



## **Outcome of the brainstorming session of ABTO AGM as input towards ABTO strategic plan**

**Submitted by  
Institute for Management Studies  
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## **Objective**

The main objective of the brainstorming session was to take stock of the ground views on key issues facing the tourism industry and raise possible solutions or recommendations towards preparation for the future direction of the industry and developing a strategy plan of ABTO.

## **Themes**

Four broad themes with various sub-themes on issues faced by the tourism industry recently and over the years were tabled:

1. Institutional Setup
2. Fiscal Issues
3. Mandates
4. Marketing and Promotion

## **Overall Coordinator**

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## **Facilitators**

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## **Venue**

Royal Institute of Tourism and Hospitality (RITH)  
Motithang, Thimphu

## **Date:**

9<sup>th</sup> August, 2013

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## **Outcome of the brainstorming session of ABTO AGM as input towards ABTO strategic plan**

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### **Context**

Four broad themes were tabled for discussion at the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Tour Operators held at the Royal Institute for Hotel Management (RIHM), Motithang, Thimphu on 9<sup>th</sup> August, 2013. Organized by the Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators (ABTO), the meeting was attended by over 100 participants including the Board of Directors, tour operator's representatives and members from ABTO. The primary objective of the discussion was to get maximum inputs from the participants towards preparation for the future direction of the industry and developing a strategy plan of ABTO.

The methodology adopted for discussion was through the Round Robin Table Talk discussion method whereby the participants were divided into four groups based on the four themes. Each theme was led by a facilitator to lead the discussions. The facilitators stimulated the discussions on their specialized themes. While the facilitators continued to facilitate the same theme, the participants received opportunities to brainstorm on each theme as they moved from one theme to another at the end of their allotted time. The brainstorming session lasted for about two and half hours. Before winding up the meeting, a gist of the discussion was presented to all the members.

The four themes were based on issues faced by the tourism industry over the years, some of which were perennial and others that were recent. Some of the issues under the relevant themes were raised over the years but somehow have remained unresolved.

The four themes are presented as per the issues tabled for deliberation along with recommendations.

### **1. Theme one: Institutional Set-up**

Theme one for discussion was on the tourism industry's Institutional set up. The theme had four issues to be deliberated that included membership composition of the TCB Council, setting up or need of an Intermediary Committee, Classification of the Tour Operators and Delinking of TCB from the Government.

## 1.1. *Membership composition of the TCB Council*

Tourism is an important industry and is one of the highest contributors of revenue to the national exchequer, especially the much needed convertible currency for an import driven economy. It also generates employment and creates opportunities for service providers. Therefore, given the importance of the sector the existing composition of the Tourism Council had deemed appropriate to have the Hon'ble Prime Minister as the Chair and other high profile representatives as Council Member of TCB.

However, this high profile membership composition has not been useful to the industry as it had become difficult for TCB to meet and fulfil their mandate. In the last five years there have been only about 5 meetings, an average of 1 meeting in a year. Given the high profile composition, in-depth scrutiny of the matters and real understanding of the problems and solutions have been difficult. Detailed reports and materials for discussion are seen to elude the thorough judgement and studied decision of the Council members.

This evidently has also created a gap between the Council and the Secretariat, thus leaving the Secretariat to function independently without proper check and balance in place. Tourism being predominantly a private sector driven industry and with the gap between TCB and TCBS, any problems faced by the industry are not able to be resolved as it is left at the Senior management level at TCBS with no higher empowered level to submit the numerous issues that needed higher approvals. This undermined the full mandate of the Tourism Council as most actions and decisions are made through action specific note-sheet submissions and approvals of the Chairman alone.

Thus, the Tour Operators ***recommend*** the following:

- Keep the TCB membership as it is but establish an intermediary body/ committee, which will function as a technical and advisory committee between the TCB and the TCBS (for details on this body see point 1.2).

**OR**

- If the intermediary body is not established, the membership could be changed with the Minister for Economic Affairs (MoEA) as TCB Chair and relevant Secretaries and a few technical stakeholders from the private sector as

members. This could facilitate meetings on a regular basis and cater to the need of the tourism industry.

## *1.2. Intermediary Committee*

In the absence of an intermediary committee and the inability of the TCB to meet on a regular basis, the issues and concerns of the Tour Operators and the tourism industry at large has not been deliberated as desired. This has also lead to implementation of many ad-hoc activities merely through note-sheets being approved by TCB Chair or Vice Chair. This has restricted wider and broader participation of TCB members in the decision making and playing advisory roles. Therefore, the need for an intermediary committee is felt. The only reservation is that the intermediary committee should not function as another bureaucratic step or structure in the decision making process but have clear TOR enabling it as a bridge for quick and smooth action.

As indicated in point 1.1 above, the Tour Operators therefore **recommend** the establishment of an Intermediary Committee. While the TOR and other operational modalities can be discussed, if the establishment of the body is approved, the important areas that need to be considered are:

- The Minister for Economic Affairs could be the Chair of the Intermediary Committee with the Secretary as one of the member participants. As per the existing structure, Hon'ble Minister, MoEA is a member of TCB and this would mean that there will be more contribution to the TCB meeting since he/she would be familiar with the issues and concerns discussed at the intermediate committee level.
- This Committee will be a link between the TCB and the TCBS and also function as an advisory and a technical committee. All issues and concerns should be deliberated in this committee and those within their admissible power could be approved. Eventually, only those issues, which require higher level directives and approvals will go to the TCB. The committee can also vet any proposals for tourism and agenda points for Council meeting, hence providing options and alternative views to the Council.
- The committee should meet a minimum of 4 times in a year and as and when necessary.

### 1.3 Classification of the Tour Operators

There are discussions and plans by the TCBS to classify the Tour Operators into A,B,C,D or other ratings based on the arrivals and revenue figure. However, it was discussed that there are several problems associated with it and they are:

- This can become technically difficult since the arrivals and revenue generated change drastically from one month to another, season-to-season and year-to-year, hence constant change in classification status for tour operators affecting image and marketing consistency. For instance, travel agent A is classified as three star Tour Operator in 2013 based on the set classification criteria. However, in 2014 there are chances that this Travel Agent does not receive any guests. Does it mean that the Travel Agent will have to be reclassified in 2014. If so, it will become confusing for the clients and cumbersome for the organization classifying the Tour Operators. Monitoring can also become complicated and difficult and the ultimate consequence will be the drop in the quality of tourism services.
- Classifying Tour Operators could also misinform the clients. They will associate the classification with the services provided by the Tour Operator; a higher classification can be understood as a better service as compared to those with lower classification. However, this is not the case in Bhutan. All the Tour Operators whether small, big, new or old, are required to provide minimum standard of services (3 star accommodation, standard vehicle, trekking equipment, licensed guide etc...)
- Small operators who are specialized in specific activities catering to niche clientele and offering quality services will be portrayed as not doing well and demotivated to provide quality services on their specialized packages. They would opt for general offerings and more arrivals to upgrade their status rather than quality services.

Thus, the Tour Operators **recommend** the following:

- Rather than classifying the tour operators, the participants expressed the need to focus on specialization. The tour operators could be specialised based on their main travel interests such as adventure, nature, culture, trekking, sports, MICE

etc. which would bring in the much needed professionalism amongst the tour operators lacking at the moment.

The other recommendation was to ensure that the rules and regulations for obtaining a tour operation licence to have certain criteria that would help in assuring certain standards in the industry and for long-term sustainability and professionalism.

- There is also the need to set a minimum standard which is currently lacking such as security deposit for specialised TO, putting in place a basic office space with office equipment and a person with background in tourism business working fulltime. This will be a good way of ensuring quality.
- It was also suggested that prior to obtaining a tour operation licence or right after the license is issued the proprietor or representative could attend a short course on how to be a responsible tour operator, portraying Bhutan as a destination and financial management etc. Such short course could be organised by TCBS/ABTO.

### *1.4 Delinking TCBS*

The proposal to delink TCBS can have many advantages such as the financial autonomy to promote tourism and implement their plans and activities and carry forward their strategies smoothly and on time. This will also create opportunities for having a dynamic Head for TCBS who has background in Tourism.

However, the delinking of TCBS might cause more difficulties than benefits. Without being a core part of the government, if financial autonomy is sought to operate like a corporate organization, TCBS would be more like any of the sector associations. TCBS not being part of the Government would not be effective in addressing the issues faced by the industry, since the issues faced by the industry are mainly with other Government entities. Therefore having a core government agency representing tourism could more effectively negotiate with these government entities as it would be itself a part of the government machinery.

Since tourism is a multi-sector industry where it has to deal with various government agencies on issues faced by the industry, it would be appropriate to have a core Government focal agency for tourism (like in all other countries). If TCBS is delinked

and made autonomous, there is a probability of Government establishing another government entity or authority in the future to oversee national tourism interests that would not fall under the purview and mandates of a delinked TCBS, thereby increasing the bureaucratic layers and making things difficult to move effectively.

Thus, it is **recommended** that TCBS should continue with its present status as a Government organization.

## 2 Theme Two: Fiscal Issues

Theme two for discussion was the Fiscal Issues. The issues deliberated under the theme included Marketing Allowances, Trekking/ Adventure equipment and Tax exemption on the Tourist Vehicle.

With the current sunset limit only until 31st December 2015, only those who apply for tour operation license prior to the deadline benefits. It implies that either tourism will have a strong foundation by then and incentives are not required after 2015 or tourism is no more a priority sector after 2015.

Nowhere in the world is a time limit set for incentives to be provided for the tourism industry. Tourism is a growing and evolving industry and hence the requirement to support the industry. With a multiplier effect that the tourism has on the local economy, the incentives provided are only there to enhance the positive impact tourism brings to the economy.

With a criteria set to becoming a tour operator, basic incentives has to be provided for it to grow and get itself established after which the incentives should depend on revenue generated by the company or on the number of tourists handled.

### 2.1 *Tax exemption on tourist Vehicles*

Currently only one coaster and one HIACE bus is allowed as tax deductible in a period of five years per Tour Company. The requirement to bring in either a minimum of 50 tourists in the last 2 operating years or to bring in a minimum of 50 tourists within coming 1 year is slightly higher.

A tour operator bringing in 50 tourists in a year would have approximately paid Nu. 1,560,000/- which is higher than the taxes he/she would have to pay.  $USD\ 65 \times 50 \times 8 \times 60 = Nu.\ 1,560,000.00$

Ideal benchmark would be to bring in a minimum of 15 tourists a year:  
 $USD\ 65 \times 15 \times 8 \times 60 = Nu.\ 468,000.00$

As long as the wheelbase of 2590mm suffice, exemption to be allowed (Especially tourist vehicle such as Toyota Innova)

Thus, the following are ***recommended***.

- Participants expressed that given the importance of Tourism sector, if it could be accorded with the status of an industry as accorded to other industry sectors e.g. manufacturing industries, export etc. With the industry status, various benefits associated with the industry status can be availed for further strengthening, professionalising and in the advancement of the tourism industry. Tourism all around the world is considered as an export industry.
- Need to rationalise the tax incentives currently given to the tour operators/ tourism industry. It was recommended that the tax exemptions be based on revenue generated by the tour company.
- For monitoring purpose as well as for standardisation, tourist vehicles could be allotted with its own registration plate number.

## 2.2 *Marketing allowances*

Marketing is one of the main activities in the travel and tourism business. Marketing in tourism is like selling a dream unlike marketing tangible products where the buyers can feel, touch, taste and test before buying. Hence, the tour operators allocate a major portion of their annual budget for marketing. However, the allowable marketing expense as tax deductible is only 2% of the assessed gross profit restricting tour operators from investing adequately in marketing. For example the existing marketing allowance translates to only about Nu.48,000.00 for tour operators handling 150 tourists in a year, which is not even enough for a single airfare cost to a tourism fair abroad.

The Tour Operators, therefore, **recommend** the following:

- Participants expressed on the need to rationalise the existing allowable marketing expenses by requesting the government to amend the existing law (Sales, Income and Excise Act) and make the marketing allowance from the current 2% of the assessed gross profit to actual expenditure that is incurred on marketing. By allowing marketing expenses incurred by the tour operators on actual basis, it would encourage tour operators to genuinely invest in marketing, supplementing government's budget allocated for marketing.

### *2.3 Trekking and Adventure equipment*

The current practice is issuing only one import license for a life span of particular equipment irrespective of the quantity. Therefore, even bringing in a sample is considered actual import and the quota is considered exhausted till the life span of the sample, prohibiting actual import of the required type, quality and quantity.

The Tour Operators, therefore, **recommend** the following:

- Participants expressed the need to do away with the current practice that limits import of trekking and adventure equipment to one time (irrespective of quantity) and not on need basis. For example, if a tour company imports a tent the same company is not allowed to import another tent until the life span of the previously imported tent expires. Further the same company is also not allowed to import another type of tent, as there are high altitude tent, low altitude tent, luxury tent, safari tent etc....
- TCBS could verify breakage/leakages and recommend for replacement.
- Although as per the trekking regulation 1996, tour operators are required to carry pressure bags for any trekking above 3500m, tour operators have not been able to provide one due to high procurement cost. It was recommended if TCBS or ABTO could procure and make it available on a rental basis.
- With technological advancement, new and improved equipment and gears are made available in the market, the participants expressed the need to update the list of trekking and adventure equipment on the tax waiver list.

- TCB and the department of Revenue and Customs/ Ministry of Finance should involve representatives of the tour operators when preparing and updating the list of equipment.

### 3. Theme Three: Mandates

Discussion for theme three was on the Mandates. The issues deliberated under the theme included Trainings on Tourism Management, Franchise reproduction of promotional materials such as tourism brochures, pamphlets, logo, file-folders, DVDs etc., Segregation of roles and responsibilities among the tourism stakeholders in terms of Facilitation and Implementation/ Regulatory and Monitoring, Waste and litter Management, Culinary and ABTO's roles and responsibilities.

#### 3.1 *Trainings on Tourism Management*

There is no budget earmarked for any trainings related to tourism management for in-service staff and no trainings being undertaken. Thus, the following are **recommended**:

- The participants expressed the need to have in place structured trainings on Operations and Management especially for the operational or management staff of new tour operators besides providing with refresher courses for the staff of old operators annually.
- Another training required was on Office Management and on ticketing and reservations.
- They stated that while the above-mentioned trainings are needed, the trainings should be outsourced to a private training provider with support from the government or handled by the respective associations. However, TCB could assist in the development of the curriculum ensuring that the training is tailored to suit the needs of the tour operators.

### *3.2 Franchise reproduction of promotional materials such as tourism brochures, pamphlets, logo, file-folders, DVDs etc.*

The promotional materials on the whole are felt to be inadequate and some are not of high quality. The consensus was that there is little awareness and information on the kind of materials produced by the TCBS and also that distribution is only in small quantity defeating the very purpose of the materials. In this regard, the following points are **recommended**:

- Participants stated the need to produce quality promotional materials both print media copies as well as documentaries with quality write ups and photographs.
- It was also felt that there are not enough materials on promoting trekking and additional focus should be made on creating materials for promotion of trekking besides laying emphasis on health and safety issues. There is also a lack of adequate photographs on trekking for producing promotional materials on trekking.
- For wider distribution and reach of promotional materials produced, the option of reproduction and distribution could be outsourced to the tourism industry associations since the materials produced are ultimately for the larger interest of the industry and the nation as a whole. Individual companies with resources to reproduce the materials could be provided the quality soft versions of the materials.
- Further they emphasised on the accessibility of the materials for the tour operators with the options and right to reproduce and use company logo on the materials reproduced.
- Participants also emphasised on detailed information or materials on availing emergency and rescue operations both by air as well as land.
- They also felt the need to have in place more materials for packaged tours as it was currently lacking. This can also be outsourced to respective associations.
- Participants also felt that there should be optimum utilization of the resources with transparency and accountability. Materials should not be produced to utilize resources that have no bearing on the industry and will not benefit the industry.

After production, enough awareness and distribution of the materials is suggested.

### *3.3 Segregation of roles and responsibilities among the tourism stakeholders in terms of Facilitation and Implementation/ Regulatory and Monitoring*

Currently, tourism activities that are funded by the Government are all carried out by TCBS namely planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. This is not healthy as there are no third party intervention to gauge the effectiveness and proper use of resources. Besides, as part of PPP, some of the government budgeted tourism activities (marketing, trainings, brochures etc.) could be outsourced to respective sector associations.

There is no segregation at the moment. So, the following are **recommended**.

- Participants viewed that more responsibilities (particularly the implementation of activities) should be outsourced together with monitoring works to have a healthy third party intervention and to assure proper use of resources as well as maintain quality aspects. Since monitoring works require substantial manpower and employment of such numbers by the TCBS permanently will require huge resources.
- Besides, the members felt that the sector associations could do much more in taking the industry forward since the associations have the first-hand knowledge and experience in the business part of the industry and are closely associated with the day to day events of the industry. The participants stressed on more roles for the sector associations with clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities between the TCBS and the sector associations.
- The general consensus was that while the present procedure of MoEA in providing the licenses worked, it also created a gap in monitoring aspects leading to a huge number of non-functioning licenses. It was therefore recommended that the tour operation licensing by TCBS will streamline and also empower TCB to closely monitor the non-functioning Tour Operators while facilitating the functioning operators.

- Third party intervention was also sought in the trainings and capacity building of the industry personnel whereby curriculum can developed by TCB and trainings outsourced with quality assurance and close monitoring on certification by the TCBS.
- It was also recommended that clearance criteria for licensing and quality assurance of trainings and capacity building should be stronger and more developed.

### 3.4 *Waste and litter management*

Organising occasional clean up campaigns are found to be ineffective, and national level intervention is required to manage waste throughout the country. Management of new, old and worn out prayer flags at places of scenic beauties has become crucial as these prayers flags have not only become unpleasant and overcrowded but concern of safety has been raised in certain areas like the Taktsang viewpoint. Further, the toilets along the highways built by TCBS mainly to cater to the tourists are in terrible conditions.

Thus, the following points are ***recommended***:

- Clean up campaigns are seen as only temporary measures and for permanent solution to the problem a strategic step like a national organization to focus on waste management issues was recommended. While there is a national strategy on waste management formulated by the MoWHS, the mandates are seen as very large covering all wastes. Therefore, a step to form a body to oversee at least the common wastes and littering that impact the industry is seen as crucial.
- Participants highlighted on the need to have more education and advocacy materials to sensitize locals and the regional visitors, since littering was mostly by locals and regional tourists rather than by the international (dollar paying) visitors.
- Tour operators can adopt trekking routes so that they can maintain these routes. They also opined the need to provide with incentives so as to motivate the public and the local people.
- Participants also felt that the public toilets that are managed very poorly be handed over to the Department of Roads (DoR). They would be in a position to facelift the public toilets and have the personnel and capacity to maintain them

since they are already involved in the field maintaining the roads where these toilets are built. DoR could also start providing these added facilities as part of the road network and its services.

- Another view was to have dialogues with different related organizations so as to better manage waste and litter.
- Pamphlets at immigration points for regional tourists with focus on hygiene, sanitation and littering was also expressed.
- Work out a strategy to reduce or stop the locals from making religious offerings using plastic bags and wrappers.

### 3.5 Culinary

It is more or less the same dishes being served over and over again without any changes in the menu. This was mainly seen as a result of lack of adequate chefs in the country for hotels and restaurants to choose from or employ compounded by the seasonal nature of the industry that discourage employment of more chefs. Situation can be improved through the following **recommendations:**

- Participants recommended to put in place a proper scrutiny/ vetting of foreigner chefs that are being recommended.
- Royal Institute of Tourism and Hospitality (RITH) should experiment/ research fusion of various culinary from various regions within the country.
- During the lean season, hotel and restaurant chefs could be trained or given refresher's courses at RITH.
- Internationally or regionally recognised chefs from abroad could be invited to give demonstration/ training to our local chefs.
- New chefs trained in local institutes (RITH and BISHT) can be deputed to various hotels and restaurants as apprentice during the peak season to help meet demands for chefs. This can be done in collaboration with MoLHR by providing stipends.

- They also voiced out the need for TCB to monitor food being served to the guests especially to ensure quality food.
- Further, they felt the need to serve different dishes on different days and if possible the dishes could be different the entire week.

### 3.6 *ABTO roles and responsibilities*

Over the years, ABTO has proven its credibility and capacity to deliver services to tour operators and has been instrumental in resolving many bottlenecks that existed in the tourism industry. The role of ABTO should be further strengthened to fulfil the needs of the tour operators and support them effectively. The following ***recommendations*** were made in this regard:

- Lobby for more representation of ABTO at TCB and other stakeholders (Druk Air), which has direct relevance to the tourism industry.
- Conduct refresher courses in various management areas at least for tour operation staff since training for proprietors were not seen as crucial if the management is looked after by trained staff.
- Take over marketing activities (such as travel fairs and road shows) especially marketing, selling tourism products and launching of new products/ packages currently undertaken by TCBS, which logically should be undertaken by the industry itself as initially started by ABTO. TCBS can focus on supplementing the marketing efforts of ABTO and tour operators through overall country promotion.
- With increasing activities and responsibilities, and the need for association to take up more roles, the resources and capacity, both financial and manpower of ABTO are seen as inadequate and need to be enhanced.
- Request for at-source deduction of ABTO membership fee of a nominal USD amount (currently USD 3) per tourist (which is tax deductible), to make ABTO financially sustainable and ensure that more beneficial programmes for the tour operators and tourism in general are initiated and implemented.

Participants felt the need for ABTO to also archive the materials and information sent by emails to the operators especially the old communication on their website for easy accessibility and retrieval by the operators at a later date when necessary.

- Expressed the need to have in place welfare schemes for the Tour Operators with strategies in place to become a member, defined membership roles and its benefits.
- Stated the need to provide with more incentives for the Board members (not necessarily cash incentives) to be motivated for more active participation and output to benefit the industry.
- Also stated the need to produce additional and exhaustive promotional brochures using materials that local media might have as inputs for quality productions.
- Recommended for scheduling more meetings for productive discussions besides enabling exchange of views and opinions. The meetings to be scheduled well ahead of time to give enough room for pre-planning.
- Participants recommended revamping of the nine working groups.
- The ABTO website needs to be updated regularly and create platforms like blogs and social media to exchange information and discuss issues.
- Further, recommended the timely issuance of the bills and receipts with regard to fee collection for tax filing purpose and if possible to be collected at source.

#### **4. Theme Four: Promotion and Marketing**

Discussion for theme four was on Promotion and Marketing. The issues deliberated under the theme included National Steering Committee for Tourism Promotion and Marketing, FAM (Familiarization trip for agents abroad) and Marketing activities such as coordination of travel fairs, B2B and road shows & identification and selection.

#### 4.1 *National Steering Committee for Tourism Promotion and Marketing*

Though agreed in principle to establish a National Steering Committee for Tourism Promotion and Marketing, the proposed Committee is still not established after a year and a half. The following **recommendations** were made:

- Participants voiced out the importance of the National Steering Committee and reiterated on its institution to carry out as an advisory role, oversee marketing and communications for the tourism sector that could give a balanced and a truly collective national character to the marketing and communication efforts.
- They also commended that the majority of committee members to be from stakeholders, ABTO, HAB, Druk Air, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- On the composition of the NSC members, they recommended having two representatives each from ABTO and HAB and one representative each from Druk Air and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- They also recommended TCB and ABTO to work together and the tour operators to be consulted on a regular basis.

#### 4.2 *FAM (Familiarization trip for agents abroad)*

With no proper guidelines in place and not having discussed with ABTO and the tour operators, the present system of giving FAM (waiver of Royalty for agents) is not transparent and is left as a prerogative of the deciding authority. Some are given only two and others even over 20. Such practices are not only unfair but also hinders the tour operators in planning FAM visit by their counterparts agents, not knowing how many will be approved (uncertainties), as it is subject to approval by TCBS.

The following **recommendations** were made:

- Participants suggested that the restriction on FAM should be lifted and left open the whole year round.
- There is the need to make FAM more transparent, develop guidelines and come up with a good rationale.

- Participants also shared that TCB should not be involved with FAM and the appointment/meeting of FAM with the TCB secretariat is unnecessary. But can meet on request or if necessary. Since it is FAM visit of the agents, TCBS official could take time to meet at the convenience of the FAM and the venue could be at the hotel lobby and need not necessarily be at the convenience of TCBS.

#### *4.3 Marketing activities such as coordination of travel fairs, B2B, road shows identification and selection*

In the current mode TCB is engaged in both promotion as well as in marketing, which in effect does not meet the objective.

The following **recommendations** were made:

- Whilst the broad country promotion can be carried out by TCBS, marketing can be carried out by the tour operators coordinated by ABTO. It was suggested that money spent for attending travel fairs/ road shows by the government (TCBS), so far undertaken without consultation with the industry to reap maximum results, could be allotted for coordination of travel fairs and road shows effectively by the industry according to market needs (coordinated by ABTO). There can be joint identification of travel fairs and road shows. Besides the overall directives can come from the National Steering Committee for Tourism Promotion and Marketing.
- The brochures need to be updated with current information at the same time making it more attractive especially on presentation.
- Requirement of appointing Public Relation (PR) agents (currently in Germany, UK, USA, Japan and Russia) were questioned, as there has been no consultation on their appointment as well as their roles and responsibility. Further, tour operators are also not aware that such PRs exist and were not informed of their addresses.
- The outcome and results of the PR agents needs to be reviewed and taken stock of.

- Stakeholders like TCB and Druk Air should provide subsidies.
- Participants also felt affirmative on allowing movies and documentaries to be filmed in Bhutan free of royalty as part of the marketing strategy.
- Promotional activities such as “Visit Bhutan 2015” should be carried out at the same time of launching new products as done in Malaysia. However, they felt that discounts should not be advertised.