

## Review of Marketing Strategies of Railway Tourism Products in India

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### Abstract

Tourism is considered to be the most fascinating and glooming sector and bringing not only prosperity but also exchanges socio-economic and cultural advancements across the nations. The travel and tourism industry has a remarkable presence in physical as well as virtual platforms. Presence of online availability of luxury tour awareness and knowledge, easy booking of these trips has made it at ease for the consumers to plan for their own itineraries well in advance.

The luxury travel relates to enjoying expensive trips with extra services, explore the unexplored areas. Luxury travels gives an opportunity to the areas to develop and get more monetary value to the economy. In order to provide a majestic and exclusive voyage experience to the tourists, Indian Railways introduced bunch of luxurious, semi-luxurious and special trains to its domestic as well as international tourists. The expectations of consumers are relatively high when it comes to experience luxury tours. It became important for the providers to ensure the value for consumers' spending. Marketing of these tour plans play important role in catering the attention of travelers. There are promotional activities, blogs, you tube channels are used to market these plans by various luxury travel providers.

These luxurious trains are managed by Indian Railways in alliance with Indian Railway Tourism Catering Corporation or State Tourism Corporations. "Deccan Odyssey" and "Maharajas' Express" are the two luxurious trains which are listed in the top 25 luxurious trains of the World. The luxurious trains are quite popular among the international consumers.

The study makes an effort to review and comprehend the marketing strategies applied by the IRCTC and Indian Railways in order to cater the tourist's interest towards the Indian Railway Tourism Products.

**Keywords:** Marketing Strategies, Luxurious Tourism, Indian Railways, Promotional Strategies, Indian Railway Tourism Products – Luxurious Trains, Semi-luxurious Trains and Special Trains

### Introduction

Railways is considered as one of the most reasonable, expedient and famous travel option for the consumers especially when it comes to long-routed places around the globe. The invention took place back in seventeenth century in the Germany with wood tracks. During the early 1800's the first steel rails were initiated by USA.

Indian Railways have a glorious history and caters the need of transportation of all categories of classes prevailing in the country. Railways are considered to be the conventional mode of travelling and it has witnessed lots of transformation from ages. Indian railways have glorious history of over 160 years and has offered range of services to the nation. It is the world's second largest system covering around 64000 km of tracks which are spread over 7000 stations, with approximately 12000 trains running on tracks every day. The glory of railways was introduced by British East India Company back in 1832, since then it has been serving the nation till date. The first remarkable milestone was introducing passenger

train in 1853. Railways is considered as one of the modes of transport and most importantly is also one of the contributing sectors to tourism industry. The recent decades have shown tremendous increase in the growth of railway tourism. There is an increasing inclination towards luxurious tourism of the consumers. In this segment tourism trains are contributing to tourism industry round the globe. Among top 25 luxurious trains of the world two trains are from India – Deccan Odyssey and Maharajas' Express. With the advent and progress of luxurious trains at global level has motivated increase in foreign tourists' attraction towards Indian luxurious trains and experiencing majestic historic culture of India. These spending's are also benefitting the country in the form of growing socio-economic aspect. Indian tourism industry is responding positively towards the increased desire of consumers towards luxurious tourism experiences and offers a range of luxury excursion personal attention" packages which also includes premium and exclusive luxurious, semi-luxurious and circuit train packages which provides mosaic exposure to Indian cosmic culture, destinations and mesmerizing escapade.

These luxury trains are benefitting and contributing the economy in all manners. It generates employment opportunities, it also benefits the travel agents who gets the tickets sold out, generates foreign inflow and also contributes to tourism industry.

Ministry of Railway along with IRCTC have offered range of luxurious, semi-luxurious and circuit trains in India for attracting international and national tourists. Originally, luxury trains were marketed only to foreign tourists in international market, but with increasing paying capacity and domestic inclination towards luxury consumption in recent decades the luxury trains are also open for domestic market. These tourists' trains run on different regions tracks and provide majestic and mesmerizing one-week tour packages to its tourists. While, luxurious trains such as "Palace on Wheels", "Deccan Odyssey", "Maharaja Express", "Golden Chariot", "Royal Rajasthan on Wheels" are running with the combined efforts and collaboration of Indian Railways with STDC and IRCTC.

The luxury or tourist train is considered to be quite different from normal course of trains running on tracks. Rather the tourists' trains are viewed as "museum panache magnetism", "to provide majestic devour", "having a mosaic or nostalgic experience of series of luxurious services with personal attention", "a source of joy and travel with entertainment" (Wikivoyage, 2019). There are 5 luxurious trains of India running on Indian tracks namely: "Palace on Wheels", "Maharajas' Express", "The Deccan Odyssey", "The Golden Chariot", "Royal Rajasthan on Wheels". These luxurious trains are replica of running luxurious hotels where one can have hospitality with monarch's experience. These trains swaddled with luxury and glorious richness of historic and majestic provides wide range of itinerary for visiting various heritage sites, temples, wild life sanctuary of the country and is a complete package of mesmerizing travel transit along with sightseeing.

Besides, luxurious trains in order to promote tourism Indian Railways have introduced Semi-Luxurious and Circuit Trains in India. To name few: "Tiger Express", "Dessert Circuit Tourist Trains", "Heritage Circuit Tourist Train", "Buddhist Circuit Tourist Train", "Majestic Rajasthan Tourist Train". The semi-luxurious trains are the replica of luxury trains with affordability for middle and upper-middle class group. The attraction of these trains are its eye-catchy itineraries.

### **Review of Literature**

The first passenger train which ran on Indian rail tracks happened to be in 1853 and since then it is serving not only to the customers from travelling one place to another but also providing services for transportation of cargo round the country for commercial purposes too. The Indian Railway has a glorious history of re-emergence and has proved as a best example of technological transformation and adoptability. At the time of independence in 1947 almost 40 percent of rail tracks were part of the Pakistan and it required huge rerouting in order to join all corners of the country. By 1952, six zones

were developed for controlling rails system in the country and by 2003 six more zones were introduced and in 2006 one more zone was added to the existing zones constituting total of 17 zones working for controlling and administrating entire railway network of the country. Indian Railways have always been governed by government for the purpose of providing transport services for passengers as well as cargo shipments. The Indian Railway system stands at the fourth position in the world in terms of rail tracks and tremendous growth. The terminus of Mumbai, Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus has been awarded with a position of “Heritage Site” by UNESCO in the year 2004. In the year 1999 UNESCO announced “Darjeeling Himalayan Railway”, “Nilgiri Mountain Railway”, “Kalka – Shimla Railway” as world’s heritage sites. (<https://nair.indianrailways.gov.in/>)

Railways offers a wide range of enchanting mosaic heritage of multi-cultured nation exposure in the form of luxurious, semi-luxurious and circuit trains to its international and national tourists. The Indian rails are enormously contributing to the travel and tourism industry of the country. The luxury trains are operated and managed by Indian Railways in association with the Indian Railway Tourism Catering Cooperation and/or State tourism corporation, while the Indian railways are responsible for trains operations and maintenance part along with the off and on – board services; whereas the marketing responsibility lies with the respective state tourism corporations. The itineraries, tariff, operation days, services, refund, occupancy availability and booking of tickets can be done through dedicated websites of respective trains. All trains inclusive of luxurious trains, semi-luxurious and circuit trains are unique in nature and offers wide range of services to its tourists. The authorized third party such as yatra.com also provide ticket booking facilities to its tourists. (<https://indianrailways.gov.in/>)

IRCTC is a corporation which came into existence in 1999 and responsible for promotion of railway tourism in the country. It has been over twenty years, IRCTC is responsible for the formulation of promotional strategies and developing rail tourism of the country. There is a dedicated portal and website of IRCTC i.e., [www.irctc.com](http://www.irctc.com) which offers profusion services to its tourists inclusive of special train offerings, hotels, travel packages of different price range, luxurious trains, semi luxurious trains and circuit trains offers to its national and international tourists. This is one window of communication of rail offerings between the special service providers and the customers at a large. Along with luxury offerings it also provides air packages, economical tour packages, land packages and hotel facilities to its customers. IRCTC also provide its services through mobile app which is both Android & Ios supportive, it is only one click away and one can get all sort of services whether it is luxurious in nature or economical in nature. (<https://www.irctc.com/our-business-tourism.html>)

D’Arpizio et al. (2016) mentioned in his study that almost 80% to luxury market is contributed by segments such as luxury hospitality services, luxury cars, personal goods of luxurious brands and amenities. The growth of global luxury industry has shown a steady pace rate of 4% in way back 2016. The study reveals that there was a remarkable shift from luxurious products consumption pattern to luxury travel which includes luxury hospitality services (around 4%), traveling in cruises (5%) and fondness of fine dine in restaurants and hotels. D’Arpizio et al. (2017) study states that 2017 onwards an increase in luxury travel; was witnessed and luxury cruises were in demand up by 14%.

Thirumaran and Raghav (2017) stated in their study that the changing tourism trends shows that luxury destinations and excursions are majorly categorized to developed nations or areas and to mature tourist places. Moreover, it is significant that the developing regions also accounts and contributes to luxury tourism. Moreover, the gap between the luxury and developing areas provides chances for explorations of more resources, maintaining them and make it accessible in an upcoming destination area which are developing. The study reveals that though luxury tourism stills a way far from developing terminuses but it is significant to understand the growing tourism opportunities in these destinations. The study majorly advocates on researching more on luxurious tourism options in developing destinations which

will provide more opportunities for interactions and experiences happening between luxurious tourism and developing regions. The basis of Thirumaran and Raghav (2017) study is a thoughtful expanded from the luxury services provided in the developing tourist regions and acceptability of these services by the consumers. In addition, the authors have also considered the information drawn from Mexico enclave luxury resorts as well the reviews stated by consumers using social media for India's Maharaja Express Luxurious Train voyage experience are utilized to produce and comprehend the luxurious production of services and escapade for superior class of consumers in developing countries. The focal point of world economies is more on fast developing projects worldwide and shifting from manufacturing base till service-based economies.

The study of Brenner and Aguilar (2002) examined the impact of Mexico's luxury tourism on the economy and also identified and stated that the impact of Mexico Tourism and identified the advantages from luxury tourism contributions and still it fails to dribble down to the economy cores.

Martinez-Ruiz, Martinez Carabolla and Amatulli (2010) stated in their study that ancient perspective of luxury tourism opportunities was congregated to urban places and tourist attraction places but with modern luxury tourism it is spreading its wings to the emerging possibilities in various cities of developing nations too. In authors findings about luxury brands are more related to aesthetics an imperceptible thing as well as brand image is based on the consumers focusing on these brands only rather than nearby localities. The luxury market is created from customer experiences and responses. (Wiedmann and Hennings 2012; 2013; A place 2015). Thirumaran and Raghav (2017) examined the numerous incipient luxurious places with great opportunities and the affecting factors of these destinations are their infrastructure and its way of presentability of the area.

Thus, according to (Vickers & Renand, 2003) the segmentation of luxury tourism always depends on the willingness of the consumers to consume different services as compared to his peer group. Amatulli & Guido (2011) also states that the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of consumers effect the luxury consumption of tourism and travel products. External contributors can be braggadocio, status symbol or avowal (Troung et al. 2008) so as to share a status position in the society (Ivanic 2015). Whereas the internal factors which motivates the luxury driven excursions may include pride factor, avariciousness (Chan et al. 2014), gratifying, personal enhancement, self-exploration (Corriea et al. 2020) and self-pleasure (De Barnier & Valette-Florence 2013; Vickers & Renand, 2003). For an enhanced thoughtfulness of motivational forces driving luxury tours consumption Corriea et al. (2020) proposed a conceptual model presupposing the antecedents and consequences of consumer's conduct.

Antecedent forces	Tourist conduct towards Luxury	Consequence forces
Social Value		Status
Conspicuousness		Self-esteem
Uniqueness		Public display

**Table 1.1:** Antecedents and Consequences of Tourist's Conduct (Corriea et al. 2020)

While taking luxury tourism decisions according to the model the antecedent factors indicate intrinsic and societal conception towards luxuries allied with the luxury terminus and experience attached. These involve social belongingness, feeling of status discriminator and different from others and sense of idiosyncrasy. Whereas, consequence forces are related to the cognizant approach of tourist's perspective towards excursion ordeal. (Corriea et al. 2020)

Dogra and Karri (2020) studied the major area of apprehension of service providers according to whom are the key factors or roadblocks in the way of success stories of luxurious trains of India. The authors used a Structural Topic Model (STP) for analysis of the information and data collected from 83 service

providers inclusive of employees and travel agents who all were part of luxury train providers, along with they also enquired 157 tourists of various countries to understand the prime botherations of the travelers. They also concluded some of the main factors or variables such as prices, policies, product marketed, facilities and services of luxury trains affects the decision-making process of the consumers in deciding the travel trip of luxury trains of India. The study offers the attitude of the tourists and service providers towards Maharaj Express, a luxurious train of India.

Dogra and Karri (2020) mentioned in their study that the aspect of marketing mix was evolved and introduced to the world was by Bordan in 1964 with 12 rudiments which would results in successful business outcomes, which was further modified into 4 elements i.e., 4 P's set up by McCarthy in 1964. A study done by Morley (1994) relating to the impact of pricing factors associated with the hotel tariffs, air-fares, international exchange rates are quite high when it comes to the consumers' demand for voyages.

Magatef (2015) has used 4 P's i.e., Product, Price, Place and Promotion factors to study and analyze the effect of tourism marketing mix factors on tourists' satisfaction level.

Blancheton & Marchi (2013), stated in their study that the construct of luxury trains was introduced in the year 1980 whereby rail tourism introduced a mix of mosaic, mesmerizing and undiscovered history with rail travels. They further acknowledged the fact that the luxury experiences are demanded by elite or rich class of the society to attend some important events of their life. Kovacic and Milosevic (2016) stated that luxury can be defined as a category of transportation which is quite different from usual forms and is also accompanied with some premium services in terms of inquisitiveness, quality, differential pricing plans and distinctiveness feeling and these amenities can be enjoyed by only small group which can afford them. Blancheton and Marchi (2013), Kovacic & Mikosevic (2016) have used "standards and experiences" terms stating that although they are associated with today's luxury trains, along with these factors the new luxury pattern cannot avoid the affordability factor with zero tolerance in quality aspect (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2012; Eckhardt et al. 2015; Vickers & Renand, 2003).

The luxury trains cannot be considered as a transit mode to take anyone to a final arrival place but it is itself considered as an arrival place (Wikivoyage, 2019). As the name suggests it provides a premium class treatment and mesmerizing special services to its travelers during complete trip.

According to Kumar and Komaraiah (2014) stated the importance of improving service quality and infrastructural development so as to showcase better promotional strategies in order to attract foreign tourists as well domestic tourists towards Indian Railway offerings. The authors focused on the promotional tools and its importance to create an awareness and willingness among tourists to experience the mesmerizing tour packages offered by Indian Railways.

Kanimozhi and Sherlin (2016) mentioned in their study that Indian Railways are more inclined towards promotional tools in order to cater the attention of national and international tourists towards its luxury and semi-luxury trains offerings. These trains are contributing a remarkable stature to the tourism industry and also enabling the industry as a revenue generating sector for the Indian Government.

Manhas and Gupta (2017) mentioned that the presence of luxurious trains of India such as Palace on Wheels and Maharaja Express has engraved a notable subsistence in the travel sector of the world. To maintain the competition level, it is worthy to understand the consumer's needs and demands to survive in the market for a longer duration. The study has focused on understanding the perception level of the tourists and their involvement with luxury travel brands. Moreover, the researchers have also studied about the potentials of the luxury train contribution to the tourism market of India as well as attitude of consumers towards the services offered by these trains. The study revolves around the expected satisfaction level from the services offered and actual level of satisfaction experienced from the services

offered by luxurious trains during the complete voyage. The authors studied various parameter and, on that basis, they concluded that there is huge gap of consumers' expectation level and what exactly they have experienced during the voyage in terms of satisfaction from the services offered. Therefore, there is a need of refurbishment of the services which are being offered by these trains.

According to Gupta and Verma (2019), the Indian Railways are the major source of transport and also contributing to tourism industry by attracting the international tourists still the awareness level of luxurious, semi-luxurious and circuit trains is relatively less among domestic consumers and it is a need to have strong promotional strategies for making such trains popular among consumers.

Ota, Ray, Chandra (2020) focused on the various services and amenities offered by luxury train a pioneer and first train – “Palace on Wheels”. The authors have focused on the probable manners to enhance the quality level of the services rendered by the train. The study has analyzed the service blueprint been designed and showcases the gap of perceived services and offered services and how the qualitative aspect of services can be enhanced. The study concluded that the application of service blueprint helps the industry to make changes to the quality of services offered to the tourists. In case of “Palace on wheels” it is successfully providing the mosaic experiences to its tourists during the entire voyage and also providing mesmerizing historical and royale charm and lure spread across the Indian terrain in sumptuously. The journey is reported as full of buoyancy and palatial adoration and the customers are highly delightful and quite satisfied. Although some loopholes were identified through feedback and it is essential to be taken care of.

Gupta and Verma (2023) stated in their study that the tour packages offered by luxurious trains are highly mesmerizing and palatial services to the tourists and still the domestic consumers are little aware about these trains and hesitate in booking for these trips. There are certain factors which are considered by the consumers such as hygiene, cuisines offered, luxury, comfort, complete tour package cost and pricing, luxury experience easy ticket bookings etc. as important for deciding upon the trips.

### **Research Methodology**

The objective of the study is to review and analyse the marketing strategies applied by the IRCTC and Indian Railways in order to cater the tourist's interest towards the Indian Railway Tourism Products. To comprehend the above objective secondary data has been taken into consideration and has analysed the positioning methods applied by tourism trains of India to cater domestic market as well along with the international market such as applicability of social media networking.

### **Tourism Products of Indian Railways**

Luxury trains are not only the name of passenger train but it itself an experience which takes their tourists to visits various place in royale and majestic manner. They are astounding and staggering marriage of historic bygone era with coeval era and make it a staggering endeavor to explore the actual paramount of Indian colors and culture. These trains are able to attract the attention of such travelers who voraciously thrive for Indian cultural heritage experience in sumptuousness manner. These trains are splendid astonishing interiors, strong security system and mesmerizing life-long stay. Indian Luxury Trains and its portal embarks an aristocracy and transcendent journey with luxury operating all over the country on single platform. (<https://www.indianluxurytrains.com/>)

### **Palace on Wheels Luxurious Train of India**

According to General Sales Agent (GSA), Palace on Wheels, RTDC an external agent (<https://www.thepalaceonwheels.org/>) the award winning and the first ever luxury train of India –

“Palace on Wheels” is a bouquet which offers the plethora of combination of historic of Rajasthan and Hyderabad blend with modern amenities gives a feeling of royalty experience during the entire voyage. The train is enriched with luxurious cabins, artistic gallery of the states, venerated Indian hospitality to its tourists, and offers a flawless journey itinerary. The train is encapsulated with the remembrance of dissipation romantic involvement and elegant historic eras, the train travel across the tracks of some significant states belongs to the “King of Land” coruscating Rajasthan, beautiful sand dunes with camel studded can be experienced and their cultural heritage attracting the attention and a chance to experience India’s most efficacious ancient traditions and witness some parts of stupendous wildlife. The train travels and cover iconic embarked cities of Rajasthan such as Jaipur also called as Pink City, Jaisalmer known as Golden City, The Blue city i.e., Jodhpur, Udaipur which is known as the City of Lakes, acclaimed wild-life “Ranthambore National Park” world legendary “Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary”. The train also takes its tourist to the love symbol renowned monument and is also one of the “Seven Wonders of World” – “Taj Mahal” situated in Agra while returning back to Delhi. The complete itinerary has been designed with a viewpoint to facilitate a world class hospitality service and comforting and pampering tourists as they are royale’s during the complete excursion.

During Covid-19 due to COVID protocol the train shut down its services but now it is all set for new trips.

**Table 2.1:** Promotional Tools Used and Awards Won by “Palace on Wheels”

S. No.	Name of the Train	Promotional Tools	Year of Award	Awards
1	Palace on Wheels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The first time in 1980 the luxurious train Palace in Wheels were marketed in U.K. Market</li> </ul>	1987	PATA Gold Award awarded by Pacific Asia Travel Association.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The local Kaul Prever Harle &amp; Simore (KPHS) were responsible for pilot promotions in UK market.</li> <li>In initial stages of advertising campaigns were introduced in 9 segments in foremost daily and Sunday newspapers.</li> </ul>	2009	the train was voted as “Best in Asia”. In a survey conducted by Conde Nast, global travel magazine reported that the train was voted as the IV Best Luxury Train in the world.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The campaign focused promotion of product and packaging aspect</li> <li>30 press releases and 24 blow ups were designed</li> <li>Ads were put on American Express Credit Card offices, India Tourist Office, Air India offices and KPHS office</li> <li>Advertisements on dedicated website, partner advertisers in other countries, help desk</li> <li>Print media, paid advertisements, travellers’ feedback</li> </ul>	2018	ATWA (Pacific Area Travel Writer Award) under the genre of “Tourist train of the Year”

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The train has witnessed time to time refurbishments, changes in interiors, matching the new era tastes and preferences.</li> <li>• Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, reels, blogs, videos, photographs</li> </ul>		
Another milestone for this train was its nomination to Worlds Travel Awards (WTA) which acknowledges the brilliance of tourism sector all over the world.				

Source: <https://www.travelogyindia.com/blog/palace-on-wheels-train-won-patwa-award-2018/>  
<https://www.thepalaceonwheels.org/awards-and-recognition.html>  
<https://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/16731/1/Unit-24.pdf>

### **Maharaja Express Luxurious Train of India**

IRCTC launched Maharaja Express luxurious train in the year March 2010 and since then it has been an eye-catching milestone for Indian Railways contribution to the tourism industry of the country. The train has countless awards in its bounty since its inception.

Maharaja Express is although the latest add on to the range of luxurious trains but it has catered the maximum awards and it has been rated highly in many of the reputed travel magazines and has been reported as one of the supreme rail journeys of the world. (<https://www.maharajas-express-india.com/>) The Maharaja Express offers four different itineraries – “The Heritage of India” it is a six nights and seven days’ tours starting from Mumbai, Udaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Jaipur, Ranthambore, Agra and end at Delhi. Pinnacle of the journey is to provide mesmerizing experience of cultural immersion. “Treasures of India” is three nights and four-day tour starting from Delhi, Agra, Ranthambore and end at Delhi. The itinerary takes the tourists to listed 5 heritage monuments in UNESCO with exclusive detailed experiences of the places with shopping facilities. The trip also provides 12% discount on the tickets of the train. (<https://www.maharajas-express-india.com/journey/treasures-of-india.html>)

“The Indian Panorama” is a six nights and seven days’ tours starting from Delhi, Jaipur, Ranthambore, Fatehpur Sikri, Agra, Orchha, Khajuraho, Varanasi and ends at Delhi. The entire journey is beautifully crafted and designed and provide experiences different cultures and heritage sites along with the sacred holy place Varanasi and holy Ganges ghats. As the names of the train the entire crafted itinerary is actually Panorama as after Varanasi tourists taste the flavor of cultural, architectural heritage of Chandels’ through Ajanta and Alora caves. Last but not the least the tourists also witness the sumptuousness interiors aided with magnanimous hospitality of Maharaja Express. (<https://www.maharajas-express-india.com/journey/indian-panorama.html>)

“The Indian Splendor” seven nights and eight-day tour start from Delhi, Agra, Ranthambore, Jaipur, Bikaner, Jodhpur, Udaipur and ends at Mumbai. It is the most luxurious trains of Asia and offers of plethora of monarchical traditions, art and mosaic culture. In addition to the amazed sequence of countless tincture of vast and diverse land, the toppings are the ambrosian cuisine the tourists enjoy during travel, exemplary hospitality and a best example of “Incredible India”. (<https://www.maharajas-express-india.com/journey/indian-splendor.html>)



**Table 2.2:** Promotional Tools Used and Awards Won by “Maharaja Express”

S. No.	Name of the Train	Promotional Tools	Year of Award	Awards
2	Maharaja Express	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ranks among top 25 luxury trains of the world</li> <li>• Advertisements on dedicated website, partner advertisers in other countries, help desk</li> <li>• Print media, paid advertisements, travellers’ feedback</li> <li>• Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, reels, blogs, videos, photographs</li> <li>• Special offers and discounts are offered</li> <li>• Attractions for domestic tourists</li> </ul>	2010	CNBC Awaaz Travel Award
			2012	Winner of “World Travel Award 2012” for the “World’s Leading Luxury Train” category
			2013	Winner of “World Travel Award 2013” for the “World’s Leading Luxury Train” category
			2014	Winner of “World Travel Award 2014” for the “World’s Leading Luxury Train” category
			2015	Winner of “CNBC Awaaz Travel Awards 2015” for best luxury train
			2015	Winner of “Seven Stars 2015” for the category for “Luxury Hospitality and Lifestyle Awards”
			2016	Winner for “Seven Stars 2016” for “Luxury Hospitality and Lifestyle Award”
			2016 & 2017	For two consecutive years the train was the winner of “World Travel Award” for World’s Leading Luxury Train
			2022	Immediately after COVID, the train won’s title of “Seven Stars Luxury Hospitality and Lifestyle Awards 2022”

Source: <https://www.the-maharajas.com/maharajas/maharajas-express-travel-awards.html>  
<https://www.luxurytrainsindia.org/special-offers.html>

### **Deccan Odyssey Luxurious Train of India**

Deccan Odyssey also known as India’s blue train has been serving tourist consumers with a blended mixture of Indian cultural experience architected carefully in order to keep them engaged from starting till end. The train has earned number of awards to its basket. It is also among one of the 25 top luxurious trains of the world. In the word of Arup Sen, Director, Special Projects, Cox & Kings said that the Deccan Odyssey has reinvented the meaning of luxury and has mapped with bizarre contemporary designs and unbeatable unique services and amenities. The Deccan Odyssey has succeeded in discover obscure culture secrets of India. The journeys designed by Deccan Odyssey unleashes to the insights of gems of cultural heritage of the country. Deccan Odyssey is also accorded by TTJ Jury Award for Excellence. (<https://www.orientrailjourneys.com/deccan-odyssey/awards-and-recognition.html>)

The majestic Deccan Odyssey offers six grandeur travel tours to promulgate with elegance. The offerings are Maharashtra Splendor, Indian Odyssey, Cultural Odyssey, Maharashtra Wild Trail, Heritage Odyssey and Indian Sojourn. (<https://www.deccan-odyssey-india.com/>)

**Table 2.3: Promotional Tools Used and Awards Won by “Deccan Odyssey”**

S. No.	Name of the Train	Promotional Tools	Year of Award	Awards
3	Deccan Odyssey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ranks among top 25 luxury trains of the world</li> <li>• Also known as “Blue Limousine on Rolling Wheels”</li> <li>• Advertisements on dedicated website, partner advertisers in other countries, help desk</li> <li>• Print media, paid advertisements, travellers’ feedback</li> <li>• Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, reels, blogs, videos, photographs</li> <li>• Special offers and discounts are offered</li> <li>• Early bird discounts, discount under child policy</li> <li>• Attractions for domestic tourists</li> </ul>	2010 to 2012	For three consecutive years the train has won Asia’s Leading Luxury Train at WTA (World Travel Awards)
			2015	Awarded for Best Luxury Train in India 2015 by North India Travel Award
			2017	accorded 7 <sup>th</sup> time with Asia’s Leading Luxury Train at World Travel Award (WTA)

Source: <https://www.orientrailjourneys.com/deccan-odyssey/awards-and-recognition.html>  
<https://www.luxurytrainsindia.org/special-offers.html>

### **Golden Chariot Luxury Train of India**

The train takes to the core of Karnataka and provides three nights and four-day trip and unveils the richness and extravagant Southern state of Indian culture.

The train offering three itineraries unleashing the myriads of South India. “Pride of Karnataka” is a five nights and six days’ trip covering Bengaluru, Nanjangud, Mysore, Halebidu, Chikamgaluru, Hospet, Goa and ends at Bangaluru. All the destinations are the splendid and not comparable tourist’s spots. (<https://www.goldenchariot.org/itinerary/GCIndicative Itinerary>)

“Jewels of South” is a five night and six days’ itinerary offers the complete luxurious tour starting from Bengaluru, Kanchipuram – Mahabalipuram, Thanjavur – Chettinad/Karaikudi, Cochin, Chertala/Maraikulam, ends at Bengaluru. This tour explores the plethora of natural beauty and cultural heritage and interiors of various places belonging to Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The train is embedded with contemporary and modern amenities and services with impeccable hospitality treating their tourists as royals. (<https://www.the-golden-chariot.com/jewels-of-south.html>)

“Glimpse of Karnataka” is a well-crafted itinerary of three nights and four days’ and covers the glorious tourist destinations of Karnataka. The highlight of the itinerary is that tourists can design their own

preference for the voyage along with the royal treatment in train. (<https://www.the-golden-chariot.com/glimpses-of-karnataka.html>)

“Majestic Karnataka” is a newly introduced package of two nights and three-days’ tour which covers the most famous travel tourists’ spots of Karnataka and also part of Goa. The journey starts from Bengaluru and ends at Goa. This is completely a leisure trip whereby one can experience heritage of Karnataka as well as want relaxation at Goa beach. Tourists can make their own memories and cherish this luxurious trip with majestic and mosaic excursion. (<https://www.the-golden-chariot.com/majestic-karnataka.html>)

“Sojourn of India” Golden Chariot luxury train is three nights and four-days’ trip to South India’s leading destinations in tourism world. This is also a newly add on to the bouquet of Golden Chariot and offers the journey which starts from Goa, Hampi, Chikmagalur, Mysore and finishes at Bengaluru. The apogee of the train is to take to the cultural aesthetic experiences, state’s art, genial hospitality and luxurious amenities. (<https://www.the-golden-chariot.com/sojourn-of-india.html>)

**Table 2.4: Promotional Tools Used and Awards Won by “Golden Chariot”**

S. No.	Name of the Train	Promotional Tools	Year of Award	Awards
4	Golden Chariot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertisements on dedicated website, partner advertisers in other countries, help desk</li> <li>• Print media, paid advertisements, feedbacks</li> <li>• Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, reels, blogs, videos, photographs</li> <li>• Attractions for domestic tourists</li> <li>• Discounts for national travelers</li> </ul>	2013	At the 20 <sup>th</sup> World Travel Award held in 2013, the Golden Chariot luxury train was accorded with the Asia’s Leading Luxury Train 2013

Source: <https://www.the-golden-chariot.com/blog/the-golden-chariot-bags-asias-leading-luxury-train-at-world-travel-awards>

<https://www.luxurytrainsindia.org/special-offers.html>

<https://www.goldenchariot.org/Sploffers>

### **Royal Orient Luxurious Train of India**

This is most bizarre train of the India and exposes to the different eloquent cultures of India i.e. Gujarat and Rajasthan. The train was introduced in 1994-95 with the combined efforts of Tourism Corporation of Gujarat and Indian Railways. The role model for this train has been “Palace on Wheels” and it fascinates its tourists with its attraction of fusion of two traditional cultures and its ambiances, services, cuisines and unique experiences of desert safaris, aesthetic exposure, wildlife exposure all together at one train. This luxurious train offers eight days and seven-night journey covering Delhi, Chittorgarh, Udaipur, Junagarh, Veraval, Somnath, Sasan Gir National Park, Ahmedpur, Mandvi, Palitana, Sarkhej, Ahemdabad and Jaipur. (<http://www.luxurytrainsindia.org/the-royal-orient/>)

### **Tiger Express Semi-Luxurious Train of India**

The train is an initiative of IRCTC to promote the wild life treasures of Madhya Pradesh. The train was introduced in 2016 and offers a five days and six nights' travel tour. It is a semi-luxurious train and with economical packages it provides a mesmerizing journey with comforts. The train cater national and international tourists and offers a luxury type excursion. (<https://www.financialexpress.com/photos/business-gallery/278936/irctcs-tiger-express-stunning-interior-images-and-details-of-the-indian-railways-semi-luxury-train/3/>) It travels through four different destinations and provide services such as AC compartments, dining restaurants in the train and multi cuisine is available which makes the journey really smooth and interesting. (<https://www.orientrailjourneys.com/blog/semi-luxury-trains-in-india/>)

### **Dessert Circuit Tourist Train**

The attraction point for this train is the dessert exposure and the itinerary is designed to travel through such cities which are attached to the dessert area of the country. The aim of this excursion is to witness amazing dessert activities and dessert environment and to explore Indian desserts. The attractions of the train are the complete AC train with dining restaurant equipped multi-cuisines and 3-star hotel accommodation is available for off train stays. (<https://www.orientrailjourneys.com/blog/semi-luxury-trains-in-india/>)

### **Heritage Circuit Tourist Train**

The train was introduced with a view of providing exposure to the treasures of Indian culture, heritage and art. The semi-luxurious train provides a tour of five days and four nights and covers UNESCO certified heritage places Khajuraho Temples and Taj Mahal along with aesthetic experience from the spirituality city of Varanasi. The train has the lowest fare offering to the domestic tourists. (<https://www.orientrailjourneys.com/blog/semi-luxury-trains-in-india/>)

### **Buddhist Circuit Tourist Train**

The train attracts national and international tourists and is also the replica of luxurious trains of India and presently serving the rail tracks of India. It covers eight days and seven nights travelling through the Buddhist tourist places of the country. It is most dynamic and equipped with amenities and facilities as compared to rest of the semi-luxurious trains of India. This is the costliest semi-luxurious train of India. (<https://www.orientrailjourneys.com/blog/semi-luxury-trains-in-india/>)

### **Conclusion**

The promotional schemes are introduced which has resulted in easy booking of tickets. Some of the luxury trains are providing special offers and discounts on luxurious trains such as Palace on Wheels, Maharaja Express, Deccan Odyssey and Golden Chariot to attract more and more travelers. There are special packages designed for Indian travelers as well, which are available on designated websites, news releases. In order to cater domestic market special packages with special itineraries are offered through dedicated websites which needs to reach to the consumers. (<https://www.luxurytrainsindia.org/special-offers.html>)

The tourists can book their tickets through official websites of luxury trains, Travelogy India, General Sales Agents (<https://www.travelogyindia.com/luxury-train/>) it is also recognized by the Govt. of India, tourism ministry. The bookings are open for domestic market as well along with for international travelers. Some authorized dealers assigned for booking of tickets of Maharaja Express (<https://www.the-maharajas.com/maharajas/maharajas-express-our-agents.html>) although the train do

not take any responsibility of passengers who book their tickets from any travel agent or third party. (<https://www.royalindiantrains.com/maharaja-express-terms-conditions.html>).

Ministry of Tourism has implemented new ways of promoting all luxury trains. In accord of modern marketing environment social media is playing vital role in promoting products. Hence, social media platform is being considered for promotion of luxury trains. Various bloggers from India and from different countries have been travelled in the luxury trains and has shared various blogs, videos, reels on Instagram, Facebook and other platforms, photographs have been posted on bloggers account and other social media platforms. This arrangement has been done under the “The Great Indian Blog Train” Social Media Influencers’ Campaign which focuses on unique tourism products for luxury train positionings. Along with these efforts, IRCTC, Indian Railways are also promoting the trains in domestic and international market and modifications have been done to the amenities and services offered by these trains according to the latest demand trends of the consumes. (<https://everythingexperiential.businessworld.in/article/Ministry-of-Tourism-promotes-luxury-trains-with-The-Great-Indian-Blog-Train/09-02-2018-140163/>)

Besides these efforts there are need of further improvements for functioning of trains. In this accord the tourism department has planned to introduced a private party to intervene and to apply PPP model replacing revenue model to take care of majority of decision-making strategies relating finances, efficiency levels and increase in occupancy levels of “Palace on Wheels” luxury train. The authorities of tourism industry and RTDC have expressed that it is high time to give international standards in terms of services, ambience, hospitality services, experiences during the entire trip and rebranding of Palace on wheels. Thus, the team from tourism ministry and RTDC have interacted with reputed hoteliers, travel agents and industry bodies to understand the need for private player for improving standards of the luxury train. According to Gayatri Rathore a senior official of tourism department, the private player would be involved in decision making relating to operations, marketing strategies and management related issues of Palace on Wheels. Furthermore, RTDC has also acknowledged the problem in occupancies of the train and have given marketing and branding related issues to tourism department.

(<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/plan-to-run-palace-on-wheels-on-ppp-model/articleshow/91328650.cms>)

The luxury trains focus on their product and branding it accordingly in the national and international market and are using latest promotional tools which are quite effective and fruitful for increasing demand of these products. Post covid the trains are restarting with their journey packages and offering their modified services to attract tourists. In order to increase the occupancies in the luxury and semi-luxury trains various marketing tools are used such as blogs, videos, reels, digital promotional tools, press releases, advertisements and making consumers aware. In international market, Indian luxury trains have huge competition with other luxury trains of various countries. Besides, all these efforts still there is a need of creating awareness among national consumers towards luxurious trains, semi-luxurious trains, circuits and special trains and need to create desire towards travelling from such trains. Price is also one of the important factors whereby it may be compared by different other ways of experiencing luxurious trips by tourists. Therefore, it is necessary to create a sufficient sense of information-based demand among the consumers and creating an attitudinal craving towards such majestic journeys. (Gupta & Verma, 2019; 2023)

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