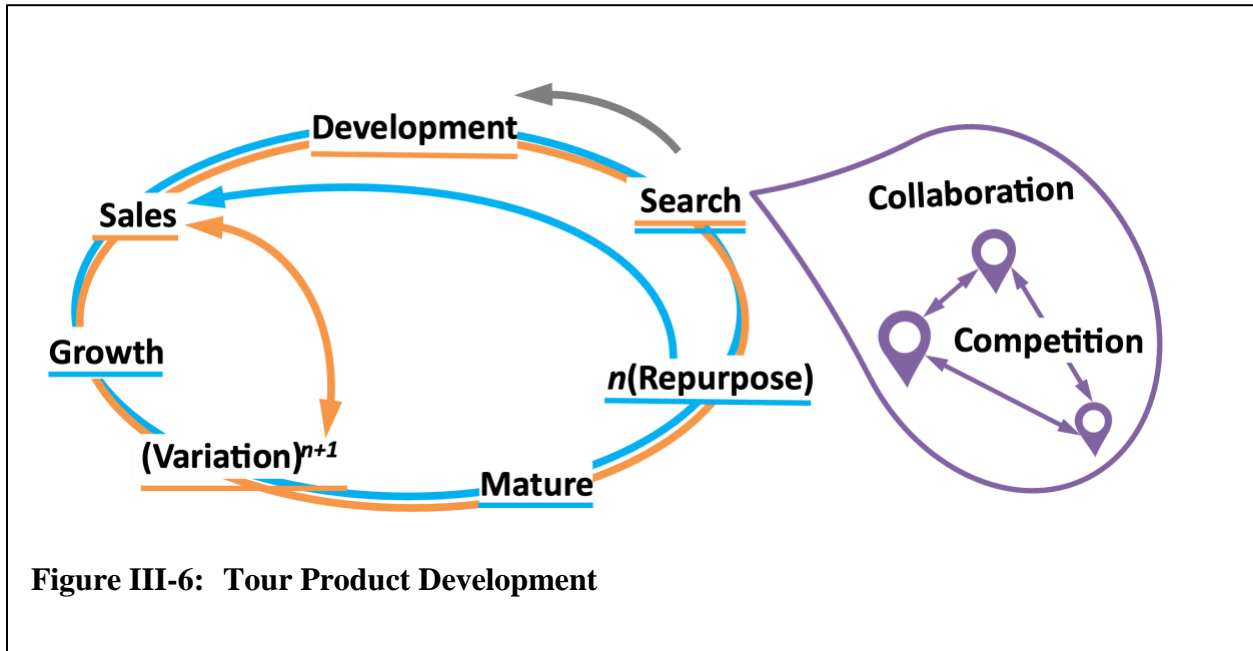
According to [Van de Ven and Poole \(1995\)](#), development processes are influenced by various actors who act simultaneously on different aspects, each contributing to the overall momentum of the process. Over time, other factors come into play, leading to a complex and multi-layered process. Therefore, relying on a single model to explain the process may lead to oversimplification and neglect of other crucial aspects of the change process.

The four models of change are closely interrelated. Teleology’s goal implementation may initiate a product life cycle, which may later result in dissatisfaction after termination. And that the product is terminated in its life cycle after it is not selected to be retained during the revolution ([Van de Ven & Sun, 2011](#)).



In their study, [Van de Ven and Garud \(1993\)](#) provide an insightful analysis of the product development process of cochlear implants using the principles of organizational change theories. The authors identify three distinct models that govern the process of product development in the firm: a teleological process in the R&D lab, a life-cycle model in the regulatory affairs department, which focuses on FDA approval of the product, and an evolutionary process in the healthcare industry as the product progresses. See Figure III-5.

This research further expands the application of these models to product development in tourism. Tour products also undergo R&D during the teleological process. These products are created by combining various tourism products crafted by destinations in dialectic circumstances. Each tour product will have a unique life cycle depending on its performance. These products evolve with the tourism industry.



The diagram depicted in Figure III-6 serves as a comprehensive overview of the tour product development process, which intricately weaves together the four change models. To amplify their attractiveness among tour operators, tourism suppliers in secondary destinations must engage in collaborative efforts while simultaneously ensuring competitiveness by offering tourists optimal experiences. In this regard, tour operators are continuously updating their products. If a particular product exhibits prowess, it may create more variations to cater to diverse groups with varying travel preferences. If the local market for a specific tour is stagnant, tour operators may eliminate it from the scheduled bus tour but retain it in their group customization categories. Tour products are unique in that they may be revived with minor modifications to the itinerary or marketing message, ultimately appealing to tourists who have previously taken the tour.

III.7 Conclusion

The study employs the TA method to identify the factors that influence tour operators' decisions regarding selecting secondary destinations for their tour itineraries. Furthermore, the

study investigates the triggers that lead tour operators to change their tour products. The findings reveal that the tour product development process involves teleology, dialectic, life cycle, and evolution, which are distinct from the four models in the typology of Theories of Organizational Change (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995).

Given the intricate nature of tour products, the study utilizes all four models to outline the development process, a novel application of the theories. As such, the study invites further research on the tour product development, as well as the possible applications of the Theories of Organizational Change across different product development processes (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995).

Moreover, the study provides practitioners with valuable insights into the factors that trigger tour operators' decisions to change their tour products, specifically the change of secondary destinations and experiences on the itineraries. This information can assist destination stakeholders in better strategizing their approach towards tour operators and considering their inclusion in tour products.

It is, however, important to note that the present study primarily focuses on secondary destination selection, which is a crucial component but not the sole aspect of tour product development. Therefore, future research may extend the scope of the study to encompass other aspects of tour product development.

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IV RESEARCH CONCLUSION

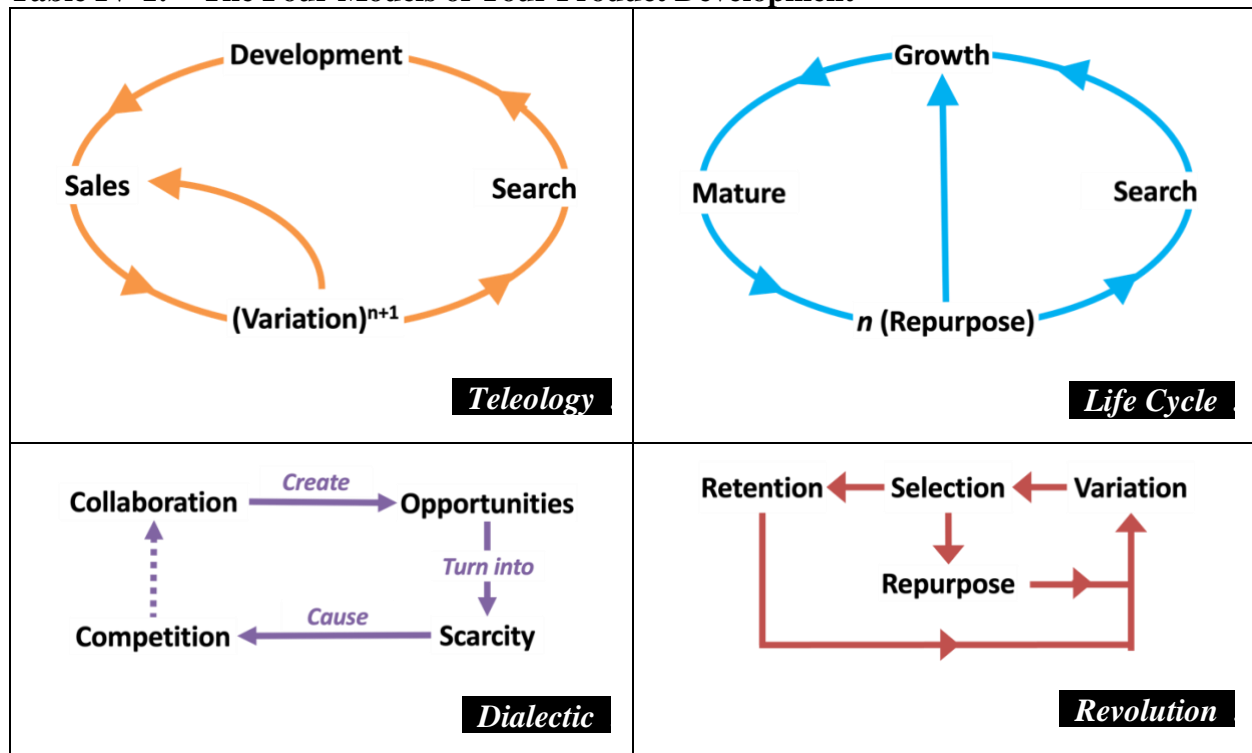
IV.1 Result and Discussion

IV.1.1 *Tour Product Development & Evolution*

The tourism industry consists of various components that come together to offer tourists a unique and memorable experience. Tour products are a combination of services provided by different entities, including transportation, accommodation, and entertainment. Tour operators who create these products do not own any of the individual services included. They act as intermediaries by promoting and selling tour products made by tourism suppliers and destinations while adding their own value. These services are not exclusive and can be acquired by other tour operators or the general public.

This arrangement leaves tour products susceptible to being copied, which poses a challenge for tour operators who are unable to prevent such replication. As a result, tour operators need to constantly innovate and enhance their tour itineraries to stay ahead of the competition. This requires them to offer exceptional services and engaging experiences. However, tour operators have limited authority over the production and delivery of these services, and can only facilitate the creative and delivery process.

This study reveals that developing a tour product involves a complex interplay of various change models, including teleology, dialectic, life cycle, and evolution. These models are distinct from the four motors of the typology of Theories of Organizational Change ([Van de Ven & Poole, 1995](#)).

Table IV-1: The Four Models of Tour Product Development

The teleology theory suggests that change occurs in a goal-setting, implementation, evaluation, and adjustment cycle (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Tour operators aim to create profitable tour products by researching, developing the product, launching it, and evaluating its performance. They make changes regardless of the sales performance. If the product performs well, they make tweaks for improvement or create more variations. If the product doesn't do well, they may make more changes to the itineraries or try it in different markets. With many components in a product and tourists having various preferences, there are many options to make it right if they insist on trying.

The life cycle of a tour product never ends. It undergoes stages of product launch, sales growth, stagnation, refresh and back to product launch (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Tour operators update products by replacing or adding new secondary destinations or experiences and

continue to sell as long as the primary destinations are in demand. Instead of being removed entirely, old products are repurposed for different groups or markets.

In dialectical models of change, conflicts arise between opposing entities, resulting in synthesis for the next cycle of progression (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). The study shows that while destinations and suppliers compete for a place in tour products, they must collaborate to attract tour operators to bring tourists to their area first. Afterward, they compete for a spot in individual products. Unlike the standard dialectical model, the synthesis doesn't turn into an antithesis for another round of conflict. More synthesis or not enough of it leads to conflict to compete.

The evolutionary model involves entities in a population competing for scarce environmental resources through variation, selection, and retention (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Similarly, tour products compete for tourists, and the best fit depends on individual requirements. Tour products evolve at varying rates and degrees in different markets.

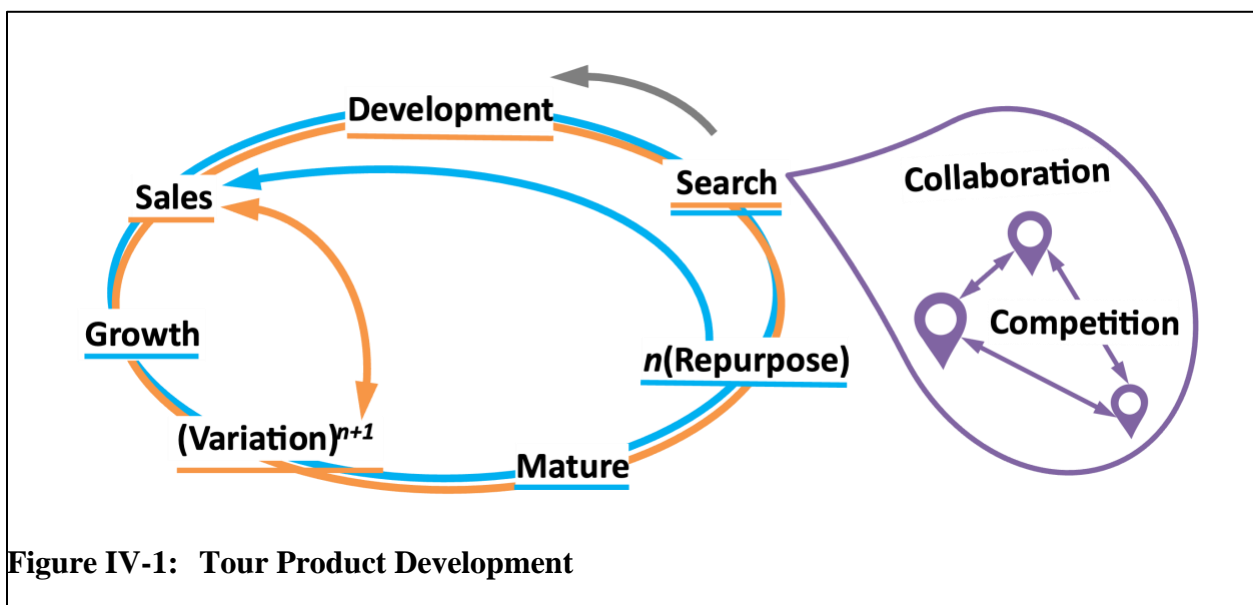


Figure IV-1: Tour Product Development

This study delves into applying four distinct organizational change theories within the realm of tour product development, a novel application of the theories. Figure IV-1 presents a comprehensive overview of the intricate tour product development process, which interconnects the four change models seamlessly. During the teleological process, tour products undergo extensive research and development. The process involves the amalgamation of various tourism products offered by disparate destinations, often amid dialectic circumstances. The life cycle of each tour product hinges on its performance, and such products undergo evolution alongside the tourism industry over time.

IV.1.2 Factors Affect Tour Operators' Decisions

A strong relationship between secondary destinations and tour operators is essential to the success of both parties. Tour operators rely on secondary destinations to provide a complete itinerary, and secondary destinations depend on tour operators to attract tourists. This interdependence is crucial for the optimal utilization of tourism resources and the generation of economic benefits for both sides.

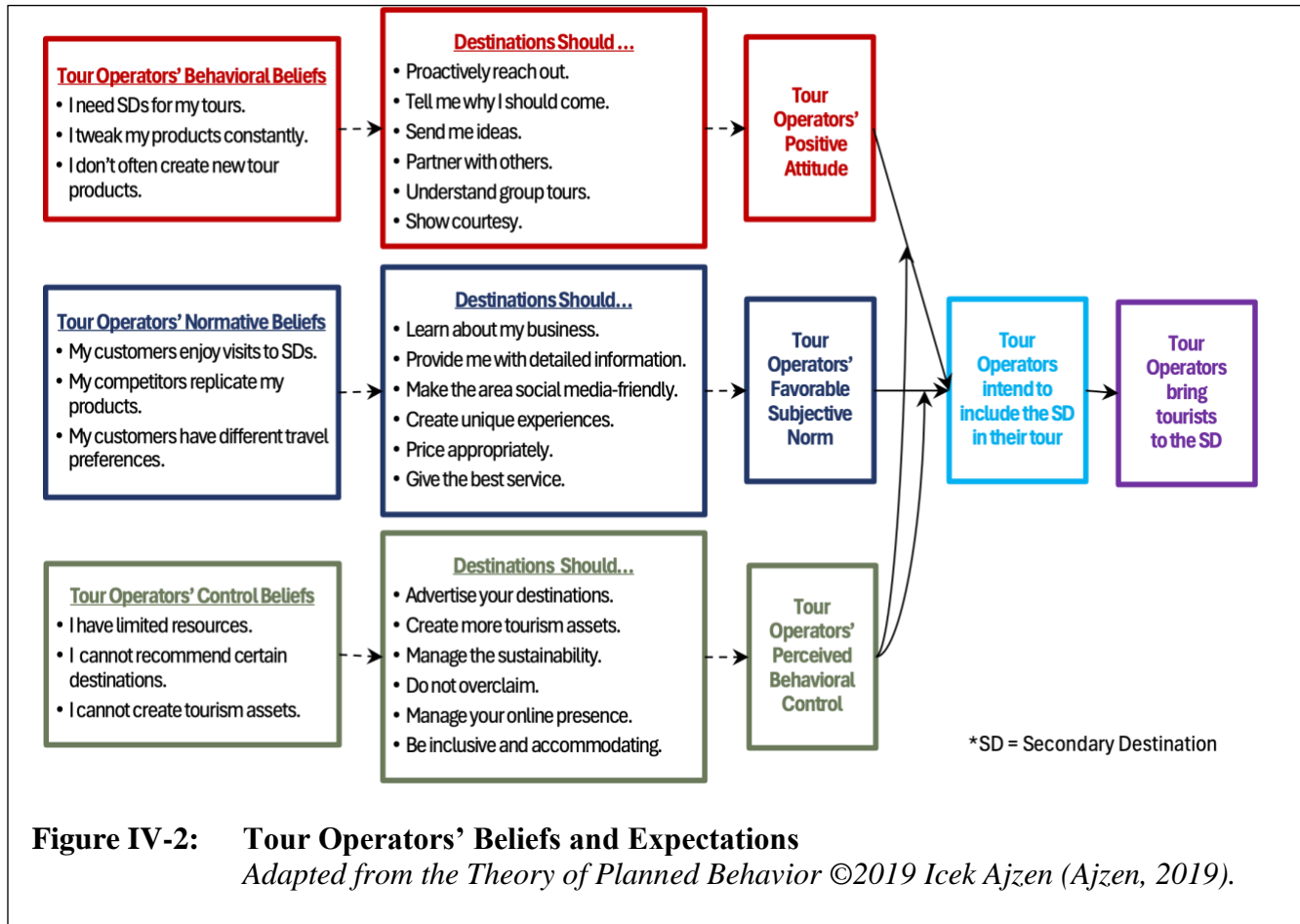
Using the Theory of Planned Behavior as the framework (Ajzen, 2019; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977; Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992), the study provides a detailed analysis of the cognitive mechanisms underlying tour product development decisions. The qualitative analysis of TPB's constructs - behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and perceived behavioral control - reveals how third parties can influence tour operators' decisions by deconstructing these constructs.

The study extensively explores behavioral beliefs to understand tour operators' intrinsic motivations when considering secondary destinations. These motivations can either encourage or

discourage the inclusion of secondary destinations in tour products. The study identifies crucial business imperatives that drive such decisions, such as the need for uniqueness in a saturated market and their expectations from destinations.

Normative beliefs are analyzed to understand the social and market pressures that influence tour operators. The study reveals how operators' perceptions of customer preferences, industry standards, and competitive positioning influence their inclinations to include or exclude secondary destinations. The subjective norms reflect external expectations and internalized industry benchmarks, indicating that decisions are not made in isolation but are responses to the broader tourism ecosystem.

Control beliefs are examined to uncover the extent of tour operators' perceived influence over the inclusion of secondary destinations. The findings indicate that tour operators often feel their choices are limited by the actions and initiatives of destinations' stakeholders. This suggests that while tour operators design their tour products, the building blocks of these products are often supplied by and contingent upon the collaborative efforts and resources of these stakeholders.



This investigation offers a strategic understanding of how third-party stakeholders can leverage TPB constructs to influence tour operators' decisions. It suggests that by knowing precisely what shapes tour operators' attitudes (behavioral beliefs), what pressures they perceive from the market (normative beliefs), and what they consider can facilitate (control beliefs), interventions can be tailored to suit these dimensions, enhancing the prospects of secondary destinations in the competitive tourism market.

In a boarder sense, the study demonstrates how the TPB framework can be used to navigate and influence complex business decisions. It provides a blueprint for strategic interventions in tour product development and other areas of business decision-making. This qualitative interpretation of TPB not only expands the theory's applicability in academic

discourse but also provides actionable insights for practitioners aiming to shape tour operators' product development strategies.

IV.1.3 Best Practices to Influence Secondary Destination Selection

According to research findings, there are several interventions that positively influence tour operators' decisions when selecting a secondary destination. Figure IV-2 highlights some of the best practices for these interventions.

Secondary destinations must provide tour operators with compelling reasons to visit and high-quality promotional material and information. They should also be creative in offering tourists unique experiences and moments worth sharing on social media. Suppliers must be equipped to accommodate the needs of tour operators' customers, particularly bus tourists and those with special needs.

Collaboration between suppliers in secondary destinations, DMOs and nearby iconic attractions is key to success. The study emphasizes the need to create tourism assets. Destinations should organize local festivals and events to give tour operators more reasons to sell. FAM (familiarization) tours must allow tour operators to experience how their customers will be treated.

Popular destinations are created through marketing efforts. Secondary destinations should, at least, maintain a decent online presence, especially reviews on third-party platforms, to attract tourists who research travel ideas and destination selections and verify tour operators' recommendations.

The success of the partnership between tour operators and destinations is reliant upon mutual efforts and cooperation. Destinations should strive to meet the needs and expectations of

tour operators to ensure a mutually beneficial and sustainable relationship. By doing so, they can improve the overall quality and appeal of tour products to tourists.

IV.2 Contribution and Future Research

Using the Theory of Planned Behavior as the backbone framework (Ajzen, 1985, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977; Madden et al., 1992) and thematic analysis (Holton, 1988), the study identifies the factors that influence tour operators' decisions about selecting secondary destinations for their tour products. It demonstrates that TPB can be used to guide product development processes, which is a new qualitative application of the theory. By analyzing TPB constructs, the study highlights how secondary destinations can impact tour operators' product development decisions. The strategic implications extend beyond tourism, suggesting that TPB can be applied in various business decision-making processes. Therefore, the study's contribution is not just to understand the development process but to actively shape it using TPB. The study encourages further investigation into the application of TPB in different decision-making contexts, particularly those where third-party intervention is desired. Future studies can explore the interactions between stakeholders in different settings, considering diverse market conditions and conflicts of interest.

In addition, the study examines tour operators' decision-making process and product development through an analysis of four models of change: teleology, dialectic, life cycle, and evolution. While these models are commonly used to understand organizational change, this study applies them in a novel way to the unique context of tour products. Specifically, the study focuses on the selection of secondary destinations and experiences, which are critical components of tour product development. However, due to the distinctive features of tour products, the development process for each model deviates from standard approaches. Future

research may extend the scope of this study to encompass other aspects of tour product development.

The findings delineate practitioners with a clear pathway for strategic interventions. Understanding the detailed factors that shape the decisions of tour operators enables DMOs and suppliers to tailor their approaches and ensure that tour operators have compelling reasons and logistical support for including secondary destinations in their tours. This strategic alignment between the destinations' efforts and tour operators' needs can lead to more diversified tourism flows and an enhanced tourist experience. This research provides a nuanced understanding of the decision-making process of tour operators and outlines a theoretical framework that practitioners can use to develop and promote secondary destinations.

The research exclusively focused on tour operators who were more experienced and proactive, which might have resulted in insights that were biased toward a specific subset of the industry. Future research endeavors could broaden the scope of the study by incorporating tour operators from areas that lack a strong presence of DMOs to substantiate and enhance the current findings. Additionally, including the perspectives of destinations, tourists, host residents, and other stakeholders could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the tour product development process and shed light on the diverse preferences and motivations of different tourist segments.

IV.3 Conclusion

In accordance with the stated research objectives at the conclusion of Chapter 1, this study sought to address three critical inquiries regarding the tour product development process. Firstly, what factors influence the selection of destinations for tour products by tour operators?

Secondly, what is the process of developing a tour product? Thirdly, what are the best practices that can influence their decisions? The present research successfully answers these questions by presenting the findings of the study. Specifically, the study identifies and outlines four distinct models in the tour product development process: dialectic, teleology, life cycle, and evolution. Additionally, the research presents tour operators' beliefs concerning the addition of secondary destinations to their tour itineraries and their expectations from the chosen destinations. Lastly, the study provides practitioners with actionable steps to improve their chances of being selected to be included in tour products.

In summary, this study serves as a testimony to the ever-evolving nature of tourism research by bridging the gap between theory and practice. It lays the groundwork for future academic research and industry application, challenging researchers and practitioners to look beyond traditional models and consider the broader implications of their work on the sustainable development of tourism and other industries.

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VITA

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