3rd International Conference on Destination Branding and Marketing

2-4 December 2009
Institute For Tourism Studies, Macao S.A.R., China

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS
3rd International Conference on Destination Branding and Marketing

2-4 December 2009
Institute For Tourism Studies, Macao S.A.R., China

Organisers:

With the support and sponsorship of:
This year’s 3\textsuperscript{rd} International Conference on Destination Branding and Marketing follows the first two successful conferences held in 2005 and 2007 and has become recognised as an international forum where leading destination branding and marketing scholars exchange new thoughts and share the latest knowledge in the field. Parallel to the growth of destination branding and marketing as a research area and professional practice, the DBM Conference now attracts great interest among professionals and scholars.

The Proceedings contains 51 double blind-refereed papers and research notes selected from a total of 92 submissions from 32 different countries. Each submission was blind-reviewed by two to four expert reviewers. In all, 38 tourism researchers donated their precious time and efforts to conduct a total of 213 reviews. We sincerely thank them for their contribution.

Papers published here represent the latest development of destination branding and marketing research in recent years. While topics such as brand equity, destination image and positioning, and destination segmentation remain fairly popular, many new phenomena and perspectives have brought tourism researchers’ attention. Topics such as sustainability, innovation, destination cooperation, the Internet, event tourism (particularly the Olympics) have drawn increasing attention in this conference. Further, new insights may emerge when the context of research changes. Indeed, we are excited that a wide array of destination types (e.g. gaming destinations, ski destination,) and special interest tourism (e.g. heritage tourism, food tourism, conference and exhibition tourism) were studied by contributors of this year’s conference.

We are truly honoured to serve on the Scientific and Organising Committee for this year’s conference. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all individuals who contributed to the success of this year’s conference. It is the tremendous commitment and hard work of all authors, reviewers, moderators, and staff members that assure the quality of this conference, and help build a brand of the DBM conference.

Leonardo (Don) A.N. Dioko, Ph.D.
Institute For Tourism Studies, Macao SAR, China
Co-Chair, Scientific and Organising Committee

Xiang (Robert) Li, Ph.D.
University of South Carolina, USA
Co-Chair, Scientific and Organising Committee
Welcome Message
To Prof. Liping Cai, Prof. Rich Harrill, Dean Bao Jigang, Distinguished Guests and Participants,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 3rd International Conference on Destination Branding and Marketing at the Institute For Tourism Studies, Macao.

I would like to extend our appreciation to you, and all the guest speakers, who have come all the way from different parts of the world to join us today. Purdue University and IFT first co-organised this bi-annual conference six years ago. Thanks to the hard work by the great team at Purdue University, led by Dean Dennis Savaiano and Associate Dean Prof. Liping Cai as well as by our colleagues in Macao, we have come to the third encounter. We are pleased that we are joined in this third conference by our new and renowned partners, the University of South Carolina, led by Dean Brian Mihalik and Prof. Rich Harrill, and Sun Yat-sen University, led by Dean Bao Jigang, I can assure you that the 3rd International Conference on Destination Branding and Marketing will be another fruitful one.

Since Macao’s gaming liberalisation policy was announced in 2002, the gaming sector has become an important contributor to Macao’s tourism industry. Nevertheless, the Macao Government realises the importance of developing Macao into a multidimensional tourist destination, so as to diversify our visitor base. To achieve this objective, there has been a discussion of scaling back the gaming sector as well as strategies to enrich the destination’s leisure, entertainment, culinary, cultural and heritage, and MICE attractions and facilities. As some recent research reveals that travelers’ perception can actually be quite flexible, what kind of marketing strategies should be adopted to re-create Macao’s image?

In the following few days, we will be devoting ourselves to the discussion of the topic. I am very happy that experts in this field are attending here and look forward to hearing solutions and suggestions to help us move forward. I believe that we will be informed new knowledge and phenomena that are worth exploring. Let’s all contribute our best to further methodological developments in foresight.

I wish you a wonderful and invigorating three days! Thank you very much.

Fanny Vong, Ph.D.
Conference Co-Chair
President, Institute For Tourism Studies, Macao SAR, China
Dear President Vong and Honored Delegates:

We would like to join President Fanny Vong in welcoming you to the 3rd International Conference on Destination Branding and Marketing. We are pleased to see many fresh faces, as well as the return of the delegates to the past two conferences.

Not long after our gathering here two years ago, we witnessed an upheaval of financial markets unfolding rapidly across the globe. Few economies, be it developed or developing, were spared by the crisis; and few economic sectors including tourism were immune from the downturn. To fight the way out of it, destinations have adopted a diverse array of corrective policies and measures to attract and retain tourists. They range from short-term aggressive marketing tactics to long-term strategic branding initiatives. Anecdotally there have been successes and lessons, regardless of the economic system in which a destination resides. This gathering offers a timely opportunity for us to confer on the best branding and marketing models and practices in the contexts of recovering from the current economic downturn and of sustaining growth through future crises.

This year’s conference continues the tradition of bringing together the brightest branding minds from both the academic community and the tourism industry. Thanks to the leadership by Drs. Leonardo (Don) Dioko and Robert Li, the Scientific and Organizing Committee has also gathered a high-caliber collection of papers authored by researchers with academic credentials and/or practical experiences in the field. As such, the conference will again illuminate how the theories and practices of destination branding and marketing can inform, contribute to, and benefit from each other. It serves as a major global platform for scholars and practitioners to inspire, to share, and to debate strategies, trends, and issues of branding and marketing as they apply to destinations.

It is our privilege to once again co-organize and co-chair the conference with President Vong. We are delighted that this partnership is joined by our colleagues from University of South Carolina and Sun-Yat Sen University. We would like to thank President Vong, IFT faculty, staff, and students for generously hosting the gathering. Our active participation in all the events will be an appreciation for their diligent work. We look forward to personally meeting each of you. Once again, welcome!

Sincerely,

Dennis A. Savaiano, Ph.D.  
Dean, Purdue University, USA  
Co-organizer, 3rd DBM Conference

Liping A. Cai, Ph.D.  
Associate Dean, Purdue University, USA  
Co-Chair, 3rd DBM Conference
Dear Delegates to the 3rd International Conference on Destination Branding and Marketing,

As the new Dean of the College of Hospitality, Retail, & Sport Management at the University of South Carolina, I would like to welcome all participants and organizers to the 3rd International Conference on Destination Branding and Marketing. I would especially like to thank the Institute For Tourism Studies for including us in this outstanding event.

Long before attending this event, I was aware of the conference’s reputation as the world’s premier research venue for destination branding and marketing. It is an honor for us to stand among the leaders of this nascent field.

While I will enjoy the conference, I do feel I have a bit of work to do. It is my job as Dean to meet as many of you as I can and chat over research, dinner, or excursions though incredible Macao. I would like to know how we can partner with your university or organization, hopefully leaving the conference with a relationship that will last well beyond the conference and reinforced each time we meet in Macao.

Welcome to the conference and once again thank IFT for providing this environment so conducive to new friendships and opportunities.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brian J. Mihalik
Dean, College of Hospitality, Retail & Sport Management
University of South Carolina, USA
Co-organizer, 3rd DBM Conference
Dear Delegates to the 3rd International Conference on Destination Branding and Marketing,

First, on behalf of the school of tourism management of Sun Yat-sen University, please allow me to express my warm welcome to you all to the 3rd International Conference on Destination Branding and Marketing. Today we are happy to gather here in Macao, the place where east meets west. We are here to exchange ideas and share our research achievements.

Unlike tourism research in western developed countries, tourism research in China is all the time closely linked to the development of national economy and society. To tackle the practical problems emerged in the tourism development process has therefore become an important task for Chinese tourism researchers. Under such a condition, Chinese scholars could have access to the reality of the industry and obtain good understanding of it. But on the other hand, this practice-oriented research approach prevents us from more in-depth academic investigation. Often we pay more attention to practical questions than academic questions, which to a large extent limit the academic contribution of our research to the increase of human knowledge. We therefore need to strengthen our communication and cooperation with our international colleagues.

The international conference in Macao just provides us such an opportunity. Through the participation to the conference, I believe, Chinese researchers will be able to get a good chance to have discussions with international scholars and re-exam their research findings, which will encourage them to develop more critical and creative thinking. In the meanwhile, the conference will provide international scholars a good opportunity to improve their understanding of tourism development in China and current research achievements by Chinese scholars as well as to enhance the mutual communication.

As one of the co-organizers, on behalf of the school of tourism management of Sun Yat-sen University, I’d like to thank Institute For Tourism Studies of Macao for the successful organization of the conference, and I’d also like to thank the other two co-organizers, Purdue University and University of South Carolina of the United States. Without their joint efforts, this conference could not have such a successful opening. May the conference a great success!

Bao Jigang, Ph.D.
Assistant President
Sun Yat-sen University, China
Co-organizer, 3rd DBM Conference
Dear Delegates to the 3rd International Conference on Destination Branding and Marketing,

It is my honor to welcome all participants and organizers to the 3rd International Conference on Destination Branding and Marketing. It would especially like to thank the Institute For Tourism Studies for their generosity and hospitality. Having attended the conference since inception, it is gratifying to see the number of friendships and quality of research increase from event to event.

While the conference has already become the world’s premier forum for destination branding and marketing, I believe its stature will continue to grow. Let me explain: at the University of South Carolina’s College of Hospitality, Retail, & Sport Management, we strongly perceive our disciplines as central to international economic development.

In this new era of globalization, with advances in communications and technology, destination branding and marketing is rapidly becoming the primary method of achieving a better life for residents all over the world.

In this context, the 3rd International Conference on Destination Branding and Marketing assumes greater importance as a Global Economic Development Conference for the 21st Century.

Enjoy the conference.

Sincerely,

Rich Harrill, Ph.D.
Director, Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Travel & Tourism Industry Center and the International Tourism Research Institute, University of South Carolina, USA
Co-Chair, 3rd DBM Conference
Conference Organisation
**Fanny Vong**  
President  
Institute For Tourism Studies, Macao SAR, China

**Liping Cai**  
Associate Dean, College of Consumer and Family Sciences  
Purdue University, USA

**Rich Harrill**  
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**Bao Jigang**  
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School of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management
College of Hospitality, Retail, and Sport Management
University of South Carolina, USA

Maria Ma
School of Tourism Management
Sun Yat-sen (Zhongshan) University, China
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Wendy Tang
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Ruth Yeung

Masters of Ceremony
Ubaldino (Dino) Couto and Tammy Ku

Thanks to
Chong Kit Pai
Kuan Mei Ian
Leong Peng Ieng
Danny Cha Daehan

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Jose But
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Elizabeth Cheng
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Kenichi Inoue
Doris Ip
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Thanks to Session Moderators

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Amitabh Upadhya
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<td>479</td>
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</tbody>
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Keynote Abstracts
BRANDING, HOLISTICALLY

Dr. Liping Cai
Associate Dean, School of Consumer and Family Science
Purdue University, USA

Abstract: Destination branding, as it is currently preached and practiced, remains entrenched in the traditional 4Ps of marketing and focuses on the destination as a product. In his speech Professor Cai will highlight the latest developments in consumer sciences that instigate a rethinking of branding fundamentals. These developments call for a holistic research agenda that is instructive for branding practitioners and destination leaders. They also challenge tourism scholars and professionals to be scientifically innovative in the study and practice of branding. Professor Cai will illustrate some of the developments with recent findings from empirical studies.

DESTINATION BRANDIMG – I STILL HAVEN’T FOUND WHAT I’M LOOKING FOR

Dr. Nigel Morgan
The Welsh Centre for Tourism Research
Cardiff School of Management, UWIC, UK

Abstract: In the last decade place branding has developed apace. Many efforts have been qualified successes while others have been unstated disappointments. In either case, millions of dollars have been spent but are the results consistent with what brand equity building principles and theories predict? Issues of identity building, politics and rapid changes in the external environment are still blurry. Trust as an inherent quality of brands remains understudied in the context of tourism. As active debate continues on what constitutes effective destination branding, we have yet to strengthen the foundations for truly robust and universal frameworks for guiding and understanding how resources can best be put to work for branding destinations in the long run. This presentation will endeavor to discuss these and other issues.
Plenary Session 1
PLACE MARKETING OR PLACE MAKING?
Annette Pritchard
Director, The Welsh Centre for Tourism Research
Cardiff School of Management, UWIC, UK

Abstract: Tourism places exist at the convergence of history and politics, social relations and cultural perceptions. In this presentation I will explore how the branding of these places acts not merely to promote them but also to create them by endorsing powerful place mythologies. Today places are themed, re-imaged or re-branded as part of international statecraft, economic regeneration and place marketing strategies. We are familiar with how this can have an economic benefit and generate place-pride, yet the discourse of place branding – in other words those identities, narratives and panoramas which are celebrated and which are hidden – also tell us a great deal about the ways we see our world. We could say that tourism marketing furnishes the would-be traveler with an imaginary place archive so that when we travel we are visiting, experiencing and consuming landscapes, places and cultures that have been produced and presented through marketing and the media. My presentation will suggest that if we are to further theorize place branding we must examine it in the wider global socio-cultural, economic and political context. Only then will we begin to unpick place branding’s culturally powerful role in representing and differentiating place.

BRAND CHINA: TOUR GUIDE PERCEPTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR DESTINATION BRANDING AND MARKETING
Rich Harrill
Director, Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Travel & Tourism Industry Center
Director, International Tourism Research Institute, University of South Carolina, USA

Abstract: This presentation summarizes research on the attitudes and experiences of tour guides in China and how they mediate contact between Western visitors and Chinese residents. We found that tour guides’ role as mediators exert considerable influence over destination branding and marketing. Tour guides were interviewed in three locations intended to capture a cross-section of experiences with travelers, including: Beijing, the cultural and historical center of China; Shanghai, the country’s commercial center; and Guilin, a major nature-based tourism destination. Through collecting and analyzing tour guides’ narrative lens, the article explores: (1) initial brand knowledge by potential visitors, (2) China’s brand image, and (3) the country’s implicit or explicit brand promise. With this information, implications are then drawn for the country’s branding and marketing. The article then discusses how these perceptions and interpretations can be used to improve China’s destination brand marketing, development, and management.
PRODUCT AND DESTINATION BRANDS: DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

Bill Gartner
Professor of Applied Economics
University of Minnesota, USA

Abstract: The discussion of destination brands is of recent vintage in the academic literature whereas product brands, at least in practice, can be traced back to antiquity. Some features of product brands such as predictability and conformity are not present all the time in destination brands. Similarly where it is easy to determine brand equity for a product brand, using market information, the same cannot be said for a destination brand. Another key difference is brand ownership. Product brands are controlled by an entity that has authority and power to sell, retire, or otherwise manipulate the brand. Destination brands are comprised of numerous stakeholders that a Destination Management Organization cannot fully control but instead must use its persuasive powers to cajole, entice or encourage to participate in the branding effort. In spite of the differences there exist similarities between the two forms of branding. The strongest of those is a personal or emotional attachment to the brand. This presentation will explore in more detail differences and similarities between the forms of branding in order to inform the direction of scientific inquiry.

A POLITICAL ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF GOVERNMENT MARKETING AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF ZHAOQING

Jigang Bao
Dean, School of Tourism Management and School of Geography and Planning
Sun Yat-sen University, China
(Co-authored with Xiaoming Zhang)

Abstract: This presentation analyzes the imperfect practice of local government in Mainland China involved in tourism marketing. The case study of Zhaoqing reveals that, when government marketing is regarded by many academics as the mainstream of government involvement in tourism development, like all the previous modes of government involvement in history, policies and implementation of government marketing are inevitably affected by the local context of socio-cultural tradition and the rules and operation of political economic system. In contemporary China, the involvement of local government in tourism marketing exposes that the decision-makers and executants work with a collective mood for quick success and an intense eagerness to directly intervene the investment, planning, design, production and promotion for tourism products. Encouraged by such mood and eagerness, the local government seldom pays attention to comprehensive market analysis or technical design for any action, and the government-dominated tourism product development may take a wrong first step at the very beginning.
Plenary Session 2
DESTINATION BRANDING AND REGENERATION

Roger Pride
Director of Marketing, Welsh Assembly Government, UK

The presentation will look at how destination branding can play a role in regenerating an area. It will emphasise the importance of achieving integration between the citizen, visitor and business messaging. It will also examine the benefits of citizen involvement in terms of informing marketing activity. The recent branding of the Valleys of South Wales as “The Heart and Soul of Wales” will be used as a case study.

WHY BRAND? THE TRUE VALUE OF DESTINATION BRANDING

Jonathon Day
Department of Hospitality and Tourism, Purdue University, USA
Founder and President at Placemark Solutions, Inc

Abstract: Destination branding supports the efforts of marketers across the tourism system, and yet, most research has focused solely on the role of the destination marketing organization. This presentation will take a fresh look at the value created by destination branding and provide a new framework for examining the value of destination brands. Dr Day will include key findings from recent studies and examples from current branding campaigns. The presentation will also discuss how DMOs can increase the value of their branding efforts for both their destinations as a whole and a variety of stakeholders.
MAINTAINING BRAND INTEGRITY IN A DISINTERMEDIATED WORLD

Jim Epperson
President/CEO, First Capitol Tourism Development Corporation
Executive Director, Harrison County Convention & Visitors Bureau

Abstract: Destinations do not own their brand. The consumer – or traveler – owns the brand. Efforts at managing brand communications must recognize the ownership and be responsive to the reality of the image that exists in the marketplace. Communications must not be dissonant with those perceptions or they will be considered unbelievable and disingenuous. Community-based destination branding has also recognized that brand communications for a destination must not be contrary to community values. This trend is a component of the sustainability of a destination. Enter the phenomenon of Social Media. Travel websites such as Tripadvisor.com, ratings of facilities on Google, and more general sites like Facebook and Twitter provide a living collection of content about destination experiences provided by actual travelers. Additionally, destination residents become involved and provide “travel-like-a-local” recommendations about the Hots and the Nots. These posts may or may not be in line with the brand architecture for the destination. In addition, destinations have now entered the discussion and are trying to manage the content to their advantage. They run the risk of appearing commercial in a realm that values an organic, social exchange of information. The presenter will review the explosive growth of social media, case studies of how destinations are reviewed and how they participate, and will challenge researchers to find ways to measure the brand and economic impact of social media on tourism destinations.

TOURISM SATISFACTION INDEX FOR HONG KONG

Haiyan Song
School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong SAR, China
(Con-authored with R. Veen, G. Li and J. Chen)

Abstract: This presentation describes a study to assess Hong Kong’s competitiveness as an international tourism destination using tourist satisfaction indexes. Tourists’ satisfaction is an important issue for many organizations that depend on inbound tourists to Hong Kong. To capture the dynamic nature of tourist satisfaction, an innovative framework is proposed by integrating alternative approaches and multiple dimensions of satisfaction. The framework has a sound theoretical underpinning, and is capable of assessing tourists’ satisfaction with both individual tourism sectors and the destination as a whole by establishing an internal linkage between them. Due to the linkage of the satisfaction levels for tourism related sectors one is able to accurately pinpoint the areas for further improvement and implement relevant procedures to enhance tourist satisfaction levels. The project is the first attempt to comprehensively and continuously monitor tourists’ satisfaction with Hong Kong tourism. The indexes can be estimated repeatedly over time in order to examine the tourist satisfaction levels, which may reflect the changes of a destination’s competitiveness. In addition, the tourist satisfaction indexes may serve as a benchmark for other destinations. The project has successfully produced satisfaction indexes of the six tourism related sectors for each of the seven important regional source markets for Hong Kong. The study presents empirical results and their practical implications for destination branding and marketing are discussed.
Full Papers
PREDICTION OF LOCAL BRAND LOYALTY TO A NATION’S TOURISM PRODUCT: A QUANTITATIVE INVESTIGATION

Lamya Al-Arrayed
University of Bahrain
Bahrain

ABSTRACT

Destinations have to be branded holistically, and the support of locals, through actions, perceptions, and word-of-mouth are vital to the brand’s success. If locals are to be recruited as brand ambassadors, it is important to understand how they perceive their nation, and consider this in destination management decision-making as well as in construction of a destination brand identity. This paper replicates the quantitative methodology targeting expatriates used in Al-Arrayed (2007) to explore whether local demographics, attribute satisfaction or holistic perceptions can contribute to prediction of locals’ support and brand loyalty to their nation’s tourism product, defined by ‘recommending that others visit the destination for a holiday and to attend events’.

Keywords: Bahrain, brand loyalty, destination branding, logistic regression, residents, word-of-mouth

LITERATURE REVIEW

The destination is a holistic system, in which tourism is inseparable from its other long-term goals. A destination brand must be managed holistically as an economy that incorporates tourism, exports, foreign direct investment (FDI) and skilled labour, politics and living standards, so that gains made towards one goal are not detrimental to it’s other goals (Anholt, 2002b; Trueman et al., 2004). Beyond the integration of various tourism promotional messages (Skinner, 2005), positive marketing messages cannot be divorced from those communicated through actions and policies (Anholt, 2002b; Johansson, 2005; Anholt, 2008). In addition, promotional messages are affected by ‘noise’ (Belch & Belch, 2007, p.142), from the media (Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Beirman, 2002; Kim & Richardson, 2003; Beeoton 2005; Govers 2007), the culture (Kim & Richardson, 2003), exports and the people. Maintaining the harmony of destination promotion messages (Anholt, 2002a) is an ambitious goal, but it can provide direction and sustain awareness of the bigger picture. There is a significant correlation between positive experience of a country and positive feeling about its products, its government, its culture, its people (Anholt, 2006b), making it easier for a strong economy to attract inward investment or travel and promote its brands. Unlike corporate brands, destinations come with baggage and history (Kotler & Gertner, 2002) which demand consideration. The brand identity that will aim to influence the existing image (Kapferer, 2004) must be informed by this image and constructed with the bigger picture in mind.

Out of 142 destination image papers reviewed by Pike (2002), about 10% used students, 42% targeted visitors at the destinations, 39% included visitors abroad, 14% used travel / trade experts, and only Witter (1985) and Jutla (2000) included local residents. Resident perceptions can identify infrastructure weaknesses to address and strengths to highlight in the brand identity. Residents interact with arrivals in their everyday life and, as front-line employees, should ‘own’ the brand (Gilmore, 2002a; Morgan & Pritchard, 2002; Govers, 2007) and portray its values through their interactions. Their attitudes can contradict or reinforce the marketed brand identity, weakening or strengthening the brand respectively. When they do not own the brand identity, their inconsistent attitudes may confuse visitors, whose own WOM would then further undermine the brand. The destination brand should be holistic (Anholt, 2002b; Gilmore, 2002; Morgan & Pritchard, 2002; Nworah, 2005), with satisfied residents serving as brand ambassadors. Al-Arrayed (2007) focused on investigating the ability of demographics, satisfaction with destination attributes or holistic perception to predict expatriate brand loyalty to the Kingdom of Bahrain’s tourism product and found that both attribute satisfaction and holistic perception contributed significantly to prediction of expatriate BLT, especially satisfaction with the destination’s Place attributes. Expatriates were defined as individuals who work outside their birth country but do not immigrate to the country where they work (Barber & Pittaway, 2000). Located between tourists and immigrants (Haug et al., 2007), they may share traits with either or both.
Expatriation and international mobility are forecast to increase with more high-level employees working as expatriates at some point (Richardson & McKenna, 2006), and they are under-researched, so they were considered a very important group. Although they bear some similarity to local residents, they often live in bubbles which attract others of the same nationality (Haug et al., 2007), they have a high ability to activate the VFR market through their networks abroad, their commitment to the destination is temporary and their relationship with the destination is less familiar and intimate (Al-Arrayed, 2007). Familiarity of tourists has been studied (Baloglu, 2001; Prentice, 2004), but expatriate familiarity / intimacy research is scarce. No other academic holistic destination branding research has been conducted in Bahrain. This paper aims to contribute towards filling this gap, by replicating the study with local residents. Resident support to branding is increasingly mentioned in current literature (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Pride 2002; Anholt, 2005b; Cooper et al., 2005; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Nworah, 2005; Pike, 2005; Young et al., 2007) emphasizing marketing to internal target markets and eliciting their brand support in reinforcing destination marketing messages. The results could provide information useful to the design of Bahrain’s brand identity. In addition, no research specifically compares resident data to discover the best predictors of loyalty. Such indicators can inform branding. This framework of this research was based on several ideas: the brandability of destinations, the holism of branding, the potential power of word-of-mouth, the need for internal marketing and the potential of prediction.

The research aims to address these gaps by answering the following research question: Can demographics, attribute satisfaction or holistic perception contribute to prediction of local brand loyalty to the destination’s tourism product?

METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire used in Al-Arrayed (2007) was constructed specifically to answer a parallel research question. Self-administered written questionnaires ensure a high response rate, accurate sampling and minimum interviewer bias while providing personal contact and permitting the interviewer to make assessments and provide necessary explanations without interpretation (Oppenheim, 1992, p.103).

Likert-type scales are recommended in tourism impact research due to their superior convergent and discriminate validity (Maddox, 1985), quantifying opinions (Hussey & Hussey, 1997), allowing respondents to indicate the strength of their agreement with ‘carefully constructed statements’ related to ‘an attitudinal object’ (Zikmund, 2000, p.291), to go beyond categorical responses and be ‘more discriminating’ and are simple to complete and to analyze (Hussey & Hussey, 1997, p.171). Their popularity in business research is due to their adaptability and ‘flexibility in anchoring scales’ for particular purposes ‘while tapping a concept’ (Sekaran, 1992, p.169). Therefore they are appropriate for measuring satisfaction. The “raw” list of constructs had been compiled through a judgment sample of travel agents, preliminary research and literature review. The instrument’s validity and reliability had to be ascertained to ensure its fitness for purpose. Content validity was achieved through literature review, consulting experts and developing an inclusive instrument (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996). Construct validity requires the use of relevant constructs that ‘tie to the concepts and theoretical assumptions’ employed (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996, p.168) and this was achieved by testing and piloting vigorously to ensure the constructs’ relevance. Criterion-related validity is ascertained if the instrument discriminates between individuals who are known or expected to be different through some other measure or data (Sekaran, 1992). Significant differences were found between expatriate and local responses. Reliability is the instrument’s consistency in measuring what it is supposed to (Sekaran, 1992), and is achieved through replication of results under the same conditions (Hussey & Hussey, 1997; Sufian, 1998), by using a larger sample and by testing groups of questions for reliability together, such as using Cronbach’s alpha to determine whether a collection of attributes ‘hang together as a set’ (Sekaran, 1992, p.174) or Factor analysis.

After the two pilots, the questionnaire was shorter, used a smaller font size, had a different layout, with attributes rearranged and grouped into distinct themes. Eliminating non-response attributes, adding a formal introductory note (Zikmund, 2000; de Vaus, 2002) and changing the attitude scale from a seven-point to a five-point ranging from “Highly unsatisfactory” to “Highly satisfactory”
McIntosh & Prentice, 1999) also made the questionnaire easier to use. The final instrument included a combination of multi-attribute five-point rating scale questions measuring destination attribute satisfaction (see Table 1) and a list of holistic perception words to choose from. Brand loyalty was addressed using a binary scale (1 = yes, 0 = no) (Ko & Stewart, 2002). Respondents were asked to state whether they intended to recommend that others visit Bahrain for a holiday and to attend events. Based on the literature, respondent demographics included gender, age, education, income, employment and marital status (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a). Researchers are of different minds regarding the placement of such questions (Sekaran, 1992), but this research followed Oppenheim’s (1992) recommendation to place personal questions near the end of the questionnaire.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Holistic perception</th>
<th>Beaches</th>
<th>Exciting</th>
<th>Hot</th>
<th>Slow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boring</td>
<td>Exotic</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>Nothing special</td>
<td>Sophisticated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean</td>
<td>Expensive</td>
<td>Peaceful</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Family destination</td>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>Unique</td>
<td>Under-developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmopolitan</td>
<td>Fast-paced</td>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>Well-developed</td>
<td>Westernised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crowded</td>
<td>Financial centre</td>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different</td>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>Glorious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorganized</td>
<td>Glamorous</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Nightlife</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute satisfaction</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Attractions</th>
<th>Costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>Beaches</td>
<td>Number of sights</td>
<td>Accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
<td>Night life</td>
<td>Variety of sights</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Cultural Activities</td>
<td>Standard of sights</td>
<td>Food and beverages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>Information about sights</td>
<td>Entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and beverage</td>
<td>Sight-seeing</td>
<td>Information at sights</td>
<td>Shopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>Friendliness</td>
<td>Facilities at sights</td>
<td>Sightseeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Al-Arrayed (2007)

This research was sample based, like most social research (de Vaus, 2002). Reliability and validity depend on the specification of the sampling frame (Baker, 2003). Compiling a complete sampling frame is not always feasible (Zikmund, 2000), and the nature of the local population presented a dilemma. The population was defined as “local residents aged 18 or over”, and the instrument was distributed in the same method as Al-Arrayed (2007). Particular attention was paid to sample representation. In this research, findings are destination specific, so can only be generalized to the local Bahrain population. The literature was reviewed to establish how samples, residents in particular, were chosen in previous research. Pike’s (2002) summary was very informative. Many destination image studies drew their samples from university students (for example, Crompton, 1979; Morello, 1983; Dillon, et al., 1986; Kale & Weir, 1986; Woodside & Lyonski, 1989; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993; Gronhaug & Heide, 1992; Waitt, 1996; Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Chen & Kerstetter, 1999; Mackay & Fesemauer, 2000; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000; Andsager & Drzewiecka, 2002; Kim & Richardson, 2003; Caldwell & Freire, 2004). Despite their attraction as a captive audience, Oppenheim (1992, p.62) advised strongly against their use in research not particularly aimed at students, because of ‘differences in educational and social background, literacy, social values and average age’ from the general population, making their results ungeneralizable.

Fears of bias from over-representation or under-representation (Sufian, 1998; Hussey & Hussey, 1997) led to the decision to approach respondents in more than one location. 26 reliable distributors of a variety of nationalities, home addresses, work addresses, institution types and positions...
were chosen as agents and instructed to distribute questionnaires to a random sample of locals they came across over a period of one week and recording the locations. They were to first ascertain that respondents live in Bahrain and are Bahraini. Each agent was given only eight copies of the local questionnaire, to encourage their cooperation, improve the rate of returned responses and get a diverse cross-section of the population. Out of 208 questionnaires, 205 were completed (96.90%). They had been randomly distributed in venues around the country; staff and parents at two schools and a large nursery, staff and students on two university campuses, shop salespeople, shoppers and coffee shop customers in two malls, staff and customers in two offices and an airline company, vendors and customers at a book fair, customers at a food court, a telecommunications company, an insurance company, two banks, a large family sports club, the pool and restaurants of a hotel, a mobile telephone shop, a library and a large centrally located internet café, staff at a ministry and a factory employing thousands and patients at a public hospital. The relaxed nature of these locations resulted in respondents’ willingness and even eagerness to participate.

ANALYSIS

The data were prepared for analysis using SPSS 14.0. Sample demographic data were compared to available census figures to establish representation (de Vaus, 2002, p.153). Where census data were not available, sample data were judged subjectively to ensure that they appeared reasonable. The sample was 50.2% male, the age distribution was 63.4%, 34.1% and 2.4% in the age groups 20-39, 40-59 and 60 or over respectively, so the two older categories were combined. 41% of the sample was married, 22.9% had no more than a high school qualification, 58.5% held a university degree and 18.5% had a postgraduate degree. The largest concentration of the sample was in the lowest income class. 20.49% of the sample was unemployed, which is to be expected because the sample included university students who are mostly not employed. Occupation responses included references to industry, position and specialization, which illustrated diversity if they could not be used for analysis. Bahrain was the stated country of origin of the majority of the sample. With only 10 of non-Arab origin, this demographic was not usable for analysis. Sample data was considered to be representative.

Respondents perceived 8 of the 14 attributes positively. Factor analysis was attempted to reduce the 14 Place attributes. Neither “Climate” nor “Beaches” had high correlations (above 0.30) with any other scale items. Deleting either would have slightly increased the value of Cronbach’s Alpha from 0.774 to 0.777. All the attributes were retained, keeping this information in mind. The items had a low total of 16 inter-item correlations above 0.3 out of a possible 91. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.739 and a Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity (BTS) significance of 0.000 supported Factor analysis (de Vaus 2002; Pallant 2005). The initial five-component solution explained a total of 63.106% of the variance. Monte Carlo PCA for Parallel Analysis (MCPA) for 14 variables and 205 cases offered two eigenvalues lower than those obtained from PCA, indicating a two-component solution. Catell’s Scree test concurred, with a sharp break after the second component. Since the correlation between the two components exceeded 0.3, they were rotated using Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization. The result was that seven and five attributes clearly loaded on the first and second component respectively, “Food and Beverage” cross-loaded on both and “Climate” did not load on either. After several trials, the two problematic attributes were dropped and the steps were repeated. Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.753 again indicated reliability. Out of 61 possible correlations, 14 exceeded 0.3. The only attribute not correlating highly with any other was “Beaches”, also the only variable whose deletion would improve Cronbach’s value to 0.758. The resulting solution had five components with eigenvalues exceeding 1.0. MCPCA’s randomly generated data matrix for 12 variables and 205 cases offered two components whose eigenvalues were exceeded by those in the solution. Catell’s Scree Plot again indicated a two-component solution with a sharp break after the second component (see Figure 1). This two-component solution had a KMO value of 0.705 and a BTS significance of 0.000. The two components explained 27.695% and 14.905% of the variance respectively (see Table 2). Correlation between the two components was low (0.276), so the solution was rotated using Varimax with Kaiser normalization producing a clean solution in which each of the 12 attributes clearly loaded on one of the two components. The components appeared to have underlying themes of activities and comfort (Table 2), so they were called “LPACT” (Local Place Activities) and “LPCOM” (Local Place Comfort). The final summary of local Place attributes was
LPACT, LPCOM, “Climate” and “Food and Beverage”. These four items were retained to be reintroduced in a logistic regression model.

**Figure 1**
CATELL’S SCREE PLOTS

The Attractions scale was considered next. The response rate was 98.5%, and a Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.864 indicated the scale’s reliability. Locals were dissatisfied with all Attractions attributes. Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis tests found statistically significant differences at the 1% level between some of the demographic groups. Factor analysis was performed. The 15 correlation coefficients ranged from 0.333 to 0.760 (exceeding 0.3,) the KMO value was 0.783 and BTS was statistically significant (Sig=0.000). This indicated that the factors hung well together and that factor analysis would be appropriate. PCA produced two components with eigenvalues exceeding 1.0 and explaining 59.38% and 18.90% of the variance respectively. Catell’s Scree test indicated that one or two factors may work, with two sharp breaks (see Figure 1). MCPCA produced two components with eigenvalues exceeding corresponding randomly generated eigenvalues for six variables and 202 cases. A two-component solution was rotated with Oblimin with Kaiser normalization (correlation=0.457) and was acceptable, but all the attributes loaded highly in a one-component solution (See Table 2), so the latter was named LATT (Local Attractions) and retained for further analysis.
### Table 2
FACTOR ANALYSIS COMPONENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCAL PLACE</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Other variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. LPACT</td>
<td>2. LPCOM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.701</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Entertainment</td>
<td>.666</td>
<td>.218</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cultural activities</td>
<td>.656</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Nightlife</td>
<td>.652</td>
<td>.153</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Shopping</td>
<td>.597</td>
<td>.242</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Beaches</td>
<td>.446</td>
<td>-.043</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Transportation</td>
<td>.406</td>
<td>.248</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Friendliness</td>
<td>-.083</td>
<td>.871</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Communication</td>
<td>-.081</td>
<td>.852</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Cleanliness</td>
<td>.245</td>
<td>.498</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Safety</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>.493</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Accommodation</td>
<td>.286</td>
<td>.475</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCAL ATTRACTIONS</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>1. LATT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Information at sights</td>
<td>.822</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Facilities at sights</td>
<td>.801</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Standard of sights</td>
<td>.800</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Information about sights</td>
<td>.780</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Variety of sights</td>
<td>.707</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Number of sights</td>
<td>.705</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCAL COSTS</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>1. LCOST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Shopping</td>
<td>.783</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Entertainment</td>
<td>.769</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. F&amp;B</td>
<td>.764</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Accommodation</td>
<td>.714</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sightseeing</td>
<td>.638</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Transport</td>
<td>.622</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Costs scale had a 100% response rate and a Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.809 (Sig=0.000), indicating a very reliable scale. Locals rated most costs positively. Accommodation was the least satisfactory (38%). There were no statistically significant differences between the categories. 13 out of 15 inter-item correlation coefficients exceeded 0.3. Cronbach’s alpha could not be improved by deleting any attributes, a KMO of 0.820, and a significant BTS (Sig = 0.000) supported Factor analysis. PCA produced only one component whose eigenvalue exceeded 1.0, explaining 51.525% of the variance. Catell’s Scree test also clearly favoured a one-component solution (see Figure 1). MCPCA concurred, offering only one component. All six attributes loaded well on one component (Table 2), so it was considered a good solution. This new variable was called LCOST (Local Costs) and retained for logistic regression analysis.

In the brand loyalty section, most locals intended to recommend others visit the destination to attend events (mean=0.66) and for a holiday (mean=0.59). Pearson Chi-square found no significant differences even at the 5% level between the categories. Positive responses to both statements (1 = Yes and 0 = No) were considered an indication of brand loyalty to the destination’s tourism product (BLT), while negative response to either or both statements indicated the opposite (see Figure 2). BLT members were assigned a value of “1” and others a value of “0”. There were 92 BLT members and 113 non-members. All the variables that were previously set aside were reintroduced as independent variables.
variables in logistic regression models. According to Hosmer and Lemeshow’s (2000) guidelines for logistic regression, no more than eight the variables can be entered into a model together, for this sample.

The first model attempted was one in which the six demographic variables Gender, Age, Marital status, Education, Income level and Employment (employed / unemployed) were entered together as independent variables. There were 205 valid responses (100% of the sample). None of the variables correlated highly with BLT, the highest being a very low 0.170 with Age, indicating that a good model may not be achievable. In addition, none of these variables correlated highly with each other. Collinearity statistics in the SPSS coefficients table showed no Tolerance values below 0.1, the lowest being 0.544, and no VIF values exceeding 1.839. Hence, all these variables could be entered into an exploratory logistic regression model together. Dropping most of them from the model did not detriment prediction. The best solution was that including only Age (Table 3). The Hosmer and Lemeshow Test Chi-square of 0.000 with 0 degrees of freedom (Sig=0.000) indicated goodness of fit, but the Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients (OTMC) Chi-square value of 5.705 with 1 degree of freedom (Sig= 0.017) indicated a poor fit. The model explained between 2.7\% and 3.7\% of the variability, according to Cox & Snell R square and Nagelkerke R square. Using this logistic regression model increased the likelihood of correct BLT prediction from 55.1\% to 59.5\%, a very small 8\% improvement ((59.5\% - 55.1\%) / 55.1\% = 7.98\%) which does not particularly support the model’s predictive usefulness. It provided positive and negative predictive values of 56\% and 61.54\% respectively. Age correlated positively with BLT indicating that older respondents were 1.881 times more likely to be brand loyal to Bahrain’s tourism product. According to this analysis, demographics are not a useful aid in prediction of local BLT.

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The process was repeated using the six variables LPACT, LPCOM, Climate, Food and Beverage, LATT and LCOST (Table 2) as independent variables. This analysis included 200 valid cases. None of the variables correlated highly with BLT, the highest being LPACT and LATT at 0.316 and 0.300 respectively, indicating that a mediocre model might be achievable. “Climate” correlated the least (0.159) with BLT and there were no high inter-correlations. Coefficients collinearity statistics showed no Tolerance values below 0.1 between variables, the lowest being LPACT at 0.574 and no VIF values exceeding 1.742, indicating the feasibility of a model. After some experimentation, the best solution included LPACT, LATT, “Climate” and “Food and Beverage” (see Table 3). The OTMC Chi-square value of 34.027 square with 4 degrees of freedom (Sig=0.000) and the Hosmer and Lemeshow Test Chi-square of 12.811 with 8 degrees of freedom (Sig=0.119) both indicated goodness of fit. The model explained between 15.6% and 21.0% of variability, according to Cox & Snell R square and Nagelkerke R square. This logistic regression model would increase the likelihood of correct prediction from 56.0% to 69.0%, a 23.2% improvement ((69.0% - 56.0%) / 56.0% = 23.2%), which supports its use in BLT prediction. The model had positive and negative predictive values of 67.1% and 70.2% respectively. LATT, “Food and Beverage” and LPACT contributed most significantly to the model’s predictive ability with the highest Wald significance values (Table 3). The direct relationship of all the variables to BLT indicated by the all-positive B values meant that Locals who were more satisfied with each of these attributes were more likely to be loyal to the tourism product, but these relationships were not very strong since all Exp (B) values were between 1.0 and 2.0. Interestingly, the variables contributing most are those related to things to do, while Costs and climate were not related.

The process was then repeated using the holistic perception words that were chosen to describe the destination (Table 1). The 34 words were entered in batches due to their number. The analysis included 205 valid cases. None of the words correlated highly with BLT, with “Boring” having the highest correlation (-0.402). The variables were tested for collinearity and multi-collinearity.

### Table 3
LOGISTIC REGRESSION SOLUTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1(a)</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
<th>95.0% C.I. for EXP(B)</th>
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<td>1. Demographic solution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.632</td>
<td>.268</td>
<td>5.555</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>1.881</td>
<td>1.112 - 3.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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<td>.400</td>
<td>7.374</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.337</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Attribute satisfaction solution</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>LPACT</td>
<td>.365</td>
<td>.197</td>
<td>3.422</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>1.441</td>
<td>.979 - 2.121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LATT</td>
<td>.444</td>
<td>.187</td>
<td>5.635</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>1.559</td>
<td>1.081 - 2.250</td>
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<td>Climate</td>
<td>.182</td>
<td>.143</td>
<td>1.622</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.203</td>
<td>1.199</td>
<td>.907 - 1.586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F &amp; B</td>
<td>.388</td>
<td>.187</td>
<td>4.298</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>1.475</td>
<td>1.021 - 2.129</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-.676</td>
<td>.274</td>
<td>6.103</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.509</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Holistic Perception solution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaches</td>
<td>1.215</td>
<td>.603</td>
<td>4.054</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>3.370</td>
<td>1.033 - 10.999</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boring</td>
<td>-1.971</td>
<td>.383</td>
<td>26.470</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>.066 - .295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorganized</td>
<td>-1.321</td>
<td>.448</td>
<td>8.697</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.267</td>
<td>.111 - .642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westernised</td>
<td>1.120</td>
<td>.746</td>
<td>2.252</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>3.064</td>
<td>.710 - 13.224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.438</td>
<td>.215</td>
<td>4.165</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>1.550</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SPSS 14.0
in case they were in the solution together. None of the independent variables inter-correlated highly. The words with the lowest unexplained variability were “Fast-paced” and “Glamorous” with Tolerance values of 0.541 and 0.586 respectively. The highest VIF was 1.849. Statistics indicated that a good model might be possible. Groups of variables were entered through exploratory trial, error and retrial. Some variables were re-introduced while others were dropped. This continued until seven independent variables remained in the solution. The opportunity cost of deletion was considered in each step along with Wald significance. The best solution included the four words “Boring”, “Disorganized”, “Beaches” and “Westernized” with low Wald significance values (Table 3). The OTMC Chi-square value of 55.257 with 4 degrees of freedom (Sig=0.000) and the Hosmer and Lemeshow Test Chi-square of 1.579 with 4 degrees of freedom (Sig=0.813) both indicated goodness of fit. The model explained between 23.6% and 31.6% of the variability, according to Cox & Snell R square and Nagelkerke R square. This logistic regression model would improve the likelihood of correct BLT prediction from 55.1% to 72.7%, a substantial 31.94% improvement ((72.7% - 55.1%) / 55.1% = 31.94%), which supports the model’s predictive use. It had positive and negative predictive values of 66.1% and 80.6% respectively. BLT was inversely related to “Boring” and “Disorganized” and directly related to “Beaches” and “Westernized”. Locals using either of the latter two words were 3 times as likely to be brand loyal to the tourism product as other locals.

FINDINGS

A comparison of the predictive ability of the three variables (Table 4) indicates that both attribute satisfaction and holistic perception contribute significantly to prediction of local BLT, especially the latter. Information about the use of the four words (Boring, Disorganized, Beaches and Westernized) is the most useful tool in prediction. This is followed by attribute satisfaction, while demographics (Age) are a poor predictor. Use of the four holistic words to describe the country can contribute to loyalty prediction, and understanding whether particular descriptions are considered positive. Descriptions inversely related to BLT would result in a negative perception of their country as a tourism destination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Predictors</th>
<th>Research Findings (Locals)</th>
<th>Findings of Al-Arrayed (2007) (Expatriates)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Variables</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contribution</td>
<td>55.1% to 59.5% (+8%)</td>
<td>55.2% to 62.2% (+12.7%)</td>
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<td>Attribute satisfaction Variables</td>
<td>LPDO</td>
<td>XPACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LATT</td>
<td>XPCOM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>Accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F &amp; B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution</td>
<td>56.0% to 69.0% (+23.2%)</td>
<td>55.3% to 74.6% (+34.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic Perception Variables</td>
<td>Boring</td>
<td>Nothing special</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disorganized</td>
<td>Underdeveloped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beaches</td>
<td>Disorganized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Westernized</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution</td>
<td>55.1% to 72.7% (+31.94%)</td>
<td>55.2% to 71.1% (+28.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best predictors</td>
<td>Holistic perception</td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
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</table>

Table 4
COMPARISON OF THE THREE MODELS
CONCLUSION

This research contributes to filling the gap resulting from the scarcity of literature addressing destination brand images local residents hold of their own country, and that addressing local brand loyalty, as well as the gap of exploring ways to predict positive WOM and brand loyalty. The usefulness of various models in predicting brand loyalty to the tourism product has been explored. This knowledge can help to identify potential brand ambassadors and the factors that may contribute to their brand loyalty, and provide some direction when designing tourism promotional material, especially for local consumption. Closer inspection of attribute satisfaction data can also help to identify strengths and weaknesses of the destination from the local point of view. It sheds light on which features should be highlighted or need to be addressed in a nation management strategy, and also identifies those most detrimental and therefore most urgent. This method can also be used with tourists. Not only can it identify which holistic perception words are most useful in tourism brand loyalty prediction, it also provides information about whether particular descriptions are considered positive or negative from the point of view of particular markets through identifying whether using particular words is directly or inversely related to tourism brand loyalty. This insight can be useful in deciding which destination aspects of the brand identity to emphasize or downplay to each target market.

Although this research identifies important areas to consider, it does not, by nature, provide comprehensive explanations for the results. It would now be useful to conduct detailed research into the areas that have been identified as requiring attention, and allow respondents to use their own constructs. In a dynamic world, responses may change over time and as a result of events, but since this paper is exploring the workability of a particular methodology, that of brand loyalty prediction, such changes would not adversely influence the findings. A larger sample would allow the logistic regression model to accommodate a larger number of variables together, and this would be particularly useful in larger more diverse destinations.

The methodology used in brand loyalty prediction can also be investigated in other destinations. Generalization of the findings through replication and corroboration in other destinations would contribute to theory in a broader way.

REFERENCES


LESSONS FROM THE TOP: WHAT CAN BE LEARNED MEASURING THE NATION BRANDING EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MAJOR WORLD TOURISM DESTINATIONS

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ABSTRACT

One of the most sensitive topics regarding the branding and the travel and tourism industry refers to the creation and promotion of the nation brands. The importance of this issue has increased with the higher attention given by the organizations involved, not only to the promotion of products and services but also of the tourism destinations. The perception associated by the potential tourists with a tourism destination appears to be essential: the more favorable it is, higher (and better) will the performances of the destination be. Creation, development and employment of the nation brands are still at the beginning, at the international level. Preceded by the Anholt Nation Brands Index (first released in 2005), Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index is one of the successful attempts to define and evaluate the nation brands based on a complex methodology considering as reference dimensions the exports, capacity of government, culture and cultural heritage, quality of population, tourism, investment and immigration for 50 countries on all continents of the world. Paper assesses the competitiveness of the travel and tourism in the World’s top 25 tourist destinations, based on the methodology and results published in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report, and considering the industry’s most representative performance indicators – international tourist arrivals and international tourism receipts, provided by the World Tourism Organization. Effectiveness of the nation branding is assessed through the association between the competitiveness of the world’s top tourist destinations and their position in terms of the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index.

Keywords: nation brands, branding effectiveness, tourism destinations competitiveness

INTRODUCTION

The branding process has exceeded the boundaries of the marketing communication and the brands have been used in an increasingly diversified context, more and more separated from the field of consumer goods that has provided the support for their initial development (Jevons, 2005). Defined as a name, a term, a sign, a symbol or a drawing or a combination of these elements intended to help in the identification of the goods or services of a seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from their competitors (American Marketing Association in Kotler, 1997), the concept of brand has been enriched with the images and identity expressing the significance of the brand or related associations and the elements present in the minds of consumers providing the foundation for the brand image formation (Hankinson, 2005).

Tourism organizations use brands as tools of marketing communication to achieve both objectives of communication (in terms of the awareness and, more important, of the consumer attitude towards them and their products and services) and objectives related to the sales of their offers promoted in the market. The success of branding depends decisively on its strategic approach: if brands express the core values of an organization, then the brand policy should align the long-term oriented strategies with the current business performances of the organization (Simões and Dibb, 2001). If creation, development and employment of brands are relatively easy to understand in the case of the tourist products and services, the process tends to be more complex when it is developed at the level of
the tourism destinations (Pike, 2005). Thus, developing a brand for a tourism destination becomes more
difficult as a result of the multi-dimensional nature of the destination itself, the different interests of the
stakeholders present in the market, the differences between the theory and specific decision-making
process involved, on the one hand, respectively the consensus of the involved community, on the other
hand, a concrete way of measuring the loyalty to the brand and, last but not the least, the problems
associated with the financial support of the brand.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the most sensitive topics regarding the branding and the travel and tourism industry
refers to the creation and promotion of the nation brands. The importance of this issue has increased
with the higher attention given by the organizations involved, not only to the promotion of products
and services but also of the tourism destinations. The perception associated by the potential tourists
with a tourism destination appears to be essential: the more favorable it is, higher (and better) will the
performances of the destination will be. Creation, development and employment of the nation brands
are at the beginning even at the international level. One of the first attempts to define and evaluate the
nation brands was completed with the release of the Simon Anholt’s first international ranking of the
nation brands, based on a comparative analysis at the level of 11 countries in relationship to a set of
items relating to products and services, competence and fairness in governance, human capital
development, perception of culture, tourism development and business investments. More recently, the
cooperation between Simon Anholt and the marketing research company GfK Roper led to the
elaboration of the Nation Brands Anholt-GfK Roper based on a significantly more complex
methodology considering as reference dimensions the exports, capacity of government, culture and
cultural heritage, quality of population, tourism, investment and immigration for 50 countries on all
continents of the world. Building a brand for a tourist organization, product or service, and/or a tourism
destination has become a key component of an effective marketing strategy implemented in the tourism
markets. Still, the branding process in the tourism markets raises at least two questions: 1) what are the
reference elements to be taken into consideration in the creation, development and employment of the
brands and 2) how significant is the impact tourism brands can generate over the performances of the
travel and tourism industry.

In the recent years, competitiveness has become one of the common concepts employed to
approach and describe the sustainable development of the travel and tourism industry, specialized
literature defining and circulating different concepts. In the context of the recent impressive growth, the
competitiveness of tourism destinations and, generally, the overall competitiveness of the travel and
tourism industry, became vital for their survival and growth in the international market, in the
conditions of increasing leisure time and rising levels of disposable income (Echtner and Ritchie,
2003). If in 1950, top fifteen tourist destinations attracted almost all of the total number of tourists
worldwide, sixty years later the percentage decreased from 98% to 57% (UNWTO, 2008). Given the
situation of the world economy, with a decrease in the overall demand for tourist services, the focus of
the tourism organizations and destinations has shifted from simply attracting more tourists to
making the tourist destinations more competitive.

Camprubi, Guia, and Comas (2008) have defined the tourist destination as a network of
relations between different actors that, together, create the tourist product. Competitiveness of a
tourism destination is a complex concept, a part of this complexity being suggested by the definition
given to the tourist destination seen as places or some form of actual or perceived boundary, such as
physical boundaries of an island, political boundaries, or even market-created boundaries (Kotler,
Bowen, and Markens, 2006). As each destination may have different traditions, history, cultural and
natural resources, as well as unique ambitions and means of accomplishing objectives, several authors
have created or adapted different models to measure competitiveness of the tourist destinations.

Claver-Cortes, Molina-Azarin, and Pereira-Moliner (2007) have proposed the Porter’s five
forces model, taking into consideration the factor conditions, demand conditions, related industries,
corporate strategy, structure and rivalry in the sector. Brent Richie and Crouch (2003) proposed the
consideration of the destination ability to increase tourism expenditures, to increasingly attract visitors,
to provide tourists with satisfying and memorable experiences in a profitable manner, to contribute to
the enhancement of the well-being of destination residents and preservation of the natural resources for the future generations. Seen from a macroeconomic perspective, tourism destination competitiveness can be assessed in terms of the natural resources, climate and culture (Lumsdon, 1997).

Dwyer, Forsyth and Rao (2000) examined the price competitiveness of travel and tourism in 19 destination countries using efficiency and productivity, while Zhang and Jensen (2007) developed a model for explaining tourism flows by adding to the price competitiveness the natural endowments, climate, geography, and cultural heritage. Consumers’ points-of-view are, also, essential in the assessment of the tourism destination competitiveness. Beerli and Martin (2004) consider tourism destination competitiveness as being a result of the perceived image of the destination, and this image is influenced in great extent by customer’s motivations, experiences and socio-demographic characteristics. Sustainable tourism, as a way of increasing competitiveness of tourist destinations, was also mentioned by several authors (Özturk and Eraydin, 2009; Williams and Ponsford, 2009). Also, the branding process for a tourism destination is crucial for long-term destination competitiveness (Boo, Busser and Baloglu, 2009). For measuring destination competitiveness, Kozak and Rimmington (1999) used quantitative performances of a destination such as the tourist arrivals and tourism incomes as well as qualitative aspects like attributes best liked or most disliked by tourists during their vacation. One important conclusion in the literature is that there is no universal model for measuring tourism destination competitiveness. Every destination has its own competitiveness’ set of factors, which can not be extended to other destinations (Kozak and Rimmington, 1999; Enright and Newton, 2004). Even there are some factors considered by almost all the authors assessing the tourism competitiveness, science has not yet agreed for an unique set of pillars to consider when measuring this competitiveness.

METHODOLOGY

The main objective aimed through the present research approach referred to the assessment of the associations between the (a) overall travel and tourism competitiveness, respectively its three major dimensions and specific 14 pillars, as they were defined in the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2008 (Blanke and Chiesa, 2008) issued by the World Economic Forum in Geneva, Switzerland, (b) the performances of the travel and tourism industry – international tourist arrivals and the international tourism receipts, based on the results provided by the World Tourism Organization, and (c) the strength of the nation brand for a selected group of twenty-five countries including the world’s top tourist destinations in terms of the international tourist arrivals: Austria, Canada, China, Croatia, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong (China), Hungary, Italy, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and United States.

Selection of the tourist destinations and gathering of the corresponding data has been done as to avoid the effect of the world economic crisis (being collected and processed data referring to the competitiveness and performances of the selected countries for the years 2007). Although Macau has been included on the World Tourism Organization’s list of the first twenty-five tourist destinations in terms of their international tourist arrivals, this destination has not been selected due to the as the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report does not provide any data referring to this destination. The group of the selected countries accounts for 632.3 million tourist arrivals (representing 70.02 % in the total of the international tourist arrivals), respectively for 576.8 billion US Dollars (representing 67.38 % in the total of the international tourism receipts).

Secondary data regarding each of these countries have been collected to provide information about the following variables of the research:

- their image and reputation as tourist destinations, respectively the value and positioning of their nation’s brands based on the scores determined according to the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index methodology;
- overall travel and tourism competitiveness, as it has been defined and expressed by the indexes determined, for the selected countries, according to the specific methodology of the World Economic Forum;
- competitiveness of the regulatory framework, business environment and infrastructure and human, cultural and natural resources, as it has been defined and expressed by the sub-indexes
determined, for the selected countries, according to the specific methodology of the World Economic Forum;

- the competitiveness of the regulatory framework in terms of the policy rules and regulations, environmental sustainability, safety and security, health and hygiene, and prioritization of travel and tourism, as it is determined, for the selected countries, according to the World Economic Forum methodology;
- the competitiveness of the business environment and infrastructure in terms of the air transportation, ground transportation, and tourism infrastructure, information and communication technology and price competitiveness, as it is determined, for the selected countries, according to the World Economic Forum methodology;
- the competitiveness of the human, cultural and natural resources in terms of the human resources, affinity for travel and tourism, natural resources, and cultural resources, as it is determined, for the selected countries, according to the World Economic Forum methodology;
- performances of the travel and tourism industry and economy, as they are expressed through the international tourist arrivals and the international tourism receipts, for the selected countries, based on the results provided by the World Tourism Organization.

Pearson correlation coefficient has been employed to measure and assess the associations between:

- the nation’s brands indexes and the scores expressing the overall competitiveness and the specific competitiveness of the regulatory framework, business environment and infrastructure, and human, cultural and natural resources of the major world tourism destinations, in order to identify the supporting elements of the nation’s brands and
- the nation’s brand indexes and the performances of the travel and tourism industry in the considered countries, in order to determine the impact of the nation’s brands over these performances.

MAIN FINDINGS

An overall assessment of the travel and tourism competitiveness at the level of the world’s top tourism destinations allows drawing the conclusion according to which these destinations do not form a homogeneous group: there are significant differences between them as the corresponding values of the Travel and Tourism Competitive Index (TTCI) reveal. Austria (with a TTCI score of 5.43) and Germany (5.41) are leading the hierarchy in terms of the overall travel and tourism competitiveness while Saudi Arabia (3.68) and Ukraine (3.76) are the tourist destinations ending it. The average TTCI value, of 4.66 (determined on a scale from one to seven), may suggest that although it is determined for the world’s top tourist destinations, their travel and tourism competitiveness could, and probably should, be improved.

Assessment of the relationships between the competitiveness of the travel and tourism and its major dimensions at the level of the world’s top tourist destinations illustrates the very strong association between the overall competitiveness and the business environment and infrastructure ($r = 0.97$), as well as the strong associations between the overall competitiveness and the specific regulatory framework ($r = 0.86$), respectively the human, cultural and natural resources ($r = 0.83$). The appropriate environment and infrastructure seems to provide the background for the development of the tourism business while the regulatory framework and the available human resources and natural and cultural heritage contribute significantly to the improvement and maintaining of the travel and tourism competitiveness of the considered countries.

With an average value of 4.94, the regulatory framework appears as a factor supporting the overall competitiveness of the world’s top 25 tourist destinations. There are significant differences between these destinations in terms of the competitiveness of the regulatory framework: Hong Kong (China; 5.91), Austria (5.86), and Germany (5.67) are leading the hierarchy having a very good set of specific regulations while Saudi Arabia (3.83) and China (3.91) are the destinations that have serious problems to solve in this respect.

The associations between the specific pillars and the overall competitiveness of the regulatory framework appear to be strong in the cases of the safety and security ($r = 0.83$), environmental
sustainability \((r = 0.82)\), health and hygiene \((r = 0.78)\), and policy rules and regulations \((r = 0.73)\), respectively moderate in the case of the prioritization of travel and tourism. These values show, on a hand, that positions currently held by the considered countries, as top tourist destinations of the world, are significantly supported by the results obtained under the efforts done to improve the safety and security for the consumers of tourist products and services, to implement measures aiming to generate the sustainable development of the tourism activities, to meet the specific market requirements and expectations regarding the health and hygiene, and, as a proper background for all of these, to build and enforce appropriate policy rules and regulations in the area of travel and tourism.

### Table 1

Major Pillars of the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness of the World’s Top 25 Tourist Destinations

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**Notes:** TTCI – Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index; RF – Regulatory Framework index; PRR – Policy Rules and Regulations index; ES – Environmental Sustainability index; SS – Safety and Security index; HH – Health and Hygiene index; PTT – Prioritization of Travel and Tourism index; Countries are ranked in the descending order of the TTC Index.

Prioritization of travel and tourism has appeared as a determinant of a secondary importance in terms of the competitiveness of the regulatory framework. This must be the direct consequence of the fact that countries holding the top positions in the world hierarchy of the tourist destinations had already considered, and some of them still consider, the travel and tourism industry, with a high priority, in their recent or current development. A higher attention given by the Governments to the industry, a more effective marketing and branding aiming to attract an increasing number of tourists and the better attendance at the specialized events in the industry could improve the contribution of this pillar to the creation of a better regulatory framework supporting the competitiveness of the travel and tourism industry.
The average value, determined at the level of the group of considered countries, of 4.45, the **business environment and infrastructure** appears as one of the areas where the world’s top tourist destinations still have to make improvements.

Table 2
Major Pillars of the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness in the World’s Top 25 Tourist Destinations
In Terms of the Business Environment and Infrastructure

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Notes: TTCI – Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index; BEI – Business Environment and Infrastructure index; ATI – Air Transport Infrastructure index; GTI – Ground Transport Infrastructure index; TI – Tourism Infrastructure index; ICT – ICT infrastructure index; PC – Price Competitiveness in the travel and tourism industry index; Countries are ranked in the descending order of the TTC index.

The hierarchy of the considered tourist destinations is leaded by the United States (with a score of 5.58), Germany (5.43), Canada (5.40), Spain and United Kingdom (both with 5.32). One-third of these destinations, particularly Ukraine (with an average score of 3.24), China (3.45), and Egypt (3.47), should take into consideration for their development the necessary improvements of the business environment and infrastructure. Due to their strong association, the infrastructure of the information and communication technology ($r = 0.90$), ground transportation infrastructure ($r = 0.89$), air transportation ($r = 0.84$), and tourism infrastructure ($r = 0.78$) represent the pillars contributing the most to the overall competitiveness of the business environment and infrastructure. The price competitiveness of the travel and tourism industry ($r = -0.49$) seems to be moderately but inversely associated with the competitiveness of the business environment and infrastructure, any increase in the price affecting the business environment and infrastructure competitiveness.
As in the case of the business environment and infrastructure, based on the average value determined at the level of the considered countries, of 4.59, the human, cultural and natural resources is another area where the world’s top tourist destinations should make improvements. United States (with an average value of 5.52), Spain (5.33), and United Kingdom (5.26) are leading the hierarchy of the world’s top tourist destinations in terms of the human, cultural and natural resources competitiveness while Saudi Arabia (3.43), Ukraine (3.51), and Egypt (3.86) are placed at its bottom. Cultural resources represent the pillar with the strongest association with the overall competitiveness of the human, cultural and natural resources ($r = 0.86$) while human resources ($r = 0.64$) and natural resources ($r = 0.52$) can be characterized through a rather moderate association. With a value of the correlation coefficient of –0.02, the affinity for travel and tourism seems to be not all important for the overall competitiveness of the world’s top destinations in terms of the human, cultural and natural resources.

With average values, determined at the level of the considered group of tourist destinations, the human resources (5.23) and the affinity for travel and tourism (4.86) are the pillars for which these destinations register values above while natural resources (3.84) and cultural resources (4.42) are the pillars associated with values below the average one expressing the competitiveness of the human, cultural and natural resources.

Table 3
Major Pillars of the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness in the World’s Top 25 Tourist Destinations In Terms of the Human, Cultural and Natural Resources

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**Notes:** TTCI – Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index; HCN – Human, Cultural and Natural resources index; HR – Human Resources index; ATT – Affinity for Travel and Tourism index; NR – Natural Resources index; CR – Cultural Resources index; Countries are ranked in the descending order of the TTC index.
Correlations between the values of the nation brands index and the overall, respectively the major dimensions of the travel and tourism competitiveness, have been measured for 20 out of the initially selected 25 tourist destinations as data regarding the Nation Brands Index were not available for Hong Kong (China), Portugal, Greece, Croatia and Ukraine (the index is not currently calculated for these countries). There is a very strong association between the values of the nation brands index and those expressing the overall competitiveness of the travel and tourism industry in the selected tourist destinations ($r = 0.88$). A high degree of competitiveness is directly reflected in a higher position of a certain tourist destination in the hierarchy built based on the determined overall travel and tourism competitiveness.

Table 4

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Notes: TTCI – Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index; RF – Regulatory Framework Index; BEI – Business Environment and Infrastructure Index; HCN – Human, Cultural and Natural resources Index; ITA – International Tourist Arrivals in the destination countries (million tourists); ITR – International Tourism Receipts (billion US Dollars); n.a. – not available data; Countries are ranked in the descending order of the TTC index.

Analyzing in a comparative manner the associations between the nations’ brands index and the major dimensions of the overall travel and tourism competitiveness for the World’s top 25 tourist destination, it can be observed that the business environment and infrastructure holds the most determinant position ($r = 0.87$), followed by the human and cultural resources ($r = 0.81$) and the specific regulatory framework ($r = 0.70$). An adequate infrastructure, supporting the development of the tourism business, as well as a stimulating business environment, contribute significantly to the improvement of the position held by a certain country, seen as a tourist destination, in the hierarchy of the nations’ brands index. Or, in other words, a solid nation brand must have as a background a sound,
reliable and facilitating business environment and infrastructure.

Human and cultural resources also play an important role for the strength of the nation brands, at least at the level of the World’s top tourist destinations ($r = 0.81$). A well-established nation brand should count on the available natural and cultural attractions, as well as on the human resources of a high quality in terms of their qualifications, skills and abilities. Regulatory framework is characterized by a less strong but still significant association ($r = 0.70$) with the position held in the nation brands index hierarchy. This suggests that a strong nation brand should be built on the background provided by the suitable laws and regulations regarding the functioning of the tourism business although their impact over the nation brands and over the effectiveness of the nation branding will be lower by comparison to that generated by the business environment and infrastructure and the available human, cultural and natural resources.

A more in-depth analysis conducted taking into consideration the pillars corresponding to each of the major dimensions of the travel and tourism competitiveness will lead to the following conclusions:

- In terms of the regulatory framework, the strength of the nation brands appears to be significantly associated with the laws and regulations concerning the health and hygiene related to the tourist products, services, and activities provided and/or conducted in the market ($r = 0.73$). Associations of moderate intensity are registered between the strength of the nation brands and the policies, factors, and regulations enhancing the environmental sustainability ($r = 0.64$), respectively the policy rules and regulations meant to create a permanent support for the development of the travel and tourism industry ($r = 0.54$). Less relevant from the perspective of the nation brand strength appear to be the safety and security ($r = 0.34$), although an unsafe or unsecure destination will tend to become a less visited one, and the prioritization of the travel and tourism sector ($r = 0.23$), as a potential vector of development of the economies and markets of the tourist destinations. The less important significance associated to the least two pillars can be explained, in a certain extent, by the nature of the selected countries: the group includes world’s top tourist destinations, where safety and security represent a rather solved problem and, also, where the travel and tourism industry already contributes significantly to the development of the economies and markets;

- In terms of the business environment and infrastructure, the strength of the nation brand appears to be very strongly associated to the information and communication technology infrastructure ($r = 0.87$) and strongly associated to the air transportation infrastructure ($r = 0.81$), tourism infrastructure ($r = 0.81$) and the ground transportation infrastructure ($r = 0.75$). In plain and simple words, strengthening the nation brand can be the direct result of the improvements done, at the level of the tourist destinations, in terms of the communication, transportation and tourism infrastructure. An interesting relationship has been identified between the nation brands’ strength and the price competitiveness of the travel and tourism industry: lower the price competitiveness of the tourist destination is, higher the strength of the nation brand will be. Strong nation brands tend to be associated with a rather high level of prices for the tourist products and services provided in the market;

- Finally, in terms of the human, cultural and natural resources, it has been observed a very strong association between the strength of the nation brand and the cultural resources available ($r = 0.84$). Strong nation brands tend to be rather those of the tourist destinations offering an increased number of the UNESCO cultural World Heritage sites, a higher capacity of sports facilities, and, overall, an increased richness of the cultural experiences provided to the potential tourists. Quality of the human resources ($r = 0.71$) appears to be another driver for the strength of the nation brand: education and training of the workforce, as well as the availability of the qualified labor characterize a well-established nation brand. Surprisingly, the relationship between the natural resources and the strength of the nation brand has been assessed as a very poor one ($r = 0.11$): although the available natural resources can provide an important competitive advantage, their existence appears to be less relevant for the building of a strong nation brand. The association between the affinity for travel and tourism, defined as the extent to which the country and society are open to tourism and foreign visitors, and the...
strength of the nation brand is not only extremely poor but, also, inverse ($r = -0.03$). Strength of the nation brand does not depend on how open are the citizens of a certain country, seen as a tourist destination, toward welcoming foreign tourists.

Based on the results obtained measuring the association between the nation brands and the dimensions and pillars of the travel and tourism competitiveness, at the level of the World’s top tourist destinations, it can be concluded that:

- the business environment and infrastructure is the most important dimension of the travel and tourism competitiveness that determines the strength of a nation brand;
- a nation brand tends to be stronger when it is perceived by the potential tourists as a destination promoted effectively (using the specific means of the information and communication technology), offering something valuable to see (mainly cultural resources), easily reachable (through the air transportation infrastructure), and providing good products and/or services (a proper tourist infrastructure);
- accessibility of the tourist destination is essential for building a stronger nation brand: consumers of the tourist products and services seem to have a better perception of the tourist destinations that are easily accessible in terms of the information available and communications about them (the internet being the medium capable to provide the highest level in this respect), and of the means of transportation providing a fast and comfortable access to them (the effective air and ground transportation infrastructure).

Assessment of the relationships between the strength of the nation brand and the performances generated by the travel and tourism industry in the selected countries indicates a moderate association, both in terms of the international tourist arrivals ($r = 0.55$) and the international tourism receipts ($r = 0.64$). Thus, it can be concluded that building a strong nation brand would help the travel and tourism industry to generate good but not necessarily better performances. There are also other factors, besides the nation brand, that contribute to the overall attractiveness of a tourist destination and, consequently, to the performances of the travel and tourism industry at the level of that destination.

**CONCLUSION**

The investigated group including the world’s top tourist destinations includes countries that differ significantly in terms of their travel and tourism competitiveness. Assessment of the relationships between the competitiveness of the travel and tourism industry and its major dimensions, at the level of the world’s top tourist destinations, illustrates the significant associations between the overall competitiveness and, mainly, the business environment and infrastructure, the regulatory framework, respectively the human, cultural and natural resources also contributing, in a significant manner, to the competitiveness of the industry. The most relevant pillars supporting the competitiveness of the travel and tourism industry are: laws and regulations concerning the safety and security, respectively the environmental sustainability (for the regulatory framework), information and communication technology, ground and air transportation infrastructure (for the business environment and infrastructure), and cultural resources (for the human, cultural and natural resources).

The association between the strength of the nation brands and the overall competitiveness of the travel and tourism industry in the case of the selected tourist destinations is very strong. A high degree of competitiveness is directly reflected in a higher position of a certain tourist destination in the hierarchy built based on the determined overall travel and tourism competitiveness. Business environment and infrastructure is the major determinant of the nation brands strength, while the human, cultural and natural resources, respectively, the regulatory framework bring their contribution to enhance the force of the nation brands.

Thus, lessons observed analyzing the competitiveness of the travel and tourism industry and the nation brands strengths at the level of the world’s top tourist destinations are the following:

1. business environment and infrastructure is the most important dimension of the travel and tourism competitiveness but regulatory framework and human, cultural and natural resources should not be omitted. Improvements in the communication, transportation and overall
tourism activities will help travel and tourism industry to gain competitiveness and generate better performances.

2. the background of the most competitive tourist destinations includes the information and communication technology infrastructure, ground and air transportation infrastructure, the available cultural resources, laws and regulations on safety, security, and environmental sustainability.

3. higher the competitiveness of the travel and tourism industry is, stronger the nation brand of that country will be. Travel and tourism industry is a significant determinant of the nation brand strength and, consequently, for the nation branding effectiveness.

4. building a strong nation brand involves paying a special attention to the improvement of the business environment and infrastructure of the travel and tourism industry.

5. strong nation brands are pertaining to the countries where laws and regulations on health and hygiene, related to the tourist products, services, and activities, are carefully considered.

6. strong nation brands are those developing and employing on a larger scale the information and communication technology.

7. strong nation brands appears to be those seizing the available cultural resources and capable to provide rich cultural experiences.

8. a nation brand tends to be stronger when it is perceived as a destination effectively promoted, offering something valuable, easily reachable, and providing good products and/or services.

9. accessibility of the tourist destination, described in terms of the communication, information and transportation, is essential for building a stronger nation brand.

Further directions of research to be followed refer to the identification of a more adequate set of determinants of the nation brands and branding effectiveness, including elements besides the existing ones considered by the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report methodology, and allowing a better measurement of the nation branding impact over the competitiveness of the travel and tourism industry; and conducting of an extended analysis of the nation branding effectiveness, in relationship with the competitiveness of the travel and tourism industry, in all the countries and tourist destinations covered by the Anholt-Gfk Roper Nation Brands Index, Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report and the World Tourism Organization.

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PLACE PULLING POWER: THE CASE OF LIVERPOOL ‘08

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ABSTRACT

The paper contributes to the developing knowledge of place branding and highlights the importance of place branding strategies, that enabling the place to seek continual development and prosperity. The theoretical concepts of place brand creators, influencers and key driving forces, together with the different brand user groups are set against both current and historic indicators of place branding to model the pulling power of place branding. Interviews with key stakeholders indicate that, in the case of the Liverpool ‘08 campaign, they are generally positive about the re-branding campaign and considered it to be creating a positive image that will continue to drive inward investment and increase tourism. However, it is clear that reputation and intangible factors are more important than functional and tangible factors when creating a positive brand image. Understanding place brands and the influence on the performance of the place, in terms of continuous development, regeneration and sustainability is important. Future comparative-case analyses between places that have gone through regeneration and repositioning could help to understand the significance of place branding, in terms of sustainability of place, and identify the specific facets of a place that could prove critical when putting place branding practices into action.

Keywords: Place branding, Liverpool ‘08, brand creators, brand users, destination

INTRODUCTION

Place branding has emerged as an academic field of study (Hankinson, 2001, Kavaratzis, 2004) in which there has been an apparent lack of empirical research (Caldwell and Freire, 2004) and little clarity or agreement about terminology and definitions (Anholt, 2004). According to Placebrands, (2006) place branding brings together a range of existing specialisms, in particular those of brand management and corporate branding, general management and marketing concepts with development policy, to create the new discipline with equal emphasis on visionary strategies and hands-on implementation, which then opens up a variety of opportunities for a place to develop and prosper.

Liverpool ‘08 is the re-branding campaign developed by the Liverpool Culture Company and Liverpool City Council, with the aim to “capture the dynamism and creativity of Liverpool and support Liverpool’s quest to become a world class city by taking full advantage of the Capital of Culture opportunity” (Liverpool ‘08, 2006). Therefore, it provides an excellent opportunity to look closely at the campaign and understand its relationship with the overall development of the place. This provides an opportunity to develop further insights into the place branding concept and begins an exploration of models which may help determine the scope and interaction of place brand elements and the key indicators of place brand sustainability.
BACKGROUND

Places using events such as arts or sports led initiatives to regenerate, re-position and re-brand themselves have been well documented (Rowe and McGuirk 1999; Garcia 2004). However, whilst destination event branding has been well documented, Caldwell and Freire (2004) believe there is a lack of empirical research in the field of place branding, and Anholt (2004) notes that there is little clarity about its importance and role in the future development of the place, city or a region. The debate relating to branding is active and intriguing: brands have been used as marks of identification at some time in almost all countries and civilisations (McNeill and McNeill, 2003). However, destination branding and especially place branding is considered to be a relatively new field of study (Hankinson, 2001; Kavaratzis, 2004) which has probably evolved out of branding tourism destinations that started to gain visibility around 1998. Nonetheless, there remains a need to:

1. Carry out further study on understanding the nature of place branding, its evolution and importance in terms of continual development of the place,
2. Identify and establish the key constructs that have influenced or contributed towards place branding and
3. Establish the significance of the role of brand creators and brand users within place branding.

DESTINATION BRANDING

Tourists are shifting towards choosing a destination based on intangible attributes, such as lifestyle fulfilment and long-lasting memories of pleasure, (Lim and O’Cass, 2001) rather than making decisions based on tangible elements, such as accommodation and attractions. Hence, branding a destination in terms of intangible attributes is perhaps the most effective marketing tactic available to contemporary marketers (Morgan and Pritchard, 2004). As a result, the need for the destinations to create a unique image in order to differentiate themselves from their competitors is more critical than ever (Morgan et al., 2004). In addition, creating a unique identity has become a basic requirement of sustainable place development within an increasingly competitive global marketplace that seems to be dominated by a few leading destinations such as London, New York, Paris and Sydney that attract over two-thirds of the worldwide tourism market (Piggott, 2001).

Most of the successful brands offer social, emotional and identity value to the users as their mainstream tag lines, in line with individual brand personalities that enhance the perceived utility, desirability and quality of the product or service (Kotler and Gertner, 2002). Moreover, these brands represent a unique mixture of product features and added values, both functional and non-functional, that have now taken on greater relevance and are inextricably linked to that brand, awareness of which may be conscious or intuitive (Macrae et al., 1995). It has been noted that consumers make lifestyle statements while selecting their destinations, since they are buying into emotional relationships (Urdde, 1999; Sheth et al., 1999). As a result, the competition in tomorrow’s destination marketplace for consumers will not be fought over price but over the hearts and minds that ideally will match consumers’ lifestyle statements. According to Morgan et al. (2004), this is how places have moved into territories previously reserved for consumer brands. It has also been noted that a lack of leadership, responsiveness and management control, together with limited availability of funds, mixed internal and external pressures will pose unique challenges to future destination marketers (Morgan and Pritchard, 1999).

In this context, developing emotional relationships with consumers is the key to destination differentiation. In addition, to build a meaningful destination brand, the essence is to create an emotional link between the destination and the potential visitors, whereby spirit of the destination is seen as a key factor in strengthening that relationship. Moreover, Pike (2005) suggests destinations are far more multidimensional constructs than consumer goods, products and other types of services. Therefore, in order to create differentiation, there is an immediate need to develop a succinct message, or slogan, that focuses on one or a few brand associations, which may be effective in winning over the consumers who are already overloaded with information about destination.
PLACE BRANDING

Place branding is a concept relating to the perceptions that people have about the place, city, region or country, and the place’s reputation among those people that the place cares about and its citizens, potential investors, tourists and other visitors (Anholt, 2005). Furthermore, all these people (including residents, investors, students and visitors) have differing perceptions towards the place and therefore place branding is a complex construct, underpinned by a constantly fluctuating reputation. As a result, the place branding eventually plays a key role in decision making of the residents, potential migrants, investors, tourists and students, as to whether they choose to visit or remain in that place or not. In relation to this, Gold (2006) suggests that place branding is neither a simple message nor part of a marketing strategy, but it is actually the residual perception left in the individuals’ minds about a place, after encountering its residents, through media, buying its products, experiencing its tourists attractions and in dealing with its administrative structures, or simply taking a self-guided tour of a city’s streets and alleys.

O’Donovan (2004) suggests that the phrase “practice of applying brand strategy” implies a very conscious effort on the part of policy makers to employ deliberate strategies to build brand image, which would enable a place to achieve a more distinct identity than its competitors. In contrast, Pryor and Grossbart (2007) argue that that definition of place branding might be sufficient to explain the practice of place marketing, but it is insufficient for the development of a theory related to place branding. Further, they add that the non-specific nature of “other marketing techniques and disciplines” offers little guidance to understanding how, if at all, conventional strategies are adapted for place branding. They concur with the notion that place branding is a useful practice, but caution that such a reductionist definition may contribute to the application of traditional branding theory and strategy in context where it is neither intended nor tested.

Furthermore, the considerations derived from comments of the scholars, who share the conceptualization of the branding process, describing branding as having symbolic and social qualities whilst forming the basis for the production of both identity and imagery (Edwards and Day, 2005; de Chernatony, 2006).

The above definition suggests that place branding processes include both acknowledgment and dedication, which is not always the case in the domain of product and service marketing (Pitt et al., 2006). However, much of the hostility shown towards the concept of place branding arises directly from the popular or simple meaning of the terminology ‘brand’ and ‘branding’, leading to a vague assumption that the practitioners and supporters of the discipline wish to brand nations like cattle, in other words, to slap on an attractive logo and catchy slogan, and the market construct or concept is created as if it were nothing different than a new or a modified product in the supermarket (Anholt, 2005). Arguably, place brands are completely different from other forms of brands and place branding is a process that derives from interpretive, rather than common managerial, techniques (Pryor and Grossbart, 2007). Indeed, it is illogical to think that simply providing a place with a new geographical look, adding specific titles to its original name and a new slogan can change its fortunes drastically. In contrast to that, if best practices, techniques and observations from advanced and tactical branding are intelligently, creatively and responsibly applied to the branding of places, the consequences can be fascinating, long lasting, wide-spread and potentially world-changing (Anholt, 2005). Unfortunately, due to the lack of clarity about the difference between place branding and the promotion of the nation’s individual assets or “products” and “constructs” such as tourism, inward investment, culture and heritage and export, not only are consumers often confused about what place branding is, but they also find it difficult to understand what is actually being branded (Anholt, 2002).

BRAND CREATORS AND BRAND USERS

A wide range of analytical methods have been used for studies on places and cities. Case studies have been used by Prideaux and Cooper (2002), convergent interviewing techniques by Hanlan and Kelly (2005), focus groups by Curtis (2000), open-ended questions and Likert scale questionnaires (O’Leary and Deegan, 2002) and the Brand’s Box method (de Chernatony and McWilliam, 1989). Place brands are multi-dimensional constructs, as reviewed by Hankinson (2004 and 2005) and are...
characteristically managed by multiple-stakeholders (brand creators, brand influencers and brand consumers) who help to develop and shape the brand. However, the existence of disparate stakeholder groups creates a lack of
1) brand ownership
2) brand leadership and
3) brand direction.

In the case of the “City of Liverpool”, and its Liverpool ’08 branding campaign, the “brand creators” include stakeholders such as Liverpool City Council, The Liverpool Chambers of Commerce (LCCC), The Mersey Partnership (TMP), The North-West Development Agency (NWDA), The Liverpool ’08: European Capital of Culture Company (ECCC), Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Federation (FSME’s), Voluntary Sector, Local Businesses, Corporate and Public bodies, all of whom vie for a voice in the creation of the place brand, and all of whom have different, often conflicting, wants and needs. On the other hand, there are also stakeholders who consume the brand: brand users who have no single voice to articulate their conflicting wants and needs.

Within the “City of Liverpool”, “brand users” include tourists, local residents, migrants (skilled and unskilled), inward investors, corporate businesses, public sector concerns, SME’s, local and government authorities. These are also equally disparate groups who influence and co-create the brand but offer no single voice and have often very different wants and needs.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this paper is to provide new insights to the existing knowledge of place branding and its importance through the study of the ‘City of Liverpool’ – European Capital of Culture 2008 branding campaign. The paper has already explored destination marketing literature in order give a backdrop to the current perspectives about place branding and the evolution of the place branding concept.

Here, representatives from six brand creators and five brand users were interviewed using questions that probed the respondents’ perceptions of Liverpool’s capability as a world-class place to visit, work and live and its economic sustainability. Respondents were drawn from;

1) Brand creators: including members of The Mersey Partnership, The Liverpool Cultural Company, The Liverpool City Council, Northwest Development Agency (NWDA), The Liverpool Chambers of Commerce were surveyed using semi-structured interviews, and

2) Brand users: including SME managers from across Liverpool, an international student cohort, members of the local communities in Liverpool, and tourists were surveyed using semi-structured open questions.

Miller and Glassner, (1997) suggested that interviews interpret relative meanings that individuals attribute to their experiences about social world. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews are one of the principle methods of data collection in qualitative research. The use of semi-structured interviews gave an opportunity to identify associative relationships between different concepts, therefore allowing for understanding to be made regarding the reasons for decisions being made in terms of specific attitudes and opinions, towards certain aspects. This method allowed the researchers an excellent opportunity to probe the interviewees in more depth, with each interview lasting between 35 and 44 minutes.

Key brand creators and users allowed on limited access and this placed constraints on the project. Yet, agreement from 11 respondents representing organisations (stakeholders – authorities responsible shaping and delivering Liverpool place brand) was gained. The size of this research sample actually turned out to be very effective in terms of establishing key research outcomes. Indeed, the research findings, with the final sample size, reached convergence in terms of responses, which were recorded, after 9 interviews. The researchers carried on interviewing 2 more participants, and confirmed that theory saturation had been reached.
A computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDA) using NVivo was carried out to capture the nuances within the hard data. By creating a computational representation of the relationships emerging from the data an overall objectivity, important to the formation of theory development (Dohan and Sanchez-Jankowski, 1998), was formed. Moreover, transcripts were generated for each research participant interview using ‘Express Scribe’ software, Dictaphone recordings and researcher’s notes were uploaded onto NVivo and that facilitated CAQDA. Each interview transcript was given a unique identification number between 1 and 11 (as there were 11 transcripts in total) and further to this, each of these sources was designated as an individual case, so as to enable smooth coding and use of other analysis features in NVivo. Using NVivo, the transcripts from each respondent were subjected to extensive content analysis, following procedures outlined by Krippendorff (2003) and Weber (1990). The content analysis was facilitated by careful coding of the texts and passages within each case to generate the relative concepts corresponding to the participant’s responses to the probing interview questions.

RESULTS

Figure 1 represents a synthesis of the current understanding of place branding and its influence on the performance of place in terms of continuous development and regeneration, and is a composite model, synthesised from the literature and from the NVivo analysis of our primary research with the brand users and brand creators. The figure identifies spheres of influence, and those particular elements within the cocktail of constructs that appear critical for enhancing the pulling power of the place. The model integrates the key brand attributes within the primary sphere of influence (table 1) with some of the key drivers necessary to sustain the brand with time, the secondary sphere of influence (table 2); with specific Liverpool examples. Preliminary analysis of the data suggest that emotional and representational facets (culture and heritage, people and communities) are perceived to be more important than functional characters, such as inward investment and regeneration projects, and the level of amenities and services on offer in Liverpool. Furthermore, the NVivo analysis of the stakeholder data reveals a much more detailed understanding between the interconnections within the cognitive schema of brand creators and brand users. One such condensed causal map is presented in figure three and summaries the stakeholders’ meta-schema.
Figure 1
The pulling power of place brand

Place Brand
Pulling Power

Primary Sphere of Influence
- Exports
- Inward Investment
- Tourism
- Culture and Heritage
- People
- Local Governance

Secondary Sphere of Influence
- Demand
- Industrial Clusters
- Ancillary Trades
- Company Strategies
- Place Specific Incentives
- Product
### Table 1
Primary Sphere of Influence (*adapted from de Chernatony, 2006; Anholt, 2005*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Sphere of Influence</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exports</td>
<td>Goods and services sold out to external businesses nationally and/or internationally</td>
<td>Liverpool Port facility handled a record of 42 million tonnes of cargo, plus distribution warehousing. Premier League Football Clubs: Everton and Liverpool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inward Investment</td>
<td>Is the amount of inflow of businesses and capital to a place</td>
<td>Grosvenor Property Development, investments and fund management services. £0.25 billion physical and economic regeneration work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Service area for tourists, leisure visitors and business visitors</td>
<td>15 million visitors in 2008.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture and Heritage</td>
<td>Key aspects of symbolic and emotional attributes of a place</td>
<td>World-heritage site status, The Beatles, Football Grade 2 Buildings: more than any other city outside London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>The group of individuals that makes up a place’s society</td>
<td>Self-belief, passion, motivated, skills uplift, trustworthiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Governance</td>
<td>Regulatory bodies and/or authority that create (and polices) the regulatory frameworks, policies and practices in a place</td>
<td>Collaborative responsibilities of stakeholders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2
Secondary Sphere of Influence (*adapted from de Chernatony, 2006; Anholt 2005*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secondary Sphere of Influence</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demand</td>
<td>Relates to the wants and needs of stakeholders and the market forces for particular products and services, at particular times</td>
<td>Cost effective offerings of products and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Clusters</td>
<td>Locally concentrated industry, with a continuous exchange of complementary goods and services</td>
<td>Music industry, biotech industries and pharmaceuticals, refineries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancillary Trades</td>
<td>The supply chains for the industrial clusters that enhance the primary course of economy</td>
<td>Health sector and environmental industries: bio-chemicals and pharmaceuticals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company Strategies</td>
<td>Deliberate local and regional corporate policies that drive development and which seeks to benefit from the place</td>
<td>Automobile plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Specific Incentives</td>
<td>Place offerings that attracts the diverse target audience</td>
<td>Infrastructure and low cost economy benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product</td>
<td>It is the unique offering combination that differentiates a place from other places</td>
<td>Football, music, comedy, rich culture and architecture.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION

Understanding the two spheres of influence will be useful to the brand developers for creating strong and reliable place brands that would have a long-term future. Here, we draw attention to the importance the stakeholders’ causal map in understanding the role of place brand by identifying perceived causalities between place branding and brand repositioning along with the formation of positive attributes. These in turn lead to the re-formation of the place image and modernised infrastructure and the re-engendering of civic pride and interest in the place. Following from the impetus of place branding, the place pulling power is strengthened through the re-invigoration of investments from leisure visitors and businesses. The pull is coupled with population retention and promotion by newly energised brand ambassadors.

Attempting to identify and classify interlinking brand facets is not new and many authors acknowledge the multiple dimensionalities of brands, including place brands, and there are numerous models and metrics which attempt to capture the various brand components. Some of these models seek to explore the more fundamental nature of brands, for instance, focusing on the functional and emotional/symbolic attributes (Cooper, 1979; de Chernatony and McWilliam, 1989, Hankinson, 2004). Other models tend to measure aspects such as brand equity, brand esteem and brand potential (Keller 2000, 2003; Kotler and Keller, 2006). The destination brand literature has complimented these typologies, often with more specific brand attributes such as weather and food (Embacher and Buttle, 1989), the geographical mix (Ashworth and Voogt, 1989), the fixed environment and recreational value (Kotler et al, 2002) or large-scale physical redevelopments and mega events (Hubbard and Hall, 1998). More recently, Hankinson (2004) has proposed a Relationship Network Brand Model for destination branding, whilst Morgan et al (2005) have developed a destination brand benefit prism. Anholt on the other hand, has created both a destination brand hexagon (Anholt, 2005) and a city brand hexagon (Anholt, 2006). However, despite growing interest in branding models, and in place branding models in particular, they give no sense of how the various brand components interact, nor do they offer a sense of their relative importance in sustaining brand image over time. That is in contrast to the results of our research, which begin to make sense of the importance of brand creators and brand users perspectives. And so we begin to investigate further the place branding construct, the juxtaposition of the two spheres and gain detailed understanding of the values and the relationships between concepts, drawn from the schema of brand creators and users.
CONCLUSION

A place brand is an amalgam of concepts; ranging from embedded culture and heritage to traditional industrial clusters and from country-of-origin product differentiation to its ancillary trades. However, the recent advance concerning place marketing and destination branding knowledge pushes individual places to develop their own unique brand identity that encompasses the place’s culture, communities and its values, governance, attraction, image, trade, infrastructure and investments, making the place brand the major driver of economy. The conceptual model (figure 1) and the causal map (figure 2) show some modern facets of place, as primary and interlinking influences, that are pulled in to develop the place by place branding. Other traditional facets are embedded within place and are shown here as the secondary influences, these play a supportive and guiding role to the primary influences. Interlinking causal maps derived from brand users and brand creators will be important in advancing our understanding of the place branding process. In order to develop a unique place identity, attention must be drawn to each of the primary influences, which could be used to analyse the place’s brand. Those primary influences are important as they make up the rational and emotional foundations of the place. Fostering strong relationships, built on the positive emotional aspects of place, between brand creators, brand users, people and communities, will maintain a virtuous perceptual spiral that in turn positively promotes the place brand. However, place brand sustainability and longevity that is likely to be dependent on the factors within the secondary sphere of influence which contribute to the economic well-being of the place: the industries intrinsic to the place, their supply chains, access to appropriate skills, demand levels and business incentives specific to the place. How all those influences interact is to be the subject of our continuing research.

REFERENCES


A POLITICAL ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF GOVERNMENT MARKETING AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF ZHAOQING

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ABSTRACT

This research is to understand the way and the reason that government involves in tourism marketing when facing different decision-making and implementing context. The case study of Zhaoqing reveals that, when government marketing is regarded by many academics as the mainstream of government involvement in tourism development, like all the past modes of government involvement in history, policies and implementation of government marketing are inevitably affected by the local context of sociocultural tradition and the rules and operation of political economic system. In contemporary China, the involvement of local government in tourism marketing usually exposes that the decision-makers and executants work with a collective mood for quick success and an intense eagerness to directly intervene the investment, planning, design, production and promotion for tourism products. Encouraged by such mood and eagerness, the local government seldom pays attention to comprehensive market analysis or technical design for any action, and the government-dominated tourism product development may take a wrong first step at the very beginning.

Keywords: government marketing, political economics, tourism development, Zhaoqing

INTRODUCTION

China’s tourism industry gradually developed after 1970s, and it already becomes an important industrial sector to stimulate domestic demand and enhance economic growth according to the opinion of China’s central government. As a result, local governments tend to expect more from the contribution of tourism, and the often-mentioned “government-dominated” development of tourism industry has been a mainstream of policies in many places. On one side, an industrialized region has a powerful government with abundant revenue that supports its decision-making and policy implementation, and the government is free to finance the emerging industries like tourism directly in routine administrative affairs; on the other side, a non-industrialized region usually performs poorly because of weak financial condition while the potential investors sometimes hesitate to come because of high risk of investment in new industries, which turns the local government to search for better policy (such as reducing taxes) and money from the upper government and finally another mode of government-dominated development is established.

In fact, the above quick analysis is far from enough as the giant nation of China has many different regions with various developing phrases. This research, by using the tourism development of Zhaoqing of Guangdong Province as a case, analyzes the relationship and interactions between the government and the development of tourism economy in recent 50 years, especially rethinking the complicated role of the government in local economic development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A look into the background of government marketing’s emergency brings us back to the 1970s, while energy crisis, stagnant inflation, increasing unemployment rate, and exasperate pollution in main western countries deteriorated the competitive situation. Individual enterprises, especially the small and middle ones without sufficient resources for crisis management, was facing a hard time that threatened their survival. The direct participation of government in several economic affairs such as promotion and
marketing, while playing the role of balancing and harmonizing the socioeconomic development, were highly appraised both by most of the private sector and the market (Lin, 2009). In 1985, the American Marketing Association (AMA) issued a new definition for “marketing”, which expanded the traditional scope of marketing to involve the communication and promotional activities of public sector and the third sector (NGOs, NPOs, etc.). This change should be the fundamental theoretical support for government marketing. From the end of 1980s, many countries have witnessed the quick development of various types of government marketing, including national marketing, regional marketing, urban marketing, local marketing, and departmental marketing.

Definitions of government marketing can be found in many publications, though they are seldom consistent with each other. Some definitions emphasize the aims of government marketing, while some others focus on the techniques in use. Fortunately, there are still some elements that have been agreed in most of the definitions. For example, the resources used in government marketing are quite different from those used in traditional marketing. It is obviously that the government depends on administrative resource of public sector when playing its marketing role. In tourism industry, when the public sector participates as a resource supplier for marketing, this kind of provision can be regarded as a public or semi-public product that can be shared by all industry without a nature of exclusiveness or competitiveness. On the contrary, there is no necessity or responsibility for the government to act in production and marketing that can be accomplished according to the enterprises’ capability or directly pertinent to their profit-driven activities. Enterprises are much more sensitive than the government to the market changes and they are inherently caring about what to produce and how to sell, which will help build up a constant and efficient market economy (Fan, 2004).

Tourism marketing can be categorized into two parts (Figure 1) after the introduction of “government marketing” concept (Chi, 2003): 1) tourism product marketing of individual enterprise for sake of its own profit; 2) destination or comprehensive marketing for sake of the regional image improvement and attraction enhancement that are usually considered as a part of duty of the government.

Figure 1

Position of government marketing in tourism marketing system

Source: Yin (2007).

Taking a city for example, the comprehensive marketing includes the following typical tasks:
1) Publicizing tourism information in the name of the destination;
2) Publishing and distributing materials to establish and consolidate the destination image;
3) Organizing various promotion events and strengthening public relationship with domestic or international markets;
4) Stimulating the cooperation between local and external tourism enterprises;
5) Designing the visual identities or slogans for this city;
6) Building up and managing the use of public mark system;
7) Bidding for mega events, such as international conferences, exhibitions, festivals and sport games;
8) Attracting the international companies to put their headquarters in this city;
9) Training and allocating the information collectors and communicators;
10) Improving the urban infrastructures;
11) Searching for better custom polices for international affairs from the central government.

In contemporary China’s political economic settings, the scope of government action includes another important issue: the administrative control of land use. Most of the tourism development projects inevitably relate to land use, and local government in China holds the monopolistic power on monitoring and authorizing land use. Therefore, to accelerate the growth of a certain industry, the government tends to implement some kind of “favorable policy of land use”, which is able to attract the investors efficiently. This should be recognized as a typical “destination marketing” action specially led by the government.

Government, including the central government (such as those of Korea and Singapore who do their utmost to support international tourism or MICE development of their countries), tends to put the strategic key points of destination marketing on taking the potential market’s perception of this destination to a new height and influencing their attitudes by carrying out some mixture of marketing tools. In the process of destination of marketing by utilizing public administrative resources, the government has to be sure that the revenue or public budget is adequate to support those efficient and absolutely necessary marketing instruments (Middleton, 2001:308). Some regions of China have begun their government marketing actions, such as the “Barrier-free Tourism Area of the Yangtze River Delta’s Cities” that consists of Shanghai, eight cities of Jiangsu province and six cities of Zhejiang province (Wang, et al., 2006). The collaborative marketing plan requires relatively equal investment on mutual policy-making and common actions of those local governments. Obviously, this requirement is not a big problem for those governments because they are regulating the most developed cities in eastern China and the abundant public revenue makes them capable to support tourism marketing for their cities.

From the view of evaluation, most governments in western developed countries tend to respect the practices of enterprises and don’t try to control the tourism production in destinations, which makes it hard to assess their effort of destination marketing directly with some conventional indicators such as annual tourist arrival or annual tourist expenditure. However, it is not to say that in developing countries there are possibilities to look into the value of government marketing (Middleton, 2001:307). These governments, though sometimes firmly controlling the industry, lack the professional managerial or operational techniques that always lead to unexpected failure of their projects or strategies in the long haul. What is more, the above comparison is not to deny all the value of government marketing from a critical or nihilist angle, but it is to clearly demonstrate the importance of evaluating government marketing from the impact perspective rather than the regulation perspective. This is different from the usual way of evaluating the achievement of product marketing.

Redevelopment of Traditional Tourism Destinations

Traditional Tourism Destinations (TTDs) refer to those destinations that directly make use of natural or cultural resources to build up a developing mode based on scenic areas or spots (Wei, 2002:12). TTDs are usually featured as a place with long history, full-equipped facilities, rich cultural accumulation, fixed types of tourism products, and relatively static market (Cui, 2004:12-13). From the 1990s, many TTDs in Mainland China faced to some systematic problems, such as fading attractiveness of resources, aging structure of products, and shrinking tourism market, which witnessed the decreasing relative importance of those TTDs in the domestic destination systems (Mei, et al., 2004).

To the government’s opinion, a possible and usually-cited reason for this relative decrement is “inadequate competitiveness”. However, inadequate competitiveness is only a rough description of the fact that can be understood in at least two sides. First, the weakening attractiveness of products loses its magic to the potential market. Types of products are somehow stable in the short run, while the attractiveness of products keeps on changing. Second, the weak marketing competence cannot offer effective support to the destination’s branding. A new born destination can unhesitatingly centralize all its sources on new product that always tends to focus on a certain market, but a traditional tourism
destination usually lose the best marketing opportunity when it is hesitating between the new product/market and the existing product/market. Hence, it seems theoretically supportive for the government to be involved in tourism marketing in TTDs.

In short, the most direct and concise marks to judge the redevelopment of a TTD are dual: with the implementation of those redeveloping policies, 1) the potential market increases and 2) effectively turns into actual market. To add new tourists to a TTD’s tourist population is a fundamental qualification of redevelopment. When analyzing the “Farewell Tour of the Three Gorges”, Bao et al. (2002) illustrated the mechanism of “market feedback system” (Figure 2): there was a negative feedback between Actual Market and Potential Market. If a redeveloping policy can foster Potential Market’s conversion to Actual Market, it is not a good one because the future market will be sure to shrink without timely making-up and the destination will only experience a very short period of increasing. The destination cannot avoid decline in the long haul. Hereby, a better redeveloping policy of government involved tourism marketing should simultaneously ensure the ratio from Potential Market to Actual Market and enhance the continuous expansion of Potential Market.

**Figure 2**
A conceptual model of the casual structure for tourists increase in destinations
Source: Bao, et al. (2002).

METHOD

In order to demonstrate the true story of government-involved marketing in Zhaoqing’s tourism redevelopment, this research chooses a structural narrative tactic. That is, based on existent theoretical background, to refine main clues from the tremendous materials of facts. Here, the distinct details reflected by the facts will be described along with the relationship between “government action” and “tourism marketing” and the validity of policy implementation will play the role of most direct criteria to evaluate such a relationship. The expected findings of this research are not to retrospect the tourism development history of a city, but to illustrate those internal or external factors that may influence the decision-making courses. This may be more helpful for future decision-makers and executants. After all, when those decision-makers finally come to a determination for certain policy, they are not in an absolute status of independence. Again, even if they manage to draw a conclusion without outer intervention or interruption, the following executants may misunderstand and misconduct the original target of that conclusion by breaking out the “boundaries” of government marketing. Thus, all possible outcomes, no matter they are active or passive, cannot only be attributed to the contribution or mistake of those decision-makers. The complex mechanism of collective decision-making and organizational operation shows its intricate practical situation in the study of government-involved tourism marketing, which appeals more research articles in this area and may engender a new trend of “political economics of marketing”.

The case study area, Zhaoqing city, is located to the northwest of Guangzhou, the capital city of Guangdong province, China. Zhaoqing is traditionally regarded as part of the Pearl River Delta region, the first industrialized region in China. However, Zhaoqing is not as developed as other cities in this region, because of its high employment in agriculture and mineral industry. In fact, Zhaoqing is famous
for its karst-based lakes (the Seven Stars Lake) in the city center and the first National Natural Protected Area (the Dinghu Mount) and is one of those “open” cities, such as Guilin or Xi’an, that were authorized by the central government of China to begin their tourism development in late 1970s. In 1982, the Dinghu Mount was approved in the first list of the National Key Scenery Area by the State Department of China. In 1994, Zhaoqing was awarded as National Historical Culture City. Again, in November 1998, Zhaoqing was coroneted as “China Excellent Tourist City”, with three other cities of Guangdong: Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Zhuhai. To be brief, Zhaoqing is a traditional sightseeing destination in southern China for its natural landscape\(^1\).

Data and facts for this research were collected from 2002 to 2006 in several fieldstrips to Zhaoqing. The fieldtrips in November 2002 and August 2004 were the longest, the most comprehensive and the most significant. At the beginning, all those investigations were not monitored under a unique research plan, but organized for different special needs. For instance, the November 2002 fieldstrip was designed for a fundamental study of a resort planning in Zhaoqing, and the August 2004 fieldtrip was to finish an comprehensive assessment of Zhaoqing’s tourism development in the past 20 years and to help complete an overall plan for its future 15 years. Besides secondhand materials, in-depth interviews and communications with local administrators of tourism, local experts, employers and employees of tourism industry, and investors were carried out very frequently. By repeatedly reading all the materials and interview records, the authors gradually noticed a government-dominated tourism development in Zhaoqing city, and ways of intervention of government in different condition obviously resulted in different outcomes. Successes and failures emerged one after another in the past decades of government marketing. However, reviews or rethought of the experiences of Zhaoqing’s tourism development was so little (Bao & Zhang, 2006) that some researchers tend to simply attribute the key decisive factor of success and failure as “strength” of government involvement: not only the government marketing succeed because of powerful government intervention in finance, human resource, techniques, and so on, but also it failed because of incomplete intervention in production and inadequate monitoring in enterprises’ behaviors. Such viewpoint neglects the relevant analysis of each interventional move of the government and only offers paradoxical summaries instead of insightful reviews.

**FINDINGS**

*Context of Decision-making and Implementing*

In 1955, Guangdong Provincial Government led the first hallmark project of Zhaoqing’s tourist resource. Huge swale surrounding the seven karst hills in central Zhaoqing city were dredged up and enlarged as a new lake of more than 6 square kilometers, which is known as the Seven Stars Lake from then on. In 1956, the Dinghu Mount, 20 kilometers northeast to the lake was honored as the first National Natural Protected Area of China for its rich semitropical forest. In the eyes of Tao Zhu, the leader of Guangdong government at that time, Zhaoqing could be an “Oriental Geneva”, and it did become a scenery city for sightseeing in the following 20 years. In November 1982, the State Department authorized the lake and the mount together as a new established National Key Scenery Area that is like a support from central government for its tourism development. Zhaoqing became national famous as a tourist destination very soon after this authorization and it kept known as the most favorite destination in Guangdong province until the late 1980s. Hotels, restaurants, parks, and other infrastructures and facilities were parts of this quick development (Cheng, 2007).

However, the tourism development of other cities, especially the theme parks’ emergency in Shenzhen around the turning of 1980s to 1990s, was such a fierce attack to Zhaoqing’s traditional sightseeing tourism. From 1989 to 1994, three theme parks invested by China Travel Service (Hong Kong) were open to tourists one by one, which offered so much new experience to the domestic tourists. Taking the first built-up theme park, the Splendid China Theme Park, for example, the total investment of ten million RMB returned in the first year of openness. Shenzhen was soon the fresh, most attractive destination in Guangdong and tourists came from not only the Guangdong province but also from the rest of the whole nation. The city image of Shenzhen was highly enhanced and tourism economy showed its remarkable contribution to the government revenue. In 1996, Shenzhen exceeded Zhaoqing both on

\(^1\) Available on the website of China National Tourism Administration: http://www.cnta.com/4-lycs/index.asp.
tourist arrivals and incomes and became the most important destination city in Guangdong. This was the end of “golden age” of Zhaoqing’s tourism industry that basically depended on the natural sightseeing attractiveness. Decision-makers of local government felt more and more nervous and stressful and they spared no effort to redevelop tourism industry beginning with the construction of more scenic areas around 1992.

Though Zhaoqing owns many national level titles or awards, it has always been a regional tourist destination when considering its resource characteristics and market features (Xiao & Guo, 2007). However, the local government has inherited a condition from their predecessors that they should actively add some new contribution to tourism development; otherwise they would be ashamed of giving up the achievement of the predecessors. This widespread anxiety can be found not only in Zhaoqing government or other local authorities of China, but also in China’s eastern neighborhood, Korea, who purposely implemented a nation-dominated tourism development policy from 2000. This policy is deeply rooted in Korean traditional value of collectivism that is to obey the administrative power and the national interest (Wang, 2005). The effort of Zhaoqing government could be traced back particularly to the beginning of the reformation and open policy in early 1980s, when the direct investment of government in tourism industry was regarded as a very regular action. The officials succeed this administrative tradition fairly well. Only in the ten years from 1992 to 2001, at least six key projects in Zhaoqing were organized, coordinated, or even directly invested by the local government (Table 1), while some projects were related not only with marketing. The tourism administrative history of Zhaoqing clearly describes a complicated context where the local government made decisions and implemented the policies of tourism development and tourism marketing. Of course, the context cannot be the decisive power, but its impact is everywhere, especially embodied in the mind and behavior of the decision-makers and executants.

Table 1
Theoretical analysis of the six redevelopment tactics in Zhaoqing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Sorts of Redevelopment</th>
<th>Expected Market</th>
<th>Modes of Government-domination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seven Star Resort</td>
<td>New tourist product</td>
<td>New market</td>
<td>Land development, planning and design, attracting external investment, comprehensive marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreamland</td>
<td>New tourist product</td>
<td>New market</td>
<td>Attracting external investment, comprehensive marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oriental Chan Lin</td>
<td>Renewed tourism product</td>
<td>New market + revisits</td>
<td>Planning and design, attracting external investment, comprehensive marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoying Oxygen Tour in the Dinghu Mount</td>
<td>Renewed tourism product</td>
<td>New market + revisits</td>
<td>Planning and design, comprehensive marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panlong Gorge</td>
<td>New tourist product</td>
<td>New market</td>
<td>Planning and design, government investment, comprehensive marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco-farming Manor</td>
<td>New tourist product</td>
<td>New market</td>
<td>Land development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Success and Failure of Government Marketing

The evident, common peculiarity of the six projects in Table 1 is that the government has gone far beyond the conventional “marketing” behaviors. As Burkart and Medlik (1981:256) once mentioned, no matter in developed or developing countries, the government tourism administrations tended to put the task of tourism product design in the first place, and the marketing or promotion of the destination in
the second place. The tourism administrations always take in charge of the representative of all stakeholders and the destination, and their work largely supplements the developing or marketing activities of individual enterprises. Here, if initiation, planning, design, construction and production of tourism product were rigidly understood as pure economic activities and the tourism product was considered as a competitive product provided by the private sector with free market competition as the only proper and legal resource distribution mode, the reality of government-dominated tourism development would have been largely neglected. However, the mechanism of government administration is so complex that any careless mistake may bring with negative or even destructive sequence. Therefore, the limitation of government’s involvement in economic activities is necessary in order to leave the market enough room to take its charge. Thus the question is whether there should be an efficient boundary of government-involved marketing activities? In fact, there has been no clear answer to this question and the usual situation of this boundary is varying according to the special local political environment. After all, “continuous change” may be a typical characteristic of such a boundary. This characteristic sometimes leads to serious lack of cohesion of government decision-making for tourism industry and does harm to sustainable tourism development. The six projects mentioned will tell the true stories of government’s behaviors and more or less prove the above viewpoint. The first three projects failed in the end, and the other three could be regarded successful at the moment.

*The Seven Star Resort* This project needed immense investment for different stages of construction and the simultaneous development of domestic market. However, Chinese recreation and resort market was growing so slow in 1990s that the resort experienced a miserable period of vacancy. What is more, the government chose a venturous way of land use mode under the pressure of monetary shortage: the external investors could obtain the right of land use with rather low tax in future construction and operation. This policy brought with serious consequences: on one hand, the potential investors always took the advantage of low tax and free land use, and always tended to avoid the obligation of infrastructure investment; on the other hand, the eagerness for financial support limited the government’s bargaining ability and led to imperfect contracts with the investors, which resulted in bad monitoring of land use when the investors were facing financial problem themselves or their attention was not on tourism development but the profit in real estate. The final condition is that most of the chartered land to investors was left unused until now.

*Dreamland* The theme park project of Dreamland with an estimating budget of 100 million RMB might be the only one to confront the challenge of Shenzhen. The success of Shenzhen’s theme parks mainly depended on the city’s special economic advantage, the leading role in similar attractiveness and the excellent location (adjacent to Hong Kong). Shenzhen, as the most important special economic region in southern China, attracts plenty of business travelers every year, which bring with a huge potential market for theme parks (Bao, 1994). In comparison, Zhaoqing doesn’t have the location advantage like Shenzhen, and its urban economy was weak in the early 1990s when the Dreamland project was initiated, so that the great market risk and financial risk during the whole course of construction and operation were far more than the competence of the city. Actually, in only a couple of years this project was given up because of no investment.

*Oriental Chan Lin (Buddhist Temple)* This project was actually a significant part of a redevelopment plan of the Seven Stars Lake area and directly financed and promoted by the government. The Oriental Chan Lin’s completion and openness to tourists from 1996 and the tourist population increment of the Seven Stars Lake in 1997 was not remarkable as expected (Figure 3). The disinterest of potential market was a warning sign to the government effort. In fact, the Buddhist culture of this project was not quite in coordination with the dominant geological landscape of the Seven Stars Lake area, and it failed to attractive both the revisit and the new market.
Figure 3
Tourist population change of the Seven Stars Lake and the Dinghu Mount (1978-2004)
Source: Zhaoqing Tourism Bureau.

Enjoying Oxygen Tour in the Dinghu Mount  As mentioned above, the Dinghu Mount was the first National Natural Protected Area in China. In early 1990s, some forestry researchers from colleges declared that the negative oxygen ion was good to people’s health and the density of negative oxygen ions in various sites of Dinghu Mount were among the greatest of all sampling areas in southern China. Local tourism administration finally paid attention to this academic support of Zhaoqing’s natural attractiveness in 1998, and soon organized a formal, official press briefing to announce its recent plan of a new tourist product: the Enjoying Oxygen Tour. This time the move of the government exactly grasped the emerging demand on health-enhanced tourism of the potential market in the industrialized and badly polluted area around the Pearl River Delta.

Panlong Gorge  The Panlong Gorge project was one of those most typical development cases in contemporary political economic system of China. A former member of the local Standing Committee of the China Communist Party, who was also once the Chairman of local People’s Congress, became the general manager of a state-owned company after her resignation from the official positions and took charge of the tourism development of Panlong Gorge. Her resignation was on purpose because she shouldn’t be both a leader of local government and a manager of a company. Under such an institutional arrangement, the development of Panlong Gorge encountered no perceptible impedance. The initiation and main construction began in February 2001 and it opened to tourists only 4 months later to keep up with the “Golden Week” of May Day, one of the longest public holidays at that time. The former leader’s new role endowed the company distinct convenience in gaining favorable policies, avoiding bureaucratic delay, and receiving lots of administrative resource for public relationships. Advertisement of Panlong Gorge even dominated the bus posters in Guangzhou from 2003. A private company can never imagine a rapid and smooth development like this because of the almost endless authorization procedure in a great number of relevant official departments. Moreover, the success of Panlong Gorge also depended on its accurate market positioning. The gorge, streams, forest, ecological learning and other activities in this area, again, found the exact segmented market that preferred nature-based and healthy tourism, especially after the SARS in 2003.

Eco-farming Manor  The land used by this project once belonged to an agricultural research institute of the government. The government decided to transfer the operation right from the institute to a resort corporate. The corporate gradually built up individual residences for vacation, restaurant, meeting
In brief, the government-involved marketing in Zhaoqing showed a “contextual intricacy”. Many other traditional destinations in China, such as Xi’an, Guilin, and Xishuangbanna, have the same experience like Zhaoqing in the past decade (Bao & Zhang, 2006). Actually, the case of Zhaoqing can be considered as a representative destination in regional scale, while the others are all famous, international destinations. The key factors affecting the consequences of government marketing can be summarized as:

1) The tourist attractiveness and product system of this destination;
2) The comprehensive level of socioeconomic development and the ability to support tourism development;
3) The condition of potential market;
4) The bureaucratic impact of the administrative system and the officials;
5) The efficiency of land use institutions.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion from this case study of Zhaoqing can be briefed as some policy implications on government marketing. First of all, a sustainable tourism development with the involvement of government marketing needs political stability on many aspects, especially on the clear, operable and realizable targets of development that are usually considered as a vital criteria of evaluation on officials’ behaviors. Secondly, the level of local socio-economic development should be pondered before promoting any costly, risky, but seemingly tempting tourism projects or offering any favorable tax kit for investors. Thirdly, though enterprises are much sensitive to market change than the government, it is not to indicate that the government could neglect the comprehensive and clear-headed analysis of market situation. At last, a government can work better to promote the participatory tourism product, such as recreation, sport games, festivals and meetings, than to assist the sale of traditional sightseeing product, because the former are much more flexible and refreshable.

The fundamental standpoint of this research is to understand the way and the reason that government involves in tourism marketing when facing different decision-making and implementing context, but not to argue whether the government should be involved or not. When existent theoretical analysis and text-like classical explanation cannot offer proper and precise answers pertinent with the intricate reality, there is an urgent need of more flexible and innovative thought. The beginning point of this research is “government marketing”, but it refuse to be only an evaluation to the practice of this concept. It tends to reveal that, when government marketing is regarded by many academics as the mainstream of government involvement in tourism development, like all the past modes of government involvement in history, policies and implementation of government marketing are inevitably affected by the local context of sociocultural tradition and the rules and operation of political economic system.

The case of Zhaoqing also illuminates the difficulty to assess the direct impact of government marketing (especially in a quantitative method), but the reason for failures can be relatively easy to understand. In the context of political and economic institution in contemporary China, the involvement of local government in tourism marketing usually exposes that the decision-makers and executants work with a collective mood for quick success and an intense eagerness to directly intervene the investment, planning, design, production and promotion for tourism products. The boundary of government marketing is frequently surpassed or totally out of the question. Encouraged by such mood and eagerness, the local government seldom pays attention to comprehensive market analysis or technical design for any action, and the government-dominated tourism product development may take a wrong first step at the very beginning. This finding suggests that, even if a local government is administratively powerful and financially capable, the disciplines of the market economy keep as the basis for government involvement. In fact, in order to realize the efficient government-involved tourism marketing, the right way may be a mixture of actions including the strategic planning of tourism policies, the pertinent tactics to specific problems, and the appropriate techniques of promotion. Besides, it is better to understand the
role of government in a government-led development of tourism economy from multiple perspectives, and the traditional dual division like “government – market” or “destination marketing – product marketing” may no longer helpful.

When China began its era of reformation and openness, the role of government in market economy was gradually explained as the decision-maker of market rules, the controller of improper behaviors, and the vindicator of distribution result, while the government itself is obligated to be out of the “game”. However, the reality always tries to challenge the common cognition and concept. The political economic history in the past 30 years of China has repeated the following phenomenon again and again: each time there comes a socioeconomic undulation or crisis, the government strengthens its administrative power because of its role and performance in resolving the economy and satisfies the main stakeholders. Actually, each specific policy or action of the local government is deeply rooted in the perplexing socioeconomic circumstance, the relationship between persons and families, the ideality or desire of individual officials, and largely the traditional culture or local social psychology. What is more, the reason of inefficient government involvement in tourism marketing may also link to the imperfect evaluation system of officials. Considering the rich reality for academic studies, there seems to be a lot to do in future political economic analysis on government marketing.

REFERENCES


FIVE LEVELS OF COOPERATION IN DESTINATION MARKETING

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ABSTRACT

This research uses the case of the development of www.purenz.com as an instrument to study the dynamics of inter-organizational cooperation in destination marketing. The study uses a combination of three sources of evidence for collection of data – interviews, documents and the actual website. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews of industry members involved in the process of establishing and managing this website between the years 1999 and 2006. The findings suggest that cooperation is not a uniform concept. The study identifies five different levels of cooperation in destination marketing: passive acceptance, support, alignment, contribution and pooling.

Keywords: Inter-organisational cooperation, collaboration, strategic alliances, destination marketing, destination management

INTRODUCTION

Destinations compete intensely to attract foreign tourists. The World Tourism and Travel Council (2006) estimated government travel and tourism operating expenditures in 2006 as USD 300.2 billion or 3.8% of total government expenditure. The high costs of overseas destination marketing have meant that there has been an increasing emphasis on inter-organisational cooperation in destination marketing. The emphasis on partnership in tourism increased during the 1980s driven in part by the move to commercialize functions which were once totally a government’s responsibility (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2002; Hall, 2000; Mandell, 1999). Partnerships (especially between the public and private sector) became a government strategy for leveraging resources (Selin & Chavez, 1995).

During the 1980s emphasis on partnerships in tourism industries was accompanied by a corresponding increase in research interest among academics in this area (Murphy, 1988; Waddock, 1989). Mandell (1999) suggests a horizontal partnership (in which government control is replaced by collaborations between the public, private and non-profit organizations) which needs different management styles and policy instruments. The participatory approach to tourism development had become a normative concept (Tosun, 2000). Issues of collaboration and partnership have come to the forefront of tourism research (Augustyn & Knowles, 2000; Hall, 2000; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2007; Yuksel and Yuksel, 2004). Fyall & Leask (2006) suggest that collaboration is the key issue which encapsulates the challenges facing destination marketers in the future.

THE MANY FACETS OF COOPERATION

A number of authors (Plummer, Kulczycki & Stacey, 2006; Hall, 2000) point out that notions of collaboration, coordination and partnership are separated and yet related. Coordination is focused on the problem of relating units or decisions so they fit together and are not working at cross purposes. Thus, coordination is perceived as a more formal institutionalized relationship while cooperation is “characterized by informal trade-offs and by attempts to establish reciprocity in the absence of rules” (Mulford & Rogers, 1982 cited in Hall, 2000, p. 147). Jamal & Getz (1995, p. 187) define cooperation as “working together towards some end”. This is a fairly general phrase which could mean the working together of individuals or organisations towards some end which may or may not be shared. This definition also does not have anything to say about ‘how’ the parties work together. Another often used term in discussions about cooperation is ‘partnership’. Partnerships are defined as “arrangements devoted to some common end among otherwise independent organisations” (Selin & Chavez, 1995, p. 844). This term specifies that the entities working together are independent organisations and that they are working towards an end which is common to all parties.
Most of the original work in the area of interorganisational cooperation comes from the management sciences and sociology fields. Interorganisational research (IOR) usually uses one of three units of analysis: the organisation, the interorganisational dyad or the interorganisational network (Selin & Beason, 1991). Wood and Gray (1991, p. 48) make the point that applying existing organisational theory to collaborative phenomena requires a shifting of focus from the individual firm to a domain. They suggest a description of collaboration based on an analysis of the commonalities in definitions of collaboration used in several papers:

*Collaboration occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures, to act or decide on issues related to that domain.*

Key elements of this description are relevant to the tourism context. The definition makes it clear that the stakeholders are autonomous with independent decision-making powers and that what brings them together are issues pertaining to a particular domain which in this case is decisions or actions relating to tourism. The shared rules, norms and structures would usually be agreed to explicitly as part of the interactive process. However, the authors allow that these can sometimes be implicit.

The benefits of inter-organisational cooperation include economies of scale; combining resources and/or spreading of risk but it also means having less control over more resources (Blumberg 2001). Within the management sciences, there are two main views on why organisations have relations (Jamal & Getz, 1995). Exchange theory suggests that organisations voluntarily interact to achieve mutual organisational goals. On the other hand, resource dependency theory proposes that organisations are forced to interact as they seek to acquire and compete for scarce resources.

As Selin and Beason (1991) state, elements of both the exchange and resource dependency theories are likely to be present in the interorganisational relations of tourism organisations. Again in the tourism context, Bramwell & Sharman (1999) suggest that the potential benefits of collaboration include avoiding the cost of future opposition and conflicts with stakeholders. Two further reasons are given for collaborating. Firstly, it improves consideration of the wider impacts of tourism and thus the resulting outcomes are more sustainable. Secondly, by improving coordination of policies and related actions, the end outcomes are achieved more efficiently. An extra bonus is that collaboration adds value “by building on the store of knowledge, insights and capabilities of stakeholders in the destination” (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999, p. 393). However, collaboration has its dangers (Bramwell & Lane, 2000) which include the complexity and time consuming nature of decision making with diverse participants; the potential for private use of confidential information and the potential for a reduced effort in joint tasks by some parties and/or an opportunistic exit from the relationship by one party.

A number of studies (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Roberts & Simpson, 2000; Selin & Beason, 1991; Waddock & Bannister, 1991) have focused on identifying the factors which seem to be critical to successful social partnerships. There is no consensus on all of the factors identified by these studies but there is general agreement on the following five:

- Recognition of interdependence by all members of the collaboration
- Benefits of collaboration are clear for individual participants
- Inclusion of key stakeholders
- Appointment of a legitimate convener to facilitate cooperation
- Formulation of joint vision, aims and objectives

Additional factors identified include balance of power between stakeholders; trust and sincerity; confidence that decisions will be implemented; geographical proximity and self regulation through a collaborative (referent) organisation.

A number of tourism researchers have used case study methodology to study collaboration (Dredge, 2006; Jamal & Getz, 2000; Lawrence, 2007; Roberts & Simpson, 2000). Generally, the case studies selected have had a sustainability and destination development focus. As Ritchie & Crouch
(2003, p.189) observe, “in the traditional tourism world the destination planning and development function is often not viewed as an integral part of the marketing function.” Within tourism, these development objectives have rarely been integrated with other destination marketing objectives or issues.

Considerable work has been done to adapt and apply conceptual frameworks from the inter-organisational relationships arena to the study of cooperation in tourism planning and development. However, a common weakness has again been that tourism planning and development has been seen as quite separated from destination marketing (Gretzel, et al. 2006; Jamal and Getz, 1995; Blumberg, 2005; Ritchie & Ritchie, 2002).

**METHODOLOGY**

A number of authors (Banoma, 1985; Buhalis, 2001; Halinen & Tornroos, 2005) suggest that case studies are a useful method in a context where exploratory research is still needed to achieve an understanding of fundamental factors. Case studies are particularly suitable for the investigation of contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Parkhe, 1993; Yin, 1994). Stake argues (1995, p.245), “Case studies are of value in refining theory and suggesting complexities for further investigation, as well as helping to establish the limits of generalizability.” This is very much in line with the objectives of this research and thus led to the selection of the case study method.

The case selected for this research is the development of the official tourism website of the New Zealand NTO – Tourism New Zealand. The creation of the website was clearly of long term importance to the NZ tourism industry and would affect virtually all the stakeholders in the domain. Stake (1995) makes an important distinction between intrinsic and instrumental case research. In the former, the case itself is the focus whereas in the latter the case is used to understand something else. Although the process of development of the website was anticipated as having intrinsic value for some, it is important to emphasise that the creation and development of this website was actually used as an instrument to provide insight into the process of cooperation and its impact on a strategic destination marketing project. While recognising that a case study is a very small step towards generalisation (Campbell, 1975) the objective is to use the insights gained from this case to help with building or refining existing theory for the study of cooperation in the destination marketing context.

The case study used a combination of the three of the sources of evidence suggested by Yin (2003) – interviews, documents and physical artefacts (that is the actual website). Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews of industry members involved in the process of establishing and managing this website between the years 1999 and 2006. The demographics of the thirty-five final interviewees are presented in Table 1 in terms of gender, size of organisation, public or private nature of the organisation and the different tourism sectors in which they operated.
Table 1
Core Characteristics of Research Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male (66%)</th>
<th>Female (34%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>14 (40%) Non-tertiary</td>
<td>12 (34%) Tertiary business qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation size</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>27 (77%)</td>
<td>8 (23%) Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public or private sector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>26 (74%)</td>
<td>9 (26%) Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism sectors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTO</td>
<td>7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support services</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operators</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airline</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Attractions</td>
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<td>Transport</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Large was defined as an organisation with 30 or more full time employees with small being defined as an organisation with fewer than 30 full time employees
(2) Organisations that give “support, aid and guidance” to the direct providers (Collier, 1994, p.101)

THE CASE OF ‘PURENZ.COM’ (1999-2006)

In the late 1990s, the national tourism organisation, Tourism New Zealand (TNZ) changed its multi-domestic international marketing approach to a global marketing strategy. Their focus shifted to developing a single brand for New Zealand across all markets. The move to a global branding strategy was highly controversial and “there was no smooth transition from one positioning strategy to another…the period 1997-2001 saw an unprecedented politicisation of the country’s tourism industry” (Morgan, Pritchard and Piggott, 2003).

The Internet was one part of TNZ’s overall ‘100% pure’ global branding strategy. Prior to the development of the ‘purenz’ site, there were a number of websites that consumers could visit including a Tourism New Zealand (TNZ) site. However, a new website was to be developed with a “strong requirement” that the site be revamped to tie in with the ‘100% pure’ campaign being developed at the time. The site was to reflect the imagery of the overall campaign. In turn, all of the traditional media advertising would promote the site for further information. The technical development of the site was outsourced to a professional web design firm, Shift Ltd., who worked in close collaboration with TNZ.

The original version of the site was basically an ‘electronic brochure’ to support TNZ’s launch of its ‘100% Pure NZ’ global campaign in key markets (Australia, Japan, USA, UK, Germany, Singapore and Taiwan) between July 1999 and February 2000 (Piggott, 2001).

The initial site (Stage 1) was developed in 1999. During the process of development, it was realised that users would find the site more useful if it included a database of local product suppliers. To be included in this database, industry members have to take the initiative to register. Registration on the site is free. The only requirement for being accepted on the site is that it is a NZ registered company and operating in NZ. Links from the purenz site take potential consumers to the member’s site for more information and / or bookings. All members have to provide at least an email address through which enquiries / bookings can be made.

The ‘purenz’ site provides an ‘even playing field’ for all those who register on it in the sense that all product providers, whether large or small, are treated equally within the website. From the user’s point of view, this makes it difficult to distinguish between the size and quality of the service.
providers. However, companies that have Qualmark (New Zealand tourism's official mark of quality) ratings are listed before other registered members.

The 2002-2003 TNZ annual report (Tourism New Zealand, 2003, 4) stated that, “The major development of Tourism New Zealand in the past year has been to more clearly identify the global tourist that is ideal for New Zealand.” This ‘ideal’ target market was labelled ‘interactive travellers’. “They are travellers who seek out new experiences that involve engagement and interaction, and they demonstrate respect for natural, social and cultural environments” (Tourism New Zealand, n.d.). The new definition of the target market was to some extent a result of the realisation that the profile of ‘purenz’ website visitors was the same as visitors to NZ who gave the best yields.

Research of site users helped change the target market definition and this in turn led to a major redevelopment of the purenz site (Stage 2). The redevelopment included changes in design for a more complete look as well as rewriting of all the content with the new target market in mind. Another key change was in terms of how the site was managed with more of the control being transferred from the developers to the national tourism organisation (NTO). In the words of an NTO manager, “… we developed a content management system that allowed us to keep content fresh internally, without having to use our agency for the content changes. So it moved from a static HTML site, to a CMS [Content Management System] driven site.”

Also in 2002, the NZ government succeeded in buying the domain name ‘new zealand.com’ after lengthy negotiations with an individual in the US. The final cost translated into approximately NZD one million of which TNZ paid approximately half with the balance coming from Industry NZ and Trade NZ. The rationale for TNZ paying a larger share according to one interviewee involved in the purchase process was “that the predominant beneficiary was going to be the tourism proposition because people look for the country URL.” The site remains in constant development with two or three projects each year to add new functionality. NZ$1-2 million are spent by TNZ on website development each year (Bates & Tamahori, 2006).

Cooperation and partnership are regularly cited as being of great value to the New Zealand tourism industry. Press releases on the creation of the new Ministry of Tourism highlighted the importance of developing productive relationships between the government, tourism operators and other stakeholders (Tourism New Zealand, 2000). At the NZ Tourism 2000 conference the NZ Tourism Strategy Group was asked to consult widely and develop a Tourism Strategy to take NZ through to 2010 and beyond. The Strategy Group was to design a ‘framework for better business and a basis for more effective partnerships’ (Hall & Kearsley, 2001). On the release of the Strategy 2010, Ray Salter, GM. Ministry of Tourism stated, “I’m already impressed with the industry-wide recognition that partnership is the way to go … “ (Tourism New Zealand, 2002)

In this case, however, interviewees indicated that there was very little input or involvement with other tourism stakeholders in the initial development of the website. All decisions regarding the design and features of the website were made by TNZ and implemented in close collaboration with their website development company. When funding was involved, the proposal would go to the TNZ Executive and Board for approval. According to an interviewee who provided support services to the NTO in the early years, there was:

...not too much consultation in development of the site precisely because it was controversial ... there were entrenched views ... politics ... TNZ had a clear view of what had to be done and got on with it.

It is clear that the process of developing purenz was perceived by most interviewees as prescriptive and had a very low level of industry consultation and involvement. Yet when the interviewees were asked for their view on what they thought were the strengths of the process used to develop purenz, this same prescriptive approach was seen by many as a key strength of the development process for a number of reasons. The key reason given for this view was that the prescriptive approach was probably the only way of getting results in a highly fragmented industry. In the words of one industry member:
This industry talks around in circles and never actually gets anywhere, so you do have to put a stake in the ground and say, yeah it might not be the best way of doing it, but ... the industry seems to believe in a diplomatic process and yet it ties itself up in knots because it becomes decision by committee and they would never of got anything done....

Overall, the low levels of cooperation in the development of the website were perceived as quite acceptable and justifiable by most of the participants in this research. Yet when prompted, these same participants considered cooperation to be very important in destination marketing. As the data collection proceeded, there was a greater focus on understanding the meaning of cooperation for each participant. The responses to this probing were analysed and provide an insight into how there were different understandings of ‘what is cooperation’ and how it should manifest itself in the destination marketing context.

From many respondents’ points of view (especially from the NTO) cooperation is about the industry having a shared understanding and acceptance of NZ tourism goals and strategies as communicated by the NTO. From the industry point of view there is an expectation that the NTO’s responsibility is to act on behalf of the tourism businesses and to support them. Minimal involvement or consultation does not appear to be an issue for this industry member:

...I wasn’t involved in it in the beginning ... I mean, there would obviously be a team in charge of it and I, I imagine it would be a research team or a marketing team. They’d know what’s happening out there. And I imagine it would be the various Tourism New Zealand offices throughout the world as well. So we’d know what’s happening in their areas as to our destination ... we belong to ITOC and TAANZ ... So we do have meetings a few times a year where we’re able to comment ... and add feedback and that type of thing.

In contrast, there were other participants who see cooperation as a two-way process. A senior industry executive views cooperation as an interactive process which needs mutual understanding and working together to achieve all parties’ objectives:

... cooperation is about understanding each other’s needs and you can’t do that without actually some time ...and interaction. ... The definition of co-operation ... basically it is understanding of each other’s objectives and working together to achieve both parties objectives with the same actions ... I mean you can’t have co-operation just because they’re nice people ...

Jamal & Getz (1995, p.187) define cooperation as “working together towards some end” without specifying how the parties work together. In this case, TNZ appears to be saying that they know where they are going and stakeholders need to understand and buy into their strategy and then align their organisation’s efforts with the NTO strategy. This approach is not in conflict with the many stakeholders who see cooperation in terms of TNZ taking leadership or acting on their behalf, keeping them informed and providing support to their own business marketing efforts. However, there are other stakeholders who expect to be consulted in the development of the objectives and the strategy and are willing to contribute resources to achieve jointly developed aims.

Research participants were asked the question, “Do you think the level of cooperation has changed over time?” In general respondents were confident that the level of cooperation had been improving since the initial launch. In the opinion of one CEO of a transport company, there was no cooperation in the initial stage of the website planning and development. Cooperation began at the stage when industry suppliers were asked to register on the site’s database and the value of greater cooperation is now well accepted by the senior management of TNZ.

I think there was no co-operation in the first phase ... in the second phase the co-operation was when it was allowed to be a part of it. And now I think there’s very
firmed a philosophy that ... at a senior level, there's regular interaction with the
industry, there's regular feedback.

The reasons for this improvement in cooperation were attributed to changes in the wider
national environment, the industry itself and within the NTO.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study suggest that there are different levels of cooperation desired in
destination marketing projects depending on the strategic or tactical nature of the NTO’s objectives and
thus the input required from stakeholders. Five different levels of cooperation in destination marketing
emerge which are labelled: passive acceptance, support, alignment, contribution and pooling (Table 2).
Each level of cooperation is defined on the basis of the input or contribution desired from the
participating stakeholders. The level of cooperation needed is a strategic choice to be made by
management based on their assessment of the existing network climate; organisational constraints, and
the cost-benefit analysis of the value of cooperation in a particular context.

The five levels of cooperation are illustrated through application to this case study. The fairly
politicised climate and discordant state of relationships between certain central organisations within the
network, when the development began in 1999, seems to have influenced TNZ’s decision to develop
the global campaign and the purenz website with minimal input from other organisations in the tourism
industry (Bhat, 2008). A major factor which contributed to this ‘go it alone’ decision is that the
original role of this website was limited to an ‘electronic brochure’ and therefore the need for input
from other stakeholders was not anticipated. In addition, TNZ was given a large enough budget by the
government to be able to develop both the campaign and the website independently without having to
seek financial or skill contributions from other stakeholders. On the other hand, the costs of a more
collaborative approach were seen to be high in terms of the time it would take and the possibility of a
less effective and less impartial result. Thus at Stage 1 of the website development, TNZ did not seek
input from stakeholders and probably hoped for passive acceptance from stakeholders.

Table 2
Different Levels of Cooperation in Destination Marketing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Input desired from stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pooling</td>
<td>Pooling of ideas and information towards destination marketing objectives and strategy formulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Contribution</td>
<td>Contribution of resources and skills in implementing destination marketing strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Alignment</td>
<td>Alignment of marketing strategies with NTO strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Promotional strategies and spend in coordination with NTO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Product/service quality aligned with NTO destination marketing strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Coordination with NTO in building distribution chain relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Pricing strategies in line with destination positioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support of tourism destination vision / strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Passive acceptance</td>
<td>No input desired from other stakeholders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By Stage 2 of the purenz portal development, TNZ needed a basic level of cooperation from industry stakeholders. Firstly, the NTO was seeking support from industry operators in terms of their registration on the website database. TNZ offered the registration free of cost and launched an intense communications effort aimed at the industry through a wide array of existing network communication channels. TNZ achieved considerable success in terms of support and participation in the website database.

At this later stage of the purenz development, TNZ also sought alignment of stakeholders’ marketing activities with their ‘100% pure’ global campaign. They were not as successful in achieving this level of cooperation from stakeholders. Most research participants showed little awareness of specific actions (beyond registering on the website database) through which they could align with TNZ to benefit the industry and/or their organisations.

In this case, TNZ never sought contribution from stakeholders in terms of resources and skills except at a tactical level in terms of hosting media and travel agent familiarisation tours. Key stakeholders with the ability to contribute resources and/or skills for destination marketing expected they would be consulted and have a say in formulating marketing goals and strategies. The major stakeholders were ready to contribute resources and skills but expected to be part of the decision-making process and not just involved at the implementation stage.

The pooling level of cooperation is only indirectly evident in this case. Pooling of ideas was not intentionally sought by TNZ. However, it is evident from the case that the feedback from the industry during Stage 2 was taken on board by the TNZ management and helped broaden the ‘100% pure’ strategy and led to modifications to the purenz website. A couple of NTO managers at the operational level suggested that the industry suggestions had given them ideas or led to improvements. Strategic managers at TNZ emphasized the changes to the strategy in response to feedback but did not give any indication that the feedback was helpful or added value to the strategy.

The pooling level of cooperation is based on the literature that suggests that there is a trend that a broader range of tourism stakeholders are seeking involvement and can add value in terms of knowledge, insights and capabilities (Ritchie, 1993; Bramwell & Sharman, 1999). In this research, there were participants who would have liked to be more involved and who had considerable knowledge, insights and capabilities. This study found that constraints to greater involvement by stakeholders were: resources and time; lack of opportunity; and a perception that their contribution would not be of value.

CONCLUSION

Cooperation in tourism is often treated as a normative concept (Tosun, 2000) and a desired ideology (Taylor, 1995). This research suggests that cooperation in destination marketing has to be approached as a strategic choice rather than an ideology. A strategy has to have a purpose and this purpose or goal needs to be shared by all whose cooperation is sought. This shared vision does not just happen but requires certain processes and actions on the part of destination marketing management. Although cooperation in destination marketing is sought from organisations, the organisations are represented by people whose understanding and expectation of the cooperative process and its outcomes can differ. These differing expectations cannot be ignored and need to be taken into account. Unless these expectations are understood and met, the desired levels of cooperation will not be achieved. There are costs involved in the cooperative process and these have to be considered in deciding on the level of cooperation necessary for achieving destination objectives (both short term and long term). Whether this investment and effort is worth the returns promised has to be assessed in the context of each tourism network.

Future research into cooperation in destination marketing needs to be clear about the level of cooperation being studied as this will have a considerable moderating effect in determining the measures to be used for evaluating the success of the cooperative efforts.
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SAYANGI KUALA LUMPUR? BRANDING STRATEGIES FOR METROPOLITAN AREAS

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ABSTRACT

Destination branding and place competitiveness has resulted in much literature in recent years. A complex game with many stakeholders has emerged. National branding is now an affirmed fact. Malaysia’s image deficit was successfully turned into an asset with the “Malaysia Truly Asia” campaign that helped position the country. Global forces are currently favouring the end of the nation state and the growth of a network of cities influencing a territory and shaping both urban areas and hinterland. With the sentiment of global standardization, destination branding contributes to shaping and defining individual urban identities. The public/private agents’ partnership becomes crucial in branding cities in a competitive destinations environment. City promotion boards are aggressively developing urban brands worldwide. The development of urban brands in Asia remains uneven. Is it due to organizational, cultural or communication reasons? The purpose of this paper is to examine the current strategies deployed for branding Asian cities as urban destinations and to identify the gaps in these strategies while focusing on the case of Kuala Lumpur. This study reviews branding strategies, institutional coordination, and stakeholders’ involvement through content and systems analysis. The evaluation encompasses the territorial scale differentiation between metropolitan and national levels. It questions the value of specific branding needs for cities aiming at a world-city status. The findings of the study indicate cases of gaps in branding supply as well as partial branding. Finally, the growth of experience tourism stresses the involvement of residents as actors and targets of the urban brand.

Keywords: experience tourism, Kuala Lumpur, urban branding, metropolisation

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the need for competitiveness for world destinations has been redefined in the light of globalization, access to information, and growth in passenger traffic. Furthermore, the globalization and standardization of technology and norms have given way to the rise of a fragmentation and differentiation process. Cities are seen as the economic and social nodal points for a system based on networks (Taylor, 1997) and eclipsing nation-state power. Maitland and Newman (2009) insist on how the metropolitan areas are well equipped to operate as nodes of worldwide networks compared to countries. In other words it is a shift in scales and organization systems crossing national borders. Urban entities are brought to a pivotal function in a world based on networks and challenging established hierarchies (Bunnell, 2002). All this leads to the notion of various leagues of cities where the global city achieves the highest level amongst world cities (Sassen, 2001). World cities are constructed at the convergence of deterritorialisation, facilitating the flow of commodities, capital, money, people and information, and reterritorialisation, fixing spatial infrastructures and transforming cities as if a magnet to allow these flows to happen (Brenner, 2004). At the local scale it questions the relevance of governance for cities that have far extended the original nucleus to an array of endless suburbs. Metropolitan areas are what constitute the standard definition of cities. The global and world city discourse defining standards of urban development and influence has been perceived as mostly North American. In the Asia-Pacific, scholars have identified the emergence of various forms of world city formation infrastructure (Marcotullio, 2003), from the developing country, nation state approach to the primate city to city states that function independently from the hinterland (Olds & Yeung, 2004).
These organizational changes and conceptual discourses are reflected in place branding. In open economic spaces like the European Union or North America, place branding has become essential to distinguish cities that offer quite similar products and investment opportunities. Perceiving destinations as brands and products to be consumed is subject to various interpretations amongst academics and applications amongst branding agents (Paskaleva-Shapira, 2007; Jensen, 2007). While the World Class discourse sets defining standards of urban morphology for international acceptance, the branding process goes in the opposite direction, with a differentiation strategy and underlining the uniqueness of cities with standardized infrastructure. The ability to create high levels of awareness of the destination provides an important competitive advantage for a destination through the use of technology and information systems, communities, evolving identities and territories (Wang & Xiang, 2007). Research in destination branding has been primarily conducted from a perceived-image perspective neglecting to analyze the destination brand from the supply-side (Konecnik & Go, 2008). Paskaleva-Shapira, (2007) summarizes the supply organization (competitiveness, sustainability, integrated management and governance) as the key driver for urban tourism success.

The objectives of this paper are threefold. They aim to identify the relationship between the urban supply (territorial configuration, administration, governance) and brands in the Asian context and Kuala Lumpur metropolitan area. They also want to reviews application of urban communication systems, that complex, it portrays the answers given by cities using models of implication of stakeholders and evolution in the use of communication channels. The last dimension regards the evolution of tourism and the need for experience. The article uses to some extent the model of urban branding communication strategies developed by Kavaratzis (2004), identifying three levels of branding. The first part starts with a review of the urban systems, the governance systems and the management of the city’s supply (site, territories, administration, tourism-related facilities, urban vision) (Kavaratzis, 2004). The analysis moves then to the relationship between national levels of organization and cities presenting different configuration such as Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Seoul. Second, intentional communication is discussed, in light of the urban supply, distinguishing national and regional branding agents using marketing techniques such as advertising, public relations and network branding (Kavaratzis, 2004). The branding is reviewed under the filter of the “world-city” discourse and its implementation. The third part broadens the reflection to experience tourism. The branding that was not controllable by marketers, based on media and word of mouth is changing with new channels of communication and new market demand. Their inherent nature forces segmentation between internal and external branding. It urges the need to integrate residents to the branding strategies for local identity and perceived-image perspectives. Finally the conclusions highlight the current gaps in urban governance, branding strategies, including the need for a broader integration of residents both of as actors and the target of urban branding.

DEFINING URBAN DESTINATIONS

Metropolitan System Morphology

The geographical site and the urban configuration (urban layout, physical constraints, access to the sea, scenic environment) are determinant physical assets of primary branding strategies. The accumulation of economical and cultural power has favoured the establishment of various rankings, and competition between cities (Sassen, 2001; Yeoh, 1999). Ranking systems and urban competition force cities to find new urban management approaches and redefine the understanding of “city.” It advocates a larger definition of world cities by an integration of urban entities into metropolitan systems. Leading metropolitan regions combine large population, a core middle class, influential political and economic power, business and media influence, cultural assets, pivotal access (world class airport, accommodations, public transport system, etc.) with functioning institutions (Marcotullio, 2003). These fixed infrastructures provide the space necessary for further globalization processes and global flows. Emerging countries cities such as Kuala Lumpur have grown exponentially over the last 40 years and went far beyond the original city limits and have spread out from inner-city to new areas in sprawling conurbations (Bunell, Barter & Morshidi, 2002). These morphological and structural changes have expanded the scale of approach to the urban phenomenon, not limited only to the core city but to all the urbanized area, working as an integrated urban system. . These systems are
multicentred and articulated around transport infrastructure and have included new facilities, such as
new airports (Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Seoul and Hong Kong), industrial parks, urban mega-projects,
business districts and networks of public transport to become focal points for policies that enhance
transnational connections.

**Urban Systems: Territorial Considerations**

International comparison of data on a city’s population is limited to a great extent by
variations in national concepts and definitions. Although an effort is made to reduce the sources of non-
comparability somewhat by presenting the data for both city proper and urban agglomeration, many
serious problems of comparability remain. In countries with rapid urbanization and expansive urban
sprawl the metropolitan region has become the norm of understanding cities; with integrated transport
networks, defining residents’ daily life, with commuting and through less meaningful administrative
boundaries. Metropolitan areas represent urban systems sharing common facts yet their configuration
and organization differs. In Korea, the tremendous urbanization of the Seoul region was accompanied
by a consolidation of the newly urbanized suburbs into the capital city. City states without hinterland,
such as Singapore or Hong Kong, have political boundaries and governance matching the limits of the
urban system. Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur present a different case associated at times to the central
municipality and at times referring to their metropolitan territory. Looking at the population and
territory of various metropolitan areas illustrate these differences of configuration. Table 1, takes into
account only the contiguous urbanized areas representing autonomous urban systems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Area (km²)</th>
<th>Density per km²</th>
<th>Percentage of nation’s population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Lumpur City</td>
<td>1,629,400</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>6,677.9</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KL METRO (Klang Valley)</td>
<td>7,200,200</td>
<td>3,970</td>
<td>1,813.7</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BANGKOK Municipality</td>
<td>6,355,522</td>
<td>1,569</td>
<td>4,050.7</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BANGKOK METRO</td>
<td>10,861,726</td>
<td>5,560</td>
<td>1,953.5</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEOUL (City)</td>
<td>10,421,782</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>17,226.1</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEOUL METRO</td>
<td>20,567,935</td>
<td>5,076</td>
<td>4,052.0</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SINGAPORE</td>
<td>4,758,600</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>6,702.3</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HONG KONG SAR</td>
<td>6,925,900</td>
<td>1,108</td>
<td>6,250.8</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Seoul Metropolitan Area is five times larger than Hong Kong but its city limits still have
twice Singaporean population. Compared to all the metropolitan areas, Kuala Lumpur has the lowest
density, which matches the urban morphology of the city with a majority sprawl component. Its relative
value accounts for 1/3 of the country’s population. It has a power of attraction similar to Seoul, but
superior to Bangkok in terms of national territory. Some are calling for metropolitan system
governance for efficiency reasons, for integrated public and private policy for sustainable development.
In Korea, the Seoul Metropolitan Area (SMA), covers more than half the Korean population over 10%
of the national territory. Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok metropolitan areas hold between 15% and 30 %
of the national population. Primate cities, capitals of nations like Thailand, Korea and Malaysia with
high level of political, economical, and media centralization face a complex urban branding process.
The status of the capital city, because of its symbolic value is more delicate. The development of the
metropolitan or regional approach has created tensions between different levels of governments, and
increases the difficulties in coordinating public activities. It creates challenges for the relations between
local and central government. Within metropolitan areas, administrative divisions might hinder the
coordination between entities of similar levels. 40% of Bangkokians live outside the limits of
Bangkok’s municipality (Table 1). This percentage reaches 77% in Kuala Lumpur’s conurbation
(Figure 1) and has an important impact on the urban identity representation.
The Kuala Lumpur Metropolitan Area (KLMA) also called Klang Valley is neither an administrative entity, nor a political division, but an economic and social urban system. Businesses, transports, equipments integrate their operations in the metropolis under a pragmatic territorial approach. The boundaries between federal and state territories are ignored or at least secondary. Even the Malaysian central government acknowledges this reality, with a centralized service to citizens under the e-KL platform. The metropolitan territorial organization is shaping the recognition of an urban brand. And tourism policies are likely to reflect the overall administrative layout of a country, region or city. Defining the organizational system of a place as a whole helps one understand and brand the city. A partial approach to place creates a partial branding.

**Urban Governance System**

The system of governance of a place influences strongly the choice of development and management. According to DiGaetano, (2003), the governments of ASEAN countries have a corporatist mode of governance, typified by a development administration, a centralized decision-making process and top–down approaches. This model, dominant in Asia throughout the 1990’s, combined with liberal business policies created quick development, favouring urbanization. Cities like Seoul, Kuala Lumpur, and Bangkok have grown dramatically under a boosterist approach to development. In Malaysia, the role of central planning is crucial in deciding the country’s orientations. The Ninth Malaysia Plan provides for the economic role played by cities to spearhead the national development. Administrative divisions and political organization such as federal territories, states and municipalities are under the guidance of centralized policies. The symbolic value of the nation’s capital city put it in a conflict area between the central government’s nation building agenda and the local perspectives. Draft Kuala Lumpur 2020 and Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2020 (KLSP 2020) reflect a top-down approach where ‘growth pole’ strategies for urban development are emphasized rather than local level strategies (Marcotullio, 2003). The regional and national agenda or priorities might differ. In developing countries like Thailand or Malaysia, the administrative configuration, territorial divisions and centralization prevents the emergence of recognized metropolitan regions with clearly defined powers and boundaries. Therefore, national branding policies or strategies might not serve well a certain region or place in a country, while focusing on national priorities. Metropolitan areas empowerment is neutralized at the national level, but in exchange benefits from the protection from a nation state’s regulations and the massive infrastructure investments made by the central government on them. Olds and Yeung (2004) argue that this geographical and political relationship with the national hinterland protects against competition from world cities. However, cities,
irrespective these “protections” are exposed to global rankings and scrutiny, and are trying to develop unique brands.

**METROPOLITAN BRANDING STRATEGIES**

Kotler, Hamlin, Rein & Haider (2002), defined place marketing as “designing a place to satisfy the needs of its target markets. It succeeds when citizens and business are pleased with their community and when the expectations of visitors and investors are met”. Confusion often occurs between place branding and place marketing, the latter focusing on the promotion of current place attractions for tourists. Many initiatives are focused on short-term advertisements, giving views of the place, which have virtually no link to the real experiences of investors, tourists, and business people that interact with it (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride, 2002). It is admitted that urban tourism is a complex setting due to the multifunctional aspects of metropolises and recent technological and communication changes have intensified a need for differentiation through branding.

**Tourism Supply in Kuala Lumpur**

The economic and demographic growth of the last thirty years in Asia, was supported by the conjugation of managerial and corporatist governance with liberal policies (DiGaetano, 2003). It’s been translated by a massive urbanization fuelled construction boom based on the implementation of transport systems, infrastructure and housing projects. It generated a much extended city due to a sprawling urbanization and a complex network of highways servicing the metropolis, with one of the highest motorization levels in Asia (Kasipillai & Chan, 2008). Furthermore, mega-projects combining shopping malls and business centres were scattered across the metropolitan area driven by new highways in a building euphoria. This punctual approach of urban development has resulted in poor integration to the urban environment and lack of long-term planning and coordination for the whole urban master plan for the Kuala Lumpur metropolitan area (Hairul, Baum & Kokranikkal, 2004). The 1990’s saw the involvement of the federal government in Kuala Lumpur to channel urban planning with the creation of KLCC and the construction of the Petronas Twin Towers. Such moves expressed the willingness to change the city’s image through the development of new iconic building to boost both the city and country’s image.

**Table 2**

**Distribution of Tourism Resources in Kuala Lumpur Metropolitan Area**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>KL City</th>
<th>Urban Selangor</th>
<th>Putrajaya</th>
<th>Total Metropolitan Area</th>
<th>Part KL City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Transport Station</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels (4&amp;5 Stars)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>56.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convention/Exhibition centers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping Malls</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractions/Sites</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks/Public Reserve</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golfs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This building reusing a whole area participates directly to the shaping of a new urban identity through the building environment (Maitland & Newman, 2009). The morphology of Kuala Lumpur is unique; extensive and multi-centred with areas of interest and attractions located throughout the metropolitan area. Indeed, half of the tourism resources and facilities are located out of Kuala Lumpur city limits and therefore are not showcased as part of the urban system (Table 2). In Bangkok, 60% of the metropolitan population lives in the central municipality, compared with 22% in Kuala Lumpur (Table 1). The distribution of the tourism facilities and attractions in the two metropolitan areas differ widely. In Bangkok, the majority are concentrated within municipal limits, whereas in Kuala Lumpur.
the situation is radically different with a metropolitan dissemination. Between half and two-thirds of the tourism resources are located outside the original municipal nucleus (Table 2). The city is approached in a much divided way since it is limited to the federal territory of KL. Therefore between a third and half of the metropolitan area is ignored in the KL institutional branding due to administrative fragmentation. Sya, (2005) identifies attractions throughout the Klang Valley as part of Kuala Lumpur’s brand assets for the destination. However it does not advocate the need for a single branding of the metropolitan area, leaving a fragmented approach to the urban system branding. The current city branding ignores 50% of its resources.

Agents of branding

City-states like Hong Kong and Singapore are a relatively small spatial unit managed by unified level of government (Olds & Yeung, 2004). They fully synergize private and public agencies (e.g. Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices, Hong Kong Trade Development Council, Invest Hong Kong and Hong Kong Tourism Board) to promote the city with a discourse that positions the main role of the city to be that of nodal point in a globalizing world economy. In Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok the stakes are different when it comes to a metropolitan branding due to the centralization of the country. The branding of Hong Kong and Singapore, is not limited to its tourism dimension, nevertheless, both city-states and nation-states value tourism as a channel for promoting the country. The role of the national governments and National Tourism Organizations (NTOs) is evident in being a symbolic representation of a country abroad, larger than tourism. Thailand and Malaysia, made big strides with tourism promotion campaigns like 'Amazing Thailand' and 'Malaysia, Truly Asia'. Urged to formulate a ‘brand identity for the nation that supports tourism, including a tourism brand’ (Henderson, 2006), governments strive to depict favourably the country for global awareness. The Malaysia Truly Asia brand has also been well received within the country to represent Malaysia’s identity. The political discourse behind branding or development choices shows the importance of territorial levels in the marketing and branding of territories (Pierce & Butler, 1999). The high centralization and focus on nation building weakens the opportunity for cities to grow their own brand. Paskaleva-Shapira, (2007) outlines the complex nature of cities and argues that the promotion of urban tourist destinations requires a citywide integrated management approach based on governance principles and strategic vision of competitiveness.

At a local level, cities built across territorial and administrative divisions, suffer from a low level of place awareness. The branding process of Kuala Lumpur as a territory with its own specifics and urban culture is dependent both on central decisions and the local governments’ willingness to cooperate. National branding policies and strategies, from Tourism Malaysia, are cascaded down the KLMA by the local Tourism (Action) Councils (DBKL, Selangor State, Putrajaya). However, these policies don’t show the metropolis as one single urban system. The opposite happens due to the strong emphasis on administrative boundaries and municipal handling of promotion, the metropolitan area concept is not present in branding strategies. Brochures, maps and websites emanating from these councils ignore the neighbouring urban counterpart. For instance, Kuala Lumpur’s brochures ignore attractions outside its administrative limits. The case of Selangor is even more disturbing since it surrounds entirely the federal territories of KL and Putrajaya and yet, these territories are virtually nonexistent. All are represented and promoted as isolated destinations that ignore and almost deny their integration to a Kuala Lumpur metropolitan area, despite sharing chunks of the metropolitan tourism attractions and facilities. Capital cities of centralized countries are perceived more as an engine of national construction by the central government. The city identity is not taken into account and is kept in a functional and passive role with little multidirectional cooperation between ministries, municipal and neighbouring state government, private operators and residents. Confusion between nation and city brands prevents the latter from being seen as a separate entity.

Business tourism is a coveted segment because of its revenue and also due to the influence and perceptive role of the participants. In Malaysia, MICE generated RM3.17 billion in revenue for the country in 2007 or 6.9 per cent of the tourist receipts and in December 2008. A special branding approach has been developed by countries towards this segment. Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) was established as a separate entity from Tourism Malaysia to coordinate MICE...
offer in the country (Table 3). These initiatives are mixed public and private with players such as convention centres, airlines, etc. Once again city-states are favoured since the cities benefit directly from the national government policies. Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok don’t have a specific convention and exhibition bureau although most of this activity happens within the Klang Valley and the Bangkok Metropolitan area.

The global city branding

The quick industrialization and urbanization of Asian tigers in the 1970’s and 1980’s, has been rapidly phased out due to massive deindustrialization process since the 1990 of the major urban centres. Singapore, Hong Kong, Seoul have become engaged in the tertiarisation of the economy with the creative class theories and the evolution to a service and leisure-oriented society. In Kuala Lumpur, the industrial deconcentration towards the provinces has initiated a similar pattern, and private developers are tapping on to these changes. Some industrial areas such as Sentul, have been turned into creative class hubs, with public transport, cultural offer and space for creativity. The world city concept and its urban competitiveness discourse favour a comparative approach to urban branding. This discourse favours megaprojects, urban renewal and morphological change to augment the urban capacity in hosting business activities. The mirror side of the world city emphasizes on the transfer of knowledge and best urban practices to enhance the sustainability and quality of life in a place. The tagline ‘Asia’s world city’ for BrandHK was launched in 2001 as a functional visual identity for the city (Table 3). This coordinated campaign proved successful when the slogan was appropriated by the residents that recognized their identity in it. Singapore Tourism Board, with Uniquely Singapore has created an array of economic areas represented with different names but under the same denomination.

The connection between the territorial governance and the branding strategies effectiveness seems to be exemplified with city-states. However, the case of Seoul Metropolitan highlights the case of primate city of a highly centralized country, which federates an integrated branding (Table 3). “Hi Seoul”, communication line was selected as brand slogan and means lovely Seoul, friendly Seoul and high Seoul. Furthermore, the external branding associates a one-stop website, portal for tourism and business needs under the auspices of the metropolitan government. In Kuala Lumpur, formal branding has been directed towards external markets with a functional, thematic offer. Furthermore, at municipal level, no visual identity has been developed. Kuala Lumpur municipal government simply uses the city coat of arms for its communication. A VisitKL logo using the city skyline has recently been launched but remains limited to the municipality (Table 3). World-city competitiveness ambitions appear with KL- A world class city, (KL2020) reflecting the corporatist/managerial point of view favouring business. The various key tourism sectors identified (MICE, wellness, Medical tourism education, shopping) are echoing the Tourism Malaysia branding strategies.
Table 3
Urban Branding Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Brand name</th>
<th>Hong Kong</th>
<th>Singapore</th>
<th>Kuala Lumpur</th>
<th>Bangkok</th>
<th>Seoul</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia’s World City</td>
<td>Uniquely Singapore</td>
<td>Malaysia Truly Asia</td>
<td>Amazing Thailand</td>
<td>Dynamic Korea / Korea Sparkling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National TO</th>
<th>HK tourism Board</th>
<th>Singapore Tourism Board</th>
<th>Tourism Malaysia</th>
<th>TAT</th>
<th>Korea Tourism Org.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand name</td>
<td>Asia’s World City</td>
<td>Uniquely Singapore</td>
<td>VisitKL Sayangi KL, PJ</td>
<td>Hi! Seoul</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City Website/platform</th>
<th>HK Tourism</th>
<th>Tourism Singapore</th>
<th>-Tourism Malaysia -DBKL -Selangor Tourism -Putrajaya Corp</th>
<th>-TAT -Bangkok Government</th>
<th>Seoul Tourism Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Tourism Exhibition &amp; Convention bureau</td>
<td>MEHK</td>
<td>Singapore Exhibition and Convention Bureau</td>
<td>Malaysia Convention &amp; Exhibition Bureau (My CEB)</td>
<td>Thailand Convention &amp; Exhibition Bureau (TCEB)</td>
<td>Seoul Convention Bureau (SCB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition &amp; Convention Bureau Tagline</td>
<td>Converging Possibilities</td>
<td>Where great things happen</td>
<td>Thailand Maximize</td>
<td>Korea, your sparkling destination!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Marketing &amp; Research</td>
<td>Hong Kong Tourism Board</td>
<td>Tourism Singapore</td>
<td>Tourism Malaysia</td>
<td>TAT</td>
<td>Seoul Tourism Organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This branding is declined with the background of a kaleidoscope of ethnic groups and cuisines. For business tourism, the greater Kuala Lumpur is sold as a low cost, value-for-money, safe, easily accessible and functional place, but without emphasis on the essence and the thrill of the place. This leads to a superficial mall-like urbanism and a functional understanding of a territory that is artificial and doesn’t emphasize on the practice and experience of the urban space and its uniqueness. Using hallmark events such as Taipusam at Batu Caves reinforce the association of the event with the place, although this attraction is out of Kuala Lumpur city. The automobile circuit of Sepang, established its name amongst the annual world Formula 1 grand prix. It’s a sporting event able to bring the name of KL to the world although the circuit is located outside of the municipality. It can be noted that none of the cities analyzed use sports club as a branding vector. Television programs will showcase European and American leagues championships, which reinforce branding for the participating cities’ clubs. It is quite puzzling to see the use of a foreign city based brand’s as a tool of branding like in 2006, when Tourism Malaysia signed a £2 million deal with Manchester United in an effort to promote Visit Malaysia Year 2007. If the idea to link a destination due to the potential media coverage of the football matches, it is still questionable to know the exact benefit of such campaign eventually promotes another brand carried by the team, Manchester. Urban branding calls for a broad approach, integrating territorial and institutional configuration to communication campaigns, yet the expectations are evolving.

THE RISE OF EXPERIENCE-BASED TOURISM

Traditionally, institutional branding agents have limited control on word of mouth and external media, like information channels (Kavaratzis, 2004). The quest for records and architectural achievements whether in Beijing (Stadium) or Dubai (Islands, towers) participate in an indirect...
branding. Yet, emergency situations, bad reviews, crises that might ruin all branding efforts made. Branding agents pay attention to media for international rankings (quality of life, economy, criminality, politeness, and language skills) based also on tourism operators services (taximeter use, different price). Dedicated public relation sponsoring actions like movie shooting to enhance visibility of a place that portrays it favourably might not have the results promotional agents see as positive (Bunnell, 2004). The rise of the importance of digital media changes the way branding is made with the irruption of the word of mouth as a key factor. The readers’ mail section has become the central part of place review. Magazines shape the understanding of the city as a whole through reviewing the cultural offer and emphasizing on the urban experience. Time Out publication launched the Kuala Lumpur version of its magazine, bringing international frame to the urban experience, with an editorial line covering the metropolitan area and enhances the feeling of belonging to a place worthy of attention. More than six different urban lifestyle magazines mirror the experiences of millions of urban dwellers across the Klang Valley and expect their interaction within their columns and websites. Although guide books, are authoritative information providers and opinion-making people are turning to internet as a major source of information. Social networks and websites like trip advisor or lonely planet are influential for branding and combine the richness of guidebooks and the viral effect of word of mouth. They gain further authority thanks to the interactive place rating and service level ranking. Destination official agencies have the ability to direct information diffusion through web editing and digital culture approach. In Seoul, a single website coordinates the whole metropolitan area and is combining tourism information and business opportunity under the authority of the metropolitan government. The digital culture is strongly anchored to a local territory while applying the filter of freely expressed world standards online. Independent websites and local forum are accessible for both residents and visitors, reinforcing the power of sources of information alongside with institutional marketers. Singapore Tourism website aims at being an interactive platform conjugating internal and external needs. This relationship can play a key factor in the branding strategies, reinforcing also the link between authorities and city residents, and how they interact with visitors (Karavatsis, 2004).

Quality of life and Experience

Place branding is usually associated with the focus on external markets. However, developing an internal place branding for residents helps to build the global brand. The world class city emphasizes on the urban quality of life, that affects not just the residents’ satisfaction but the visitors’ experience as well (Paskaleva-Shapira, 2007). Quality is becoming a key principle of city tourism, referring not only to tourism products and facilities, but also to urban life in general. Places with first grade quality hotels and business facilities but with huge economic differences and little social cohesion appear less attractive than places with a balanced approach to urban development. The emphasis on quality of life and conductive urban atmosphere goes back to the world-class city and creative economy discourse. In order to define the criteria of attractions of a city, the creative class, defined as people in science, engineering, architecture, education, arts, music, and entertainment, whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology, and/or new creative content (Florida, 2002). The crime, transportation, education, and public safety are the functional properties, while the creative class adds value to the brand (Yeoh, 2005). Creative Tourism is considered to be a new generation of tourism, urban oriented and involving interaction. UNESCO Conference of Santa Fe, (2006), defined it as a form of tourism in which the visitors have an educational, emotional, social, and participative interaction with the place, its living culture, and the people who live there. They feel like a citizen. It requires that managers recognize the creativity within their city as a resource, and provide new opportunities to meet the evolving interests of tourists. This urban culture underlines the attention paid to the stakeholders in the supply process, and notably the urban system organization. Residents need to be involved to invest in and communicate what is happening in the place and what are the things done to develop it in line with an agreed, shared, vision (Konecnik and Go, 2004).

Kuala Lumpur is associated to a dynamic city, with futuristc skyline in a dominant Muslim culture and populated majority with Chinese. The internal communication is limited to messages emphasizing on civic duties. It is interesting to notice that seldom people’s face are displayed preferring the Twin Towers as a background. Sayangi Kuala Lumpur, or Sayangi Petaling Jaya tagline are used more for civic campaign rather than in a way of asserting the essence of the city identity and quality of life (Table 3). Political issues between the various governments prevent from shaping a sense
of belonging to the metropolitan environment. Kuala Lumpur’s residents seldom encompass the metropolitan area as a whole. Attractions are not limited to selected buildings and architectural archetypes although the cultural heritage awareness amongst resident is low (Tung, Lim & Bouchon, 2009). Impression from residents that cultural offer in Kuala Lumpur is limited and that the usual weekend leisure time is spent in shopping malls while holiday time is used to escape from the city and seldom to experience the urban life or discover new neighbourhood through events or cultural offer. The multiculturalism, a key theme in the society’s expression, is trapped in a fixed representation of traditions. The idea of a distinct Kuala Lumpur’s identity, hereby urban, defined by intra or extramural territories is still to develop. The loyalty to the brand KL is low since the brand is virtually nonexistent. Yet residents share a common experience across the Klang Valley by their work, leisure and practice of public spaces; practice that defines the sense of belonging and appropriation of the place (Busquets, 2004). A KLMA brand should be differentiated at external and internal levels. Firstly one aimed at the international and even outstation market. Secondly, local branding for residents, related to various places or attractions within the metropolitan area (e.g. Sunway Lagoon, Batu Caves, Genting Highlands) under the metropolitan brand umbrella.

Lifestyle and identity branding

An exciting urban culture, like in Shanghai, Milan or Sydney helps to brand cities and to differentiate them from other places in the same country. People feel privileged to live in New York, London or Rome, and share a lifestyle, represented by iconic celebrities such as Woody Allen, Queen Elizabeth II or Fellini. The paradigm has shifted from the commoditization of the place to the rise of the experience economy (Stigel & Friman, 2004). Tourism organizations are striving to render the destination choice a lifestyle signal with high emotional value and personal validation. Famous residents are enhancing the value of the place and help put a celebrity face representing the resident population. Travel and gastronomy television programs with star chefs exploring local cuisines mirror urban destinations turned into stage for action. Jackie Chan has become both the ambassador and the face of Hong Kong and has created a desire to experience the richness of the city life. As an ambassador of the city he really expresses the uniqueness of the place.

Visitors want to be part of the local culture and urban lifestyle. Destination or product became a commodity, but is now expected to be an experience. For instance, Barcelona has successively managed to put herself on stage and the Barcelona ponte guapa communication campaign justified the heavy infrastructure work prior to 1992 Olympics both residents and visitors. The urban morphological change was used to strategize a powerful brand shaped by a modernized Catalan identity and culture (Busquets, 2004). In Malaysia, the strong multicultural environment and its harmony are portrayed in national branding. The essence of Kuala Lumpur and its identity has the common denominators of ethnical diversity, tropical climate, Malay culture, modernity and a sense of moderation. The interest towards the local scene allows cultural clusters to emerge and favour an urban culture in which residents are happy to spend their leisure because of the wide range of cultural offer throughout the city. In Singapore, Henderson (2006) revealed that the New Asia–Singapore brand from the Singaporean Tourism Board was composed of six personality characteristics: cosmopolitan, youthful, vibrant, modern, reliable, and comfortable. The choice of these epithets showed a willingness to move from a serious business place to a “cool’ and hype image for a city based on digital culture attracting creative people. Cities have to compete on various levels and few reach the full multifunctional spectrum.

Emphasizing on the urban regeneration and the development of tertiary activities linked to creativity connects people in cultural clusters and reinforce the city quality of life (Jensen, 2007). Morgan & Pritchard (1998) advocate the need to tap the original culture and build on its history. While this approach works well for KL residents, for internal positioning, it creates confusion for external tourist that cannot see an integrative brand speaking for KLMA system. Seoul, as the nation primate city, has been recently promoted and organized as an independent metropolitan destination, with insisting on its identity, its cultural roots creating a contemporary effect of diversity. The residents are associated to the branding and are aware of the city urban culture. This bottom up approach favours the communication of a unique identity, which is leveraged to external branding, giving a face to the city.
The success of internal branding towards residents could trigger a higher sense of belonging and participation to the city’s cultural offer.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the branding strategies applied follow universal principles of supply side assessment, promotion and communication based on the urban specialties while adhering to the world standards and objectives. However some gaps have been identified. The first gap lies in the role of territorial and governance configuration. Cities combining a clear territorial delimitation and matching governing systems are advantaged, whereas primate cities of a country play a local and national role. Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur suffer from the interference of national agencies and agendas and have difficulty to be recognized as autonomous systems. Tourism Malaysia is very clear in delimiting market segments and clearly announces its priority. This is a strong segmentation by tourism functions that ignore the urban systems.

The second gap is unique to Kuala Lumpur. Due to the absence of any metropolitan brand; Kuala Lumpur is subject to partial city branding. The core city accounts for less than a quarter of the total population and comprises of half of the city supply for branding. Yet due to fixed structure of administrative divisions the branding operated under municipal capacity is limited. The remainder of the metropolitan area is branded under administrative denominations that are obscure in a worldwide branding objective. Bangkok doesn’t face a similar case since the core city represents 60% of the population and the total supply of the branding supply. The current system interferes with the appropriation of a global understanding of Kuala Lumpur as a metropolitan relieved from municipal boundaries fractures and from national branding strategies that don’t favour its expression. City states have managed to form strategies combining the branding of their territories and implemented by a governing system that fits in.

The third gap is related to the need for internal branding. Due to technological changes favouring the rise of experience based tourism, defining a clear visual identity can reverse a brand deficit. It should emphasize on multicultural heritage, cultural offer, quality of life and integrative to the residents experience. The rise of a creative class combined with the digital culture is changing residents’ awareness and participation. This involvement, translated into a rooted urban culture would help visitors to experience the uniqueness of a vibrant metropolis.

Finally, although the centralized structure of Malaysia and Thailand favours a national agenda over municipal powers, the case of Seoul shows that an independent brand coordinating body fitting a metropolitan area enhances its external and internal branding in a one stop approach. It also aligns the metropolitan brand with the national one. In a similar manner, an autonomous private-public branding office covering the metropolitan area could help to coordinate a global Kuala Lumpur brand.

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SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CERTIFICATION AND STATE CAPACITY: KEEP IT LOCAL, SIMPLE, AND FUZZY

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores issues of sustainable tourism certification and state capacity in developing countries. Based on observation and interviews in seven countries, we argue that global process-based certification programs are likely to fail and to undermine state capacity in developing countries. Sustainable tourism programs should be locally designed with local logos, largely performance based, and aggregation should be based on fuzzy logic concepts of necessary and jointly sufficient attributes of sustainable tourism. Properly designed programs will have a high likelihood of success and will enhance state capacity.

Keywords: ecotourism, sustainable tourism, certification, state capacity, fuzzy set logic

INTRODUCTION

International tourism is increasingly affecting every corner of the globe. By 2007, over 900 million tourists crossed international borders for their holidays and generated revenues of US $856 billion (WTO website). While growth was significant in Western Europe and other developed countries, international tourism growth in developing nations was even more impressive with many countries using their attractive “sea, sand and sun” to climb the development ladder. Growth in East Asia and the Pacific, for example, increased from 190,000 international world tourist arrivals in 1950 to over 70 million in 1993, while international tourism revenues in Latin America and the Caribbean reached some US $37.3 billion in 2005 (www.unwto.org). For many, tourism was a magical industry that brought foreign currency and jobs without smokestacks. But, it also became increasingly apparent that tourists destroyed the very things that they came for (Honey, 1999). Interest in alternate forms of tourism arose as a response to the exploitative aspects of the new mass tourism whose growth was strongest in developing countries. However, the inherent contradictions in mass ecotourism were particularly acute.

By the late 1980s, the governments of most countries as well as the United Nations noted the increase in global tourism and the industry’s detrimental effects to the environment and society of those countries in which it was most rapidly expanding. In 1992 the international agreement of both the Rio Declaration on the Environment and Development and the Agenda 21 marked the emergence of a global awareness of the new issues arising with tourism and globalization. In 1995 the first World Conference on Sustainable Tourism was held further identifying the need of tourism to develop in ways compatible with the tourist states. By the late nineties the interest of governments and international organizations in regulating the tourist industry and educating both hosts and participants was clear. Community leaders and other local stakeholders also began to exert pressure from below to alter the tourism product in order to protect the environment, emphasize local culture and products, and share tourism revenues with local communities. “Green” and “sustainable” and “eco-friendly” are now ubiquitous terms in tourism policy papers, regulations, and promotional materials.

As governments, environmental groups, tourism organizations, tourists, and others have become focused on sustainability, efforts began to conceptualize, measure, and standardize sustainable tourism practices and to create certification programs. From 2000-2004, at least 48 countries created or defined national eco-tourism strategies (Higgins, 2006), though in many countries the efforts are still insufficient (Medina, 2005; Mycoo, 2006). In North America alone there are over 50 certification schemes. A growing number of green tourism certification instruments are being developed and marketed by individual countries, NGOs, and consulting firms. Important debates about conceptualization and measurement have emerged, while there is general consensus for some standardization (Buckley, 2002; Font, 2002; Font and Harris, 2004; Honey, 2002, 2003). Since 2000,
we have interviewed dozens of stakeholders and officials, and observed the consideration and attempted implementation and practice of sustainable tourism certification in Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Fiji, and Honduras.

As political scientists, we bring a perspective that highlights two important issues of sustainable certification. First, we posit that the principal positive benefits of sustainable tourism indices and measures in the poorest countries are not the establishment of internationally recognized and technically rigorous measurement. Rather, we believe that the development and implementation of sustainable tourism certification in poor countries is a process that can result in an important dialogue and policy-making process about the type of development and tourism that a country wants, greater awareness in the business community of the needs and contributions of the local communities, and a shift in attitudes across sectors and generations. Our previous survey work in Costa Rica suggests that a sustained effort in promoting sustainable tourism leads to greener attitude shifts in the general population and most strongly in the youth (Bowman & Jennings, 2005). Indeed, we believe that a strategy based on international standards could have a net negative effect. In a survey of existing studies and literature, Adams et al. (2006) find that, contrary to conventional wisdom, there is a negative relationship between conservation efforts and social development of local communities. And Silva (2003) demonstrates how the selling of environmental sustainability can actually undermine the fabric of social equity in places like Costa Rica. Poverty eradication and conservation of the environment, unless carefully planned, often are at cross-purposes. Local stakeholder support can too easily erode if the local benefits are not emphasized.

The second perspective that, as political scientists, we bring to the certification debate is an awareness of the importance of state capacity. State capacity is the ability of a government to develop and successfully implement effective policies. A distinguished group of political scientists and political economists including Weber, Hirschman (1958), Gerschenkron (1962), Evans (1979), North (1990), Heredia and Schneider (2003), and Breznitz (2007) argue that state capacity is a crucial element in political and economic development. Huber (1995: 167) assesses state capacity, conceptualizing state strength broadly as the ability to achieve four goals: “(1) enforcement of the rule of law throughout the state's entire territory and population (legal order); (2) promotion of economic growth (accumulation); (3) elicitation of voluntary compliance from the population over which the state claims control (legitimation); and (4) shaping of the allocation of societal resources (distribution).” The developing world requires greater state capacity and must avoid actions that reduce state strength. The announcement of new policies or programs that are subsequently discarded or unmet or obvious failures not only represent opportunity costs and failures for the particular program, but contribute to a weakening of state capacity as they undermine voluntary compliance (legitimation). For example, if a government, stakeholders, and NGOs adopt a difficult and stringent international certification program, spend resources and energies in the implementation, and get buy-in from the local stakeholders through meetings and regulations, any subsequent abandoning or failure of the program not only reveals a lack of state capacity, but also makes it harder to implement voluntary compliance for future programs. This can lead to a vicious downward cycle of state failure when government announcements of new policies and programs are met with scepticism and policy fatigue. Our interviews in Honduras indicated that more than 90% of businesses did not believe that announced government tourism policies would be enacted, while in Costa Rica more than 60% of businesses did believe the state would successfully implement announced policies. A modest certification program that can be successfully implemented and maintained is far superior to a more robust certification program that is unlikely to survive. The technically best certification program might not result in the best outcome without sufficient existing state capacity, and that capacity is woefully lacking in much of the developing world.

We applaud the work done by Buckley, Font, Honey and others to green tourism and to certify sustainable practices. However, we believe that the current discussion fails to resolve two key issues and ignores a third, issues that are crucial for successful sustainable tourism certification in the poorest countries of the developing world.

The first unresolved issue that is addressed in the literature is the tradeoff between process and performance-based certification measures. We argue that performance-based measurements are much
more likely to be successfully implemented in developing countries than are process-based measures. Process-based measures are technical and expensive. Not only are resources limited in poor countries, but state capacity and institutions necessary to monitor, assess, and enforce compliance for process-based indicators are far different in Bolivia and New Zealand.

The second contested issue deals with universality and whether programs should be global with a universally recognized logo, or whether the programs should be largely based on local conditions, with locally designed logos. The components of sustainable tourism development in places like Fiji, Belize, Australia, Singapore, and Sweden are not the same. The sustainable tourism certification process must provide governments and stakeholders with an opportunity to carefully consider such factors as the type of tourism that they want, the amount of local cultural and economic participation involved, and the products and activities to be encouraged (Brinkerhoff, 1996; Medina, 2005). These local conditions and goals cannot be mere window-dressing to satisfy local concerns, but must be a major component of the sustainable index conceptualization, measurement, and aggregation. We argue, and the evidence is quite clear, that local actors should design local instruments with locally recognized logos. We also believe that sustainable tourism certification is long-term process in the developing world, and that locally developed performance measures are the most likely to generate the necessary and voluntary buy-in from a large range of local stakeholders for long term success. In developing countries, certification conceptualization must be organic and local and the process should be relatively easy to implement. Also, the national dialogue and development of sustainable tourism certification can play an important role in national branding as a tourism destination.

One key reason for the organic necessity of tourism logo and the components of greenness is power. Marsano and Scott (2009) convincingly employ the theories on power from the social sciences, especially Timothy Lukes 3 faces of power, to reveal how power is used in destination branding in a fairly sophisticated and resource region—Australia’s Gold Coast. Issues of faces of power are even more relevant in developing countries with lower levels of education and resources.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, we argue that the current discussion fails to systematically consider one of the most important aspects of the certification instrument, aggregation of indicators or attributes to a final score or sustainable ranking. Sustainable tourism, as with concepts such as democracy and human development (Smithson & Verkuilen, 2006: 21), is a concept that is comprised of multiple conceptual dimensions. It is theoretically difficult, if not impossible, to add or aggregate multiple dimensions to a final gradated or dichotomous score while retaining theoretical fidelity. One appropriate way to satisfactorily aggregate a multidimensional concept such as sustainable tourism is with fuzzy sets. Without the theoretical fidelity that can only be achieved through the use of fuzzy sets, local stakeholders may abandon sustainable tourism programs.

Sustainable tourism certification programs in the developing world should meet four criteria to be most successful. 1: The program must favour cultural and social concerns in order to gain support of local stakeholders and must be based on cooperative or voluntary compliance from businesses and other stakeholders in the developing world; therefore, the program must be suitable for success in an environment of limited state capacity and performance should outweigh process. 2: The conceptualization of “green” or “sustainable” must be organic and conceptualized by local actors. Efforts to create a single instrument that can be used in multiple dissimilar countries are unwise. 3: The likelihood of long-term success of any program must be sufficiently high to limit the possibility of a failed program weakening existing state capacity. And 4: The instrument and design must maintain theoretical fidelity, which for the multidimensional concept of sustainable tourism can be achieved only through fuzzy sets. If these four conditions are met, the chances of a successful program are much higher, leading to a potential virtuous circle of capacity building in the state and in the local communities.

This paper will proceed as follows. The first section presents the importance of ecotourism certification in destination branding and marketing for small economies (cities, states, regions, or countries). The second section summarizes the evolution of ecotourism certification and briefly introduces several existing instruments. The third section discusses the need for local input in customizing local content in tourism certification indices and the positive benefits of voluntary
compliance in developing countries. This leads us to conclude that local performance-based certification programs are best for poor countries. We then introduce the shortcomings of dichotomous or gradated measures of greenness, and discuss the utility of fuzzy sets for aggregating multidimensional concepts. We then briefly use the concept of democracy to demonstrate the power and utility of fuzzy set indices for multidimensional concepts.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ECOTOURISM CERTIFICATION AS DESTINATION BRANDING

The destination brand is a powerful tool that can conjure emotional appeal and that brand image is crucial for differentiation and success of a tourism destination (Leisen, 2001). Hosany et al. (2006) use canonical correlation analysis to demonstrate that this “emotional” image captures the majority of variance on destination personality dimensions. For larger cities, countries, and regions, there are a host of tools and options available for destination branding and building that emotional appeal. One such opportunity is global events, in particular sports. A good deal has been written about the leveraging of the World Cup, the Euro Cup (particular in Portugal in 2004), and the Olympics (particularly the Barcelona games), and sports in general (Nauright, 2004). Our interviews with city and state tourism officials in Rio de Janeiro in June 2009 identified sports as the principal mechanism for the re-branding the Rio de Janeiro. City and state officials are using Barcelona tourism branding as a model, and Panamerican Games (2007), the World Cup (2014), the World Military Games (2011), and the bid for the 2016 Olympics to springboard this new brand.

Buenos Aires (13 million inhabitants) has a different model based on events, cultural instead of sports. According to former national tourism minister and current culture minister of the city of Buenos Aires Hernán Lombardi, the destination brand and emotional connection for Buenos Aires is built through a series of big cultural events such as tango festivals, regional book festivals, design events, opera, and film festivals. These heavily orchestrated events bring in tourists from around the region and the world, and help to create the image of Buenos Aires as fashionable and hip (interview by author, June 1, 2009) (see Cornelissen (2005) for a description of the creation of a similar image in Capetown).

Unfortunately, event and sports tourism do not have the same punch in small towns and small developing countries (Daniels, 2007). The destination brand and emotional appeal of that brand image for small entities is often related to culture and markers of identity. One important dimension of branding and differentiation for places like Papua New Guinea, Tonga, and Belize is sustainable and cultural tourism. Small places, even in wealthier countries, have recently moved to the concept of Geotourism, defined as tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place—its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents (see http://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable/about_geotourism.html). As we will argue below, sustainable tourism certification that focuses too heavily on process and benchmarks will eliminate an important branding and marketing tool for small developing countries.

EXISTING MEASURES OF TOURISM CERTIFICATION

It is unsurprising that tourism certification instruments face challenges and growing pains, as “green” tourism is a complex multidimensional concept and practitioners have only recently begun to seriously consider the ramifications and challenges of certification mechanics. Indeed, the first attempt to standardize the definition or conceptualization of sustainable tourism development came in 2000 when a group of leading scholars and practitioners of sustainable tourism met in Canada and drafted the Mohonk Agreement. The agreement determined that “sustainable tourism seeks to minimize ecological and socio-cultural impacts while providing economic benefits to local communities and host countries” (Honey, 2002: 375). On its most basic level, sustainable tourism development is only realistic if all stakeholders can agree on priorities: ecological maintenance, local community, and tourist satisfaction. Achieving sustainable development proves to be difficult because there is a bounty of advice for stakeholders but a shortage of resources, excessive pressure from demand, and a hedonistic philosophy among tourism operators despite increased awareness of the local community.
One effort to encourage sustainable tourism and to harmonize the conceptualization of “sustainable” is the implementation of tourism certification. Martha Honey, the pre-eminent scholar on certification schemes, defines certification as a set of procedures that audits and gives written assurance that a facility, product, process, service or management system meets specific standards or sustainability. It awards a logo or seal or other indicator to those who meet or exceed established criteria or standards (2003). According to the World Tourism Organization’s Voluntary Initiatives for Sustainable Tourism, over 260 voluntary initiatives exist including 104 eco-labelling and certification programs. Invariably, in the plethora of certification programs different criteria are used to indicate sustainability. Two main divisions exist in the measurement of sustainability.

One school, supported by the World Tourism Organization, is process-based certification, an example being Environmental Management System. This form of certification focuses on management and technical solutions to improve environmental efficiency of a destination. Common criticisms of programs like Green Leaf, Green Globe, and ISO 14001 for hotels (all of which rely on process-based certification measures) is that they focus on the “gray” characteristics like wastewater processing and removal rather than the “green” characteristics tourists are concerned with, like protection of the local environment. The high implementation costs of such programs and the fact that what a business does is trivial and that how they do it matters are two weaknesses of process-based certification. Given the costs of these programs, their potential is limited for the large number of poor countries that are embracing ecotourism and seeking mechanisms for sustainable standards and certification. Moreover, while benchmarking and process based measures have theoretical appeal, the practical viability is in question for the tourism industry. As demonstrated by Warnken, Bradley and Guilding (2005), it is not viable to establish benchmarking for something as simple as water consumption even in a wealthy country like Australia, as factors such as age of buildings, early stage resort planning, climate, extend of communal facilities. The authors find that fully accredited eco-resorts used more water than non-accredited resorts. As such, they have considerable concern for industry administered accreditation schemes.

The second school, performance-based certification, determines the goals or targets requiring achievement to attain certification and hold the same standard to all companies and products seeking the certification. The popular CST programs in Costa Rica uses such performance-based certification systems whose drawbacks are the difficulty in measuring many standards, the lack of common definition of sustainability targets, and the lack of agreed upon methodologies for determining some indicators, like carrying capacity. These can lead to charges of greenwashers (Johnson, 2002) and the proliferation of certification schemes that dilute the impact of certification for branding and lead to confusion (Font, 2002). Bendell and Font (2004) also present a fascinating discussion about how certain performance-based schemes with emphasis on local development and consumption of local products might fail to meet GATS standards and treaties.

According to Martha Honey, the future of sustainable tourism certification lies in the fusion of process- and performance-based certification standards. One of the biggest challenges for the certification industry to build upon this fusion is the wide-range and growing number of systems that currently exist.

Current programs differ greatly on target, conceptualization, measurement, and aggregation. These programs all divide sustainability or greenness into categories or components, as the one point that is in universal agreement is that tourism sustainability is a concept comprised of multiple dimensions. For example, the Costa Rican CST measures four dimensions or components of sustainable tourism; biological and physical surroundings, physical plant, external clients, and socioeconomic context (Bien, 2002: 147-49). The CST has 152 yes/no questions to measure compliance on these four dimensions. Each question is weighted on a one to three scale, and a formula is used to calculate the final score in each dimension. The final CST score is the lowest score on any of the four dimensions. For example, if a hotel has a 90 on three dimensions and a 20 on the fourth, the overall score is a 20. Honey (2003: 11) refers to this as an “unusual and seemingly harsh scoring system” that encourages improvement. Finally, hotels receive green leaves to display based on their final scores: 0-19 points receive 0 leaves, 20-39 receives 1 leaf, 40-59 receives 2 leaves, 60-79
receives 3 leaves, 80-94 receives 4 leaves, and 95-100 points receives 5 leaves. As of this writing, only three hotels have all five leaves and 5 hotels earned four leaves.

Australia’s Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program (NEAP) is based on eight criteria; natural area focus, interpretation, environmental sustainability, contribution to conservation, work with local communities, cultural component, customer satisfaction, and responsible marketing. How are these different components aggregated into a final ranking? The NEAP allows self-assessment of yes/no questions and descriptive questions in the eight areas. All core criteria must be met to receive the “Eco Certified” logo. A trained assessor is supposed to verify the self-assessment, but does not systematically happen due to a lack of funds. This is an important point to highlight, that even in a country as wealthy as Australia, there are not sufficient funds for the verification.

The Green Globe 21 is the most ambitious attempt at a global certification program that includes a wide range of activities, from hotels to bus companies to airports and communities. The Green Globe certification process is based on benchmarking and established best practices for 9 key areas; greenhouse gas emissions, energy conservation and management, freshwater resource use, ambient air quality, wastewater management, waste minimization, ecosystem conservation and management, environmental and land-use planning, local impact and generating maximum local employment. To be an affiliate and use a Green Globe affiliate flag, a company must pay $100. This is the most popular status, though it is meant as a stepping-stone to benchmarking. To use the more prestigious Green Globe circle logo, although the value of the additional prestige is uncertain, a company must pay up to $1000 and a community up to $5000 plus the cost of independent auditing, and go through the benchmarking process. To use the Green Globe circle logo with a check, a company must exceed benchmarking and meet established best practices.

We believe that Honey is correct that the ideal certification processes must account for both process and performance. However, in the poorest of countries, many of which are experiencing significant growth in inbound tourism, the ideal might not be plausible. It is important to note that countries such as Belize and Bolivia may not have the state capacity of Costa Rica and Australia, and even those countries have not been able to fully implement their measurement; if Paraguay set up an expensive and technical process-based measure for all hotels and lodges, there would be a high likelihood of a long term failure even if resources were provided for the short term.

LOCAL INPUT AND DESIGN

One of the potentially powerful externalities of sustainable tourism certification is the education and incentives to businesses and citizens to learn, accept, and promote new behaviours that support the vision of tourism development that each country decides best reflects their vision of and priorities for sustainable development. In wealthier countries with established institutions, strong bureaucracies, and long-established post-materialist values (Ingleheart), this can be achieved through process, regulations, and mandates. However, in many developing countries that lack the state capacity to enforce regulations and rely in large part on voluntary compliance, the expense and technical complexity of process-based certification make that unrealistic. In some cases, local communities, businesses, and workers must alter existing values and embrace sustainable norms and will not respond favourably if they feel forced to meet what may appear as draconian measures. Tying sustainable attitudes with tourism can be a potent force for value shifts. Education and promotion of sustainable values can change attitudes towards littering and pollution in a single generation; if the population also believes that eco-friendly national tourism branding bring jobs, then attitudes can shift even more rapidly (Bowman & Jennings, 2004). Moreover, the standards, complexity, and costs of participation in sustainable tourism certification must be lower than the perceived benefits that accrue to the businesses. Otherwise the “paper park” syndrome will be replicated in “paper sustainable tourism certification” where the advances might look good on paper, but in actuality are quite limited.

The challenges of process-based indices such as ISO 14001 for poor countries are difficult to overcome, even with an initial influx of resources from an NGO, government, or international institution. It is not only that these highly technical measures are expensive and require extensive technical skills. For one, the technical nature can lead to a lack of transparency: it is easy for local
stakeholders to judge that a hotel is dumping sewage into the lagoon (performance), but difficult for them verify that the ISO numbers are correct (process). More importantly, developing countries often lack the institutions to regulate and oversee the implementation of a process-based sustainable tourism index for a large industry such as tourism. Process-based indices are most suited to large enterprises, and many developing countries are intentionally encouraging small family-owned enterprises as part of a national tourism plan. The ISO process is simply unsuited for developing countries that encourage local ownership of hotels and other tourism enterprises, as the cost for a medium sized business can reach up to $40,000 and $400,000 for a large hotel (Honey, 2003; Skinner, Font and Sanabria, 2004). It is unsurprising that sustainable certification programs in wealthy countries throughout Europe gravitate towards process-based certification while developing countries such as Costa Rica select performance-based models. Even in countries as wealthy as Spain, the first time certification costs of up to $7500 euros and subsequent annual fees of 2500 euros, which are considerably lower than ISO 14001 process, are an important obstacle for the EMS ecolabel adoption in the hotel industry even with public funding programs and technical assistance (Ayuso, 2007: 151-52). If these costs are an impediment in Spain, they are simply untenable in places like Nicaragua. Even if a panel of experts concludes that the process-based measures are more objective and consistent than performance-based certification, they are so likely to fail to exhibit staying in poor countries that great caution must be exercised wherever process dominates performance.

The decision to favour process or performance illustrates how decisions based on technical issues can shape policy, equity, and power in poor countries. The tourism hotels and companies in developing countries who could pay tens of thousands of dollars for the ISO process will often be multinational chains. Family-owned lodges and hotels in Costa Rica would face a much greater burden for a process-based assessment than would a Marriot or Accor property. Therefore, if Costa Rica selected a process-based certification program, the entire tourism industry would be tilted towards multinational corporations and away from locally owned businesses. And for sustainability, there are good reasons to nurture smaller enterprises, particularly if sustainability goals include the reduction of leakage, the increase in better employment for locals, the consumption of locally grown food, authentic cultural experiences, and environmental buy-in from local stakeholders. While there is general agreement in the literature that some local input in necessary, in the developing world stakeholder participation must be enthusiastic and fundamental (Medina, 2005), and that enthusiastic support will simply be more likely with performance-base instruments that favour social and cultural concerns (Honey, 2002: 33).

There is a trend towards global standardization for two important reasons. First, supporters argue that the value of a certification and the use of logos and branding for meeting certification would be enhanced if tourism establishments used a universally recognized seal of approval to lure environmentally conscious tourists (Koeman et al., 2002). And second, the lack of a global accreditation body has led to different definitions of sustainable tourism, false claims of “greenness” by actors who are not so green (greenwashing), and confusion.

The evidence, however, suggests that the arguments for standardization are heavily outweighed by the benefits of locally designed certification programs. In a systematic study, Font and Buckley (2001) find no effects, including on the marketing and promotion side, of ecolabels. There is no compelling evidence for tourists wanting standardized ecotourism labels, and therefore there is no need for an international system. While tourists will claim in theory that they will pay 5-10 percent more to stay at sustainable hotels, there is scant evidence that they will actually pay it in practice (Higgins, 2006). Ayuso finds that ecolabels have no effect on bringing more tourists to a hotel or in allowing a hotel to charge higher prices. As one hotel owner explains (quoted in Ayuso, 2007: 151): “A sales increase because of the ecolabel? Zero.” Even one of the most emphatic proponents of an international standard and single logo, Green Globe, has three logos, the affiliate flag that requires nothing more than $100, a globe without a tick that requires benchmarking and a higher fee, and a globe with a tick that is reserved for those establishments meeting a higher standard. Green Globe asserts that there is value in being able to use the green globe logo that is widely identified with the program. Yet, few entities choose to pay the benchmarking price and are apparently content to use the Affiliates’ Green Globe flag that requires no action at all. We have spoken to more than 100 tourists in 5 countries, and none of them saw any additional value in staying at a Green Globe logo hotel over a
Green Flag logo hotel. While this survey was limited, we maintain that there is no established value for universal logos.

The benefit that accrues internationally and financially is to the sustainable destination country itself, and not to the individual properties. Costa Rica has perhaps been the most successful in branding itself, with regular stories in the press about the CST and Blue Flag beach programs, with its award-winning “No Artificial Ingredients” ad campaign, and with its decision to set aside huge percentages of its land as national parks (PR Newswire, 2002; Bowman, 2002). The limited evidence that individual properties benefit from sustainable certification is for those rare hotels with superior environmental performance across the entire range of sustainability dimensions (Rivera, 2002).

In our view, global standardization takes policy power away from local government and tilts the process in favour of wealthier countries whose goals are more technical and centred on the process; poor countries more often view sustainable tourism as including issues of distribution, local content of food and products, and cultural issues. Flexibility in defining “green” tourism is a process that can then be a powerful tool to not only encourage the meeting of certain sustainable standards, but in educating stakeholders and citizens about the conceptualization of sustainability that best reflects the particular development vision of the country. Indeed, the process of each developing country in deciding which types of sustainability to emphasize is an important part of the process of buy-in and ownership that is lost with global standards imposed from outside.

For example, an ethnically heterogeneous country like Fiji or Bolivia would be much more likely than Japan or Uruguay to consider as crucial for sustainable tourism activities such as the support of indigenous businesses, local foods, and authentic indigenous cultural activities. The benefits of universally recognized logos are presently abstract and unsubstantiated, and do not make up for the lost benefits of local participation in conceptualizing and developing local certification programs and local sustainable logos.

The local design of the dimensions of sustainability for each country and the accompanying logo are an important part of country branding. Costa Rica uses leaves for hotels and blue flags for the beaches, tying into the international branding of nature tourism, natural parks, and an abundance of flora and fauna. Fijian officials are developing a logo that builds on the brand of friendly and authentic indigenous communities. Different countries have different conditions, needs, and goals, and a certification program and the logo are, in best practice, an outcome of an important national dialogue and a potentially crucial component both of national identity and international branding in the international inbound tourism market.

FUZZY LOGIC AND MULTIDIMENSIONAL CONCEPTS

An additional challenge of sustainable tourism certification that, to date, has been overlooked by the academic community is the complex nature of sustainability such that it maintains both gradated and dichotomous dimensions. The majority of the certification schemes in place and even those building global acceptance do not account for both dimensions. Either a tourism enterprise or destination is or is not sustainable or is moving toward or away from sustainability. But only the application of fuzzy-logic as an aggregation mechanism to certification schemes can maintain theoretical fidelity since the concept of “sustainability” has both gradated and dichotomous dimensions. The use of fuzzy set theory in the social sciences is the subject of many excellent recent works (see Smithson & Verkuilen, 2006; Ragin, 2000; and Ragin & Pennings, 2005) and it is not our purpose here to discuss fuzzy sets in any detail. Fuzzy set theory emerged in response to classical set theory where objects could be precisely defined as being part of a set or not. In the mathematical world objects often fit neatly into crisp sets, but empirical objects often do not easily fit either into one set or another (Smithson & Verkuilen, 2006: 6). One example of this is the heap of sand. We can easily imagine a heap of sand. We can subtract a grain of sand at a time, but there is no precise point at which the reduction of one grain of sand changes the resulting pile from a heap to a non-heap.

Issues such as greenness, democracy, human development, and poverty are similar to “heap of sand” in that it is impossible to precisely define with any theoretical fidelity precise dichotomous crisp
sets. While we may have an arbitrary division that a family of four that makes $17,999 is poor and another family that makes $18,000 is not poor, in the real world this distinction is completely artificial and the family earning the extra dollar per year is unlikely to feel any better off than the officially poor family.

Some sustainable tourism certification programs are also dichotomous, such as Green Globe. Either a company meets all of the benchmarks to receive the round logo or they do not. There are two principal problems with this. First, there is no theoretical fidelity. Two hotels could have identical scores on every measure except one, with one hotel barely over the proper benchmarking score on the final measure and one hotel barely below. One hotel would be certified as Green Globe certified and the other would not, even though the difference between the two could be reasonably accounted for by measurement error or a rounding error by the hotel owner following the benchmarking guide. A reasonable observer in the community, however, would be unlikely to be able to declare which of these two establishments should be able to exhibit the sustainable certification; is one hotel really sustainable and the other not sustainable? Even worse, Hotel A could have near perfect scores on every attribute except one, and barely miss clearing the bar on that one attribute, while Hotel B could be barely above the bar on all attributes. Stakeholders would realize that Hotel A was in fact more sustainable even though only Hotel B could exhibit the sustainable certification logo. The dichotomous sustainable tourism certifications do not pass the common sense test. Still worse for the certification programs in the developing world is the heaven or hell consequences. If a locally owned hotel in Ecuador works to green its facility, and barely misses the cut, it receives the same benefit (completely not green) as a neighbouring hotel that did nothing, creating a strong disincentive to expend resources for sustainability. As established earlier, one of the major goals in developing sustainable certification programs in developing countries is to encourage participation and education by all stakeholders. Participation is much more likely to occur in the developing world with carrots than with sticks. Dichotomous aggregation also provides an incentive to hotels to do the bare minimum to get over the sustainable bar, and then never improve.

An alternative option to dichotomous (all or nothing, yes or no) aggregation of certification indices is gradation or continuous measures. Instead of thinking of a heap or not a heap, one could simply have a measure of the size of the sand pile based on the number of grains of sand (or ounces or pounds or cubic meters). This would add precision. In ecotourism certification, a gradated score could have a number of questions and a score for each question, and then sum up a final score, or average the different dimensions, and even convert the final score to a 0-100 or 0-10 index. While this seems like a simple solution to the aggregation problem of the dichotomous scales, this solution is also unsatisfactory. These continuous measures may have theoretical fidelity when measuring a single-dimensional concept like grains of sand or dollars per year, but lose all theoretical fidelity when measuring multidimensional concepts such as human development or democracy or sustainable tourism.

What is universally agreed is that sustainable tourism is a concept that is comprised of multiple dimensions. There is wide-ranging disagreement on what those dimensions are, and we argue that there are some dimensions that are country-specific appropriate. For our purposes, let us put forth a hypothetical sustainable tourism certification program based on three simplified dimensions; waste and pollution, education and green services to clients, and benefits to local communities. The certification instrument has 10 questions for each dimension, for a total possible score of 30. For this example, let us assume that all questions are weighted equally. Let us imagine a hotel, the “Green Inn,” that is doing its assessment for certification. The Green Inn scores a perfect score on two of the three dimensions, education/green services to clients and inclusion of local communities. However, the Green Inn scores a zero on waste and pollution. Untreated sewage is pumped directly into the river. Vehicles are old diesels that belch pollution into the air. Trash is dumped into a nearby park. Should the Green Inn be rewarded with a sustainable tourism score of 67/100 (20/30) and be allowed to display a recognition of their greenness? This type of scoring lacks any theoretical fidelity, makes a mockery of green scoring, and would quickly lose the necessary support of the local stakeholders.

If neither dichotomous nor gradated measures maintain theoretical fidelity, what is the option? We argue that the appropriate aggregation technique is fuzzy set logic. There are four important
attributes of fuzzy sets for aggregating a multidimensional concept such as sustainable tourism (Smith & Verkuilin, 2006: 1-2).

1. They are able to handle vagueness systematically.
2. They are able to aggregate concepts that have both a categorical and a dimensional character.
4. Results will have theoretical fidelity and will be understandable to the local community.

Sustainable tourism certification should follow the same model for aggregation. The dimensions or attributes of sustainable tourism chosen by each country should be viewed as a group of necessary conditions that are jointly sufficient for sustainable tourism. Without being explicit, this is precisely what the Costa Ricans chose for the CST. The CST has five dimensions and the final score is the lowest score of any of the dimensions (all dimensions are necessary, and jointly sufficient). Honey calls this aggregation “unusual and seemingly harsh” (2003: 11), but it is not harsh at all. Rather, it is the best way of aggregating multiple dimensions of a single concept such as sustainable tourism. The Costa Ricans intuitively realized that neither dichotomous nor gradated measures could adequately represent a company’s sustainable tourism score. And they were right. Instead of the three-level scoring of the democracy scale, the Costa Ricans have a slightly more complex 5-level scoring (0-19 points receives 0 leaves, 20-39 receives 1 leaf, 40-59 receives 2 leaves, 60-79 receives 3 leaves, 80-94 receives 4 leaves, and 95-100 points receives 5 leaves). For the sake of ease, we would recommend that countries start with a three-value system, and increase to a four or five-value system after successful implementation.

CONCLUSION AND A FRAMEWORK FOR CERTIFICATION IN DEVELOPING WORLD

Sustainable certification is an important tool for international branding and marketing for developing countries who see sustainable tourism as an important component in their development strategy. We have established that sustainable certification programs in the developing world should meet several conditions. First, performance should be favoured over process. Second, the dimensions or attributes of sustainability should be locally determined. Third, the program and logos should be local and designed to enhance national branding for inbound tourism and encourage change in national attitudes and behaviours. Fourth, the aggregation of the multiple dimensions and attributes should be neither dichotomous nor gradated, but based on fuzzy set theory. And fifth, the program must not start out as too ambitious, because a failed program also reduces state capacity and reduces the likelihood of success in future attempts. How should a developing country proceed? The first step is to set out the goals of certification. As shown in Table 1, these goals are broader and more comprehensive in the developing world than in advanced industrial countries, and these differences must be understood to increase the likelihood of success.

| Table 1 |
| Elements of Sustainable Tourism Certification |

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<th>In the Advanced Industrial Countries</th>
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<tr>
<td>a. Define and enforce environmentally sustainable practices in hotels and other tourism businesses.</td>
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<td>b. Educate owners, employees, and clients and change behaviour in all three.</td>
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<td>c. Use the significant capacity of the state to enforce.</td>
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<th>In the Developing World</th>
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<tr>
<td>a. Have national dialogue about the type of sustainable tourism for the country.</td>
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<td>b. Develop the dimensions of sustainability that stakeholders support.</td>
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<td>c. Develop logos and other elements that enhance national branding.</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Provide benefits to local communities and indigenous communities.</td>
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<td>e. Build legitimacy for the program, such that participation is voluntary and supportive.</td>
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<td>f. Use limited capacity of the state to coordinate and reward.</td>
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<tr>
<td>g. Create a certification program that is limited in complexity and cost, rewards participation, and has incentives for improvement.</td>
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</table>
Sustainable tourism certification is an important element in greening the industry. In the developing world, an ambitious but ultimately failed program undermines state capacity and future programs. The process of building a sustainable certification process can be a powerful tool for building national development consensus and engendering legitimation and enhanced state capacity.

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\(^1\) What is less clear, however, is precisely what “sustainable tourism” actually means. In general, economically advanced governments and actors have portrayed sustainable as dealing with the environment, while developing countries and actors view sustainable as including significant economic and political components.

\(^2\) [Link](http://www.cec.org/databases/certifications/cecdata/index.cfm?websiteID=2)

\(^3\) For more on Green Globe 21 see Koeman et al. (2002) and [www.greenglobe.org](http://www.greenglobe.org).

\(^4\) For a complete example of using fuzzy logic for a multidimensional concept see Bowman et al. 2005.
CAN A CITY BRAND CHANGE A COUNTRY’S IMAGE PERCEPTION? AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE SÃO PAULO CITY PROMOTION TO THE ‘BRAND BRAZIL’

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the role that city brands play on building the international perception of a country, focusing on the case of São Paulo and Brazil. There has been limited research into the influence of cities on building the perception of countries and there is no consistent literature about the perception of the Brazilian image from inside or outside Brazil. Research was undertaken using in-depth interviews with eight key individuals who discussed the concept of the ‘Brazil Brand’ within their different professional areas of expertise. An analysis undertaken of the current ‘Watercolour plan’ created by the Brazilian government was proved to be non-effective in helping the country to grow in other fields besides leisure tourism. The city of São Paulo – if promoted in parallel with the ‘Watercolour Plan’ - would help Brazil to make its brand understandable for foreigners - tourists, investors and workers - and at the same time add a sense of maturity and future to the country’s set of values.

Keywords: city and country branding, image perception, São Paulo, Brazil

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the role that city brands play on building the international perception of a country focusing on the case of São Paulo and Brazil. The economy plays a big role on Brazil’s future and it seems to be the least vulnerable developing country to the current world economic crisis with a huge and increasing domestic market, responsible for making the country less dependent on the exports of goods. Brazil is considered as the most stable of the BRIC (an acronym for Brazil, Russia, India and China created by Goldman Sachs after a study that predicts the world’s economic powers in 2050 - considering their GDP) countries even if it has a lower growth than the others (Financial Times, 2008). However, Brazilian global brands are barely perceived by foreigners and this continues to be an area where the country needs to work hard (Soeconomia, 2006; Portal Exame, 2007a; 2007b).

Only when the previous Brazilian government of 1995-2003 started to understand that the image of a country has a direct influence on the final price of its exported goods, did a concern with Brazil’s image emerge from the political scenario. In 2005 the Brazilian government launched the ‘Watercolour Plan’ - the result of two years of work from the Brazilian Department of Tourism together with EMBRATUR (Brazilian Tourist Institute) to identify amongst 18 countries the perception of the Brazilian image abroad in order to build the ‘Brand Brazil’. This brand would represent the tourism products and stamp the Brazilian exported goods (Soeconomia, 2006; Jornal de Turismo, 2006; Portal Exame, 2007b). As a result of the ‘Watercolour Plan’ implementation, an international campaign was launched in 2008 with the goal of encouraging tourists to ‘live’ Brazil through various experiences and sensations, beyond sun and beach. The strategy is consumer focused, tailoring Brazil’s attributes to the interest of each place of consumption (Reuters, 2008).

Even when talking about the potential of the country, the image perception of Brazil is still a big issue. There is a common opinion amongst specialists within politics, economy, culture, tourism, education and the private sector that Brazil does not know how to sell itself. Research conducted by MacCan-Erickson Brazil in 2002 points out that the general public still associates the country with the old clichés of a tropical country because they do not really know what Brazil stands for due to insufficient information about it. Lack of seriousness, violence, corruption, geographical distance and
low self-esteem of the population are still problems associated to the country’s image. On the other hand, there are positive aspects associated to the ‘Brand Brazil’ such as richness of resources, creativity and humanity (Gazeta Mercantil, 2004; Portal Exame, 2007a).

São Paulo, which covers an area five times that of Paris - with 16 million people living in the metropolitan area - is one of the world’s great cities and would certainly be better known globally if it did not have to compete with the beauty of its neighbour Rio de Janeiro and Brazil’s many other natural attractions. Even not being well known by the general international tourists, São Paulo is considered by artists, journalists and business people as the New York of South America and one of the world’s coolest cities nowadays for exporting innovative musicians like CSS and the hippest DJs of the music scene, besides the Brazilian Graffiti, which also has its origin in the city of São Paulo (The Guardian, 2008). A British journalist published an article in a famous Brazilian Travel magazine, comparing London and São Paulo by saying that they were cities separated at birth for their multiculturalism, underground arts scene, shopping opportunities and gastronomy - giving more credits to São Paulo in the last one (Viagem e Turismo, 2008).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The ‘Watercolour Plan’ was a result of a one-year research conducted in 2004 by Vox Populi ordered by the Brazilian Government together with Embratur after the creation of the Brazilian Tourism Ministry in 2003. This quantitative research was divided into two phases where the first consisted of applying questionnaires in order to understand the opinion of the political entities and the national and international tourism trade. The second phase was a research with 5,000 potential tourists from 18 countries and 1,200 tourists interviewed at eight Brazilian airports when they were returning to their home country. It is important to point out that the research aim of the second phase was to try to discover what the image of Brazil was abroad and if this image would have changed after the visit to the country.

From this information, a briefing was elaborated aiming at the construction of the ‘Brand Brazil’. This briefing comprised of the research findings and a visual reference. After a contest between several Brazilian design studios, the logo of the ‘Brand Brazil’ was chosen. A structured consumer research to find out the real image of Brazil, a lot of investments in the internet and a commitment to apply the plan detached from the government parties and the president in power follows what the literature indicates as effective ways of building a place brand (Anholt, 2004; Boyle, 2007; Gilmore, 2004; Kotler & Gertner, 2002). It is not the method used to build the Brand Brazil but the way the Brazilian government used the research findings to create a branding strategy that is under consideration here. The ‘Brand Brazil’ was created in the context of what people think about the country ‘today’; this brand will never reflect anything beyond the stereotypes foreigners have of the country, as the idea of promoting the ‘place vision’ suggested by Avraham and Ketter (2008) and Gilmore (2002) was ignored. As shown in Figure 1, it is unreliable for the government to work with this proposed strategy, which seems to have been biased regarding the importance that the ‘Business and Events’ segment has, particularly as business tourists spend twice as much as leisure tourists, and that today São Paulo is the most important centre for business events in Latin America (Watercolour Plan - Operational Plan 2007-2010).

Another function proposed for the new ‘Brazil’ logo was to validate Brazilian exported goods in order to guarantee their quality. As noted in the introduction Brazil needs to work hard to promote its global brands, but according to Cai, Cude and Swagler (2004), consumers only tend to consider paying more for a product if it came from a developed country. On the other hand, Drouvot considers that Brazil’s manufacturing capacity is still small, but if Brazil worked harder to promote its image, the country would become a credible and successful exporter of industrialized goods with prices higher than the Chinese and the Indian products (Drouvot, 2005). As long as the promotion of the country image is not adequately carried out, there will be a limit regarding the type of products acceptable to foreigners for purchase, as the product-of-origin was proved to be directly related to the values that its country stands for (Gilmore, 2004).
A recent publication by Hanna and Rowley (2007) recognized through exploratory research reports that the discipline of place branding has shifted from ‘tourism’ to ‘brand and business’. The authors point out that the term ‘place’ would be the one that would better fit into the area of city and country branding, as it also embraces towns, nations and specific locations, while ‘destination’ would be a term related to tourism only. In Hanna and Rowley’s view branding tools for products and services are no longer sufficient to build a strong place image.

Branding a place is more than promoting tourism. Other factors such as stimulating inward investment, enhancing the inhabitants’ quality of life, developing the place’s cultural scenario, attracting workers and promoting the country’s exports are also important considerations when building a place brand (Anholt, 2004; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2008). The first and essential step to place branding is looking at what citizens think about their city. Real structural changes may need to take place so that the experience of the city does not turn into a disappointment for tourists or business people attracted by the country brand (Winfield-Pfefferkorn, 2005). The branding process should ideally start after structural and social changes have been made, but if changes have already started or there is a clear strategy aiming at improvement, the ‘place vision’ can guide a ‘place communication’, telling the consumer what the place is today and what it wants to become (Avraham & Ketter, 2008).

The theory of effective branding is being built around a ‘place’ definition where ‘place’ is synonymous with nation rather than considering that cities, regions and countries are distinct in the way people live, perceive and consume them (Caldwell & Freire, 2004). Furthermore, the focus on the relation between cities, regions and countries and the way they influence or complement one another was never considered as a main theme in any of the studies examined as part of this research. When writing for an insight booklet used by Young & Rubicam Advertising about solutions for changing a country image, Silvester suggests: “Want your country to project sophistication as well as good old craftsmen and peasants? You need two brands. When French marketers want to project urban sophistication, they do not use France. They use a separate sub-brand called ‘Paris’” (2008, 27). This statement conveys the assumption behind the research reported in this paper regarding the influence of the city of São Paulo on the ‘Brand Brazil’.

Most of the case studies written in the last decade focus on the latest successes of city and country branding, specially the case of London, New York, Japan, Spain, Australia and recently China. Cities or countries from Latin America, apart from Mexico, are in general barely cited in branding publications as a subject of study. Brazil, when mentioned, is used as an example of a country without a proper brand building strategy, as its image is still associated with old prejudices.

Drouvot is one of the few non-Brazilian writers to focus on Brazil. In his book about the economy he attributes the slow economic development of Brazil to its lack of self-promotion and positive information about its industrial capacity (Drouvot, 2005). In order to measure if there was an
influence of the product country-of-origin on the perception of the product’s quality, Drouvot conducted a quantitative research with questions that were answered face-to-face in a short period of time in order to capture the respondents’ first impression. Brazil was placed in the questionnaire amongst seven other countries and a sample with respondents in two different stages of their lives was gathered: students starting in University and professionals ending a masters’ degree in the same French University. The predictable result was that the younger part of the participants could only associate the ‘Brand Brazil’ with leisure products such as carnival, football and music/dance, while the professional participants saw Brazil strongly associated with Embraer, one of the largest aircraft manufacturers in the world, the textile and automobile industries, besides the exports of commodities such as fruits. Drouvott concludes that as Brazil cannot compete with low labour costs of other developing countries such as India and China, it should invest strongly in differentiating its image focusing on treasuring its country-of-origin product brands amongst the general public.

There has been limited research into the influence of cities on building the perception of countries and there is no consistent literature about the perception of the Brazilian image from inside or outside Brazil. The research described below was designed to address these gaps in understanding by crossing both worldviews taking into account Brazilian people or foreigners who represent or promote Brazil in a European context.

METHODOLOGY

In the discussion of the literature above a representative sample of the areas of theory that emerge from the subject of place branding, also referred to as ‘City and Country branding’, ‘Nation branding’ and ‘Destination branding’ was reviewed. The data was gathered in a way that the general descriptive information was analytically narrowed down in order to support the aim of the research, which was to identify if the image of a city can influence the way people perceive the country it belongs to and if the promotion of this city could create added values to the country’s image. As the intention was to conduct research within the place brand theory rather than producing facts or data, an inductive approach - theory building - was taken, rather than a deductive approach, which aims at testing a hypothesis – theory testing. The research strategy chosen to collect and analyse the collected data was exploratory. This is the common approach used within the tourism field whenever marketers need information on consumers’ opinion, values and attitude (Kolb, 2006). This design was chosen to investigate the concept of the ‘Brazil Brand’ among eight interviewees in order to cluster shared meanings among the individuals within their different professional areas of expertise. Bryman declares that even if participant observation is the most common approach associated with social research, unstructured interviews – where the research provides a slight guidance for interviews – can also be an opportunity of coming across unexpected issues that can successfully contribute to the research findings (Bryman, 1988).

A multiple qualitative approach with three phases was used to collect the data. This process provided the opportunity to triangulate the data from different sources. Phase one: key informant interview. The first phase was an interview with the key informant a specialist in the area of place brand theory, in order to develop a moderator guide. The researcher conducted a semi-structured interview followed by an unstructured interview, which was more of an informal discussion about the research topic and the research questions. The discussion informed the type of subjects used to build a moderator guide which was developed following a structure where the interviewee was guided through the subjects of the interview in a way that the researcher was free to insist on a topic if naturally mentioned by the interviewee amongst other topics, as well as to probe a topic if not mentioned earlier. After developing the moderator guide, the data collection moved on to phases two and three, which took place concurrently and influenced each other.

Phase two: secondary data collection. Besides the literature review researched to support the topic, alternative sources of data such as television documentaries, newspaper and magazine articles, promotional materials, PhDs and online sources were investigated. The Embassy of Brazil in London provided access to official documents which were used to analyse the research behind the ‘Watercolour Plan’ a government initiative designed to address Brazil’s image issues.
Phase three: primary data collection. The primary data collection was conducted by means of seven face-to-face recorded interviews from August to December 2008. The interviewer used a printed moderator guide, adapted according to the interviewee’s field of activity. The aim of the interviews was to develop ideas about what these people thought of the research topic, rather than collecting real and representative facts. It was clear during the data collection and analysis that when the interviewees talked about Brazil as a developing country in a context of the developed world, they could have made use of prestige bias, saying better things about their home country compared to what they really think, in order to preserve its own image as a Brazilian representative (Oppenheim, 1992). To preserve the spontaneous answers of the interviewees’ own ideas and feelings the researcher chose to conduct the interviews in each respondent’s own language (Temple & Young, 2004).

In order to build a place brand, areas other than tourism should be considered (Anholt, 2004; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2008). Therefore the sample unit for the primary data collection was developed considering the areas that both influence and are influenced by place image: politics, economy, education, culture and tourism. The procedure adopted was non-probability sampling as the chosen interviewees were the most accessible members to access information within the needed areas of expertise, made possible by a snowball effect - where the first interviewees gave the researcher the contact information of the following ones. This was also a judgement sample as the researcher investigated every respondent’s background in order to make sure they would fit the sample unit (N. Kotler, Kotler, & Kotler, 2008).

All the interviews were carried out by the principal author of this paper, and then transcribed in the original language of the interview - English or Portuguese. The content of all the interviews - including the key informant - were analysed through open coding in order to identify all the possible subjects that could have emerged from the interviews. Through a bottom up process they were then clustered into meanings to make clear the common topics within the responses given during the eight semi-structured interviews - including the key informant. The main topics found amongst the data received the following code names: ‘Image perception’, ‘Self Promotion’ and ‘Opportunities’. Besides this, the codes ‘City’ and ‘São Paulo’ were also analysed when addressed amongst the previous codes. During the stage of axial coding there was a perception that the areas of politics (public sector), economy (private sector), society, culture, tourism, press/promotion were cited by the interviewees within every code so they were made into common sub-codes within all the codes above. The sub-code ‘general’ was added to the codebook to identify whenever the previous codes were mentioned in a general way, referring to a universal image of the country, its infrastructure or geographical aspects as well as the general view of the country as a brand. The data was also gathered in a table in order to measure if the sub-code had a clear difference on frequency when mentioned amongst the codes for ‘Image’, ‘Self-promotion’ and ‘Opportunities’. An acronym was developed for each interviewee, including the key informant, in order to make the following results easier to read. The acronyms put the initials of the respondent’s name together with his professional field. Since the key informant does not belong to the sample, but still has very important points to contribute to the findings, his opinion is shown separately as a comparison to the findings of the other seven interviews.

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FINDINGS

Research question 1: What knowledge and perceptions do Europeans hold about Brazil, and how is Brazil addressing this?

The combination of the code ‘image’ and ‘self promotion’ will address the first research objective of this exploratory research. **Image**: The findings of this theme will reflect Brazil’s image
perception as a country and as a brand to the interviewees, taking into account the country’s history and past performances, responsible for building a national identity and an international intuitive understanding. **Self Promotion:** This second theme will identify the interviewees’ perception and judgment about the country’s present actions, which address the image perception issues. The previous ‘Document Analysis’ session is also an answer to this research question.

During the interviews, it was very clear that talking about the actual perception of Brazil was easier for all interviewees rather than talking about what is being done to change the country’s actual image, as the biggest amount of data collected was clustered within the ‘Image’ topic. When talking about the Brazilian image, politicians tend to speak in a more general way about the country, while people from the cultural and economical fields tend to talk about the country’s image related to their areas. All the interviewees declare that the country is in a ‘good moment’ by assuming that there is a very positive outsider view of Brazil’s political moment due to the election of President Lula. Simultaneously, all the interviewees also recognize that the country image still only stands for natural beauty and the same old clichés such as samba, carnival and football, even if some of them start to see a shift beginning to emerge. Five out of the seven interviewees connect the prejudice against the country to the fact that foreign tourists - who do not know the country - can only view Brazil as one. The majority also comment that people who visit the country change this perception into the knowledge that the country is extremely diverse. Two of the interviewees blame the failure of tourism promotion to focus on other aspects of the country besides natural beauties, even if this is the focus of the current ‘Watercolour Plan’. Information through the press is considered another issue, since the lack of a solid image of the country turns Brazil into a victim of the foreign press, which most times is interested in newspaper sales instead of considering what would be good for the country’s development. Avraham and Ketter (2008) predicted what is happening to Brazil by saying that weak brands make people addicted to only look at one aspect of the place, hiding its diverse potential.

RW-Key states that European people do not have a very clear image of Brazil like they have of China and India, but nevertheless he assures that Brazil has a positive image internationally based on the perceptions of the samba, carnival, and football positive clichés.

Being of mixed ethnicity is a social aspect identified by the majority of the interviewees when talking about Brazilian people, a fact reflected by the Brazilian history that results in the actual and unique personality and look of Brazilians. RA-Pol sees this particularity as positive for brand building, as being a mixed country is an advantage in a world that is more and more concerned with racial discrimination. RW-Key believes that - opposed to America, where everyone that goes there becomes American - Brazil is a source of diverse creative talent in one place, as he imagines that its people are more linked to where they come from. He also says that due to the diversity, there is an existing myth about Brazil being a place without racial discrimination reflected by celebrities like Pelé. Anyhow, he thinks that foreigners are not aware of this special Brazilian mix either.

Half of the interviewees mentioned the fact that the Brazilian government has recently started worrying about Brazil’s international image. Nevertheless, RA-Pol states that Brazil started very late and that Brazilians still has to learn a lot about place branding from places like Spain - the most mentioned example of success in the literature. Two of the respondents commented that they still couldn’t recognise a centred and strong strategy to promote the ‘Brand Brazil’ and this is something that could be fatal to the branding process, as recognized by Gilmore (2004) and Anholt (2004). There is a clear common sense among the majority of the other interviewees who know that something has to be done, but at the same time they get very confused when it comes to coming up with practical solutions, as they all admit that branding a massive country like Brazil is truly difficult. This reflects the literature, as authors like Anholt and Kolb have an optimistic view of the development of the emerging countries as tourism destinations, but at the same time, there is a great lack of agreement between authors when it comes to solutions (Anholt, 2004; Kolb, 2006).

TF-Tour alone defends the country’s ‘Watercolour Plan’ strategy by giving some positive facts such as the increasing number of weekly airline flights to Brazil, the fact that European tourists are travelling more to Brazil and that one of the social results from this is that a lot of areas in Brazil are being regenerated because of the tourism income.
Culture is mentioned by six of the interviewees as another form of promotion that detached from the government efforts is responsible for stirring up a good perception of the country abroad, all of them classify Brazilian visual arts, music and cinema as authentic and rich with traditional but multicultural influences, characteristics that attract the attention of tourists and international artists from the rest of the world. The cultural tourist is a type of ‘new tourist’ defended by the literature (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008) but it is clear that Brazilian culture today is a ‘product’ being consumed outside of Brazil and that is why culture - different from what the literature defends in this case - should not be considered only an attraction to bring people to the country but a means to make people enhance their knowledge of a place without leaving home.

The interviewees also recognize that the press and advertising are not the only means to get the image of the country across and that is why, when asked about the current changes of the Brazilian image, other areas were also mentioned. In the social scenario, HD-Econ mentioned the ‘Bolsa família’ (a Governmental program for direct wealth transfer to Brazilian families in poverty or extreme poverty situations in response to the Zero Hunger strategy, which guarantees the human right of adequate feeding to avoid the most vulnerable part of the population suffering from hunger) as a positive initiative from the Brazilian government. LP-Cult mentions the positive external politics within southern countries such as China. Education is another field that can influence a country brand. DT-Edu states that recently the British Universities started to invest in exchange with the University system in Brazil. Still in the field of Education, TF-Tour mentions the programme ‘Brazil in the School’ has being applied in schools in London. This programme consists of the distribution of academic material produced by the Brazilian Embassy in London to teach children attending schools in UK about Brazil in a proper way. This isolated plan is one of the most effective branding processes because, the complexity of the place-brand construction relies on sociological influences such as the school (Kunczik, 1997).

It is interesting that even focusing on the foreign image perception of Brazil, the majority of the interviewees mentioned the internal perception of the country, described most of times as negative. Three of the interviewees state that the impression that Brazil can produce nothing apart from samba, football and carnival is also a prejudice shared by Brazilian people, who also believe that Brazil cannot be better than other countries abroad, especially when comparing it to the USA and the European countries. The government has a big responsibility in that for never having involved its people in its actions. Brazilian people don’t know what BRIC stands for and that there is a ‘Brand Brazil’, which was launched four years ago to promote the country. If Winfield-Pfefferkom defends that all stakeholders need to be involved in the city branding process, its people should be the centre of this process since they represent the place’s heart (Gilmore, 2002; Winfield-Pfefferkorn, 2005).

The majority of the interviewees mentioned the economical scenario when talking about Brazil’s perception and they always talked about Brazilian economy within the BRIC context. All of them have a positive view of the country amongst the other countries of the BRICs - Russia, India and China. HD-Pol alone points out that, besides the optimistic view, the country still has a lot to work on its image in order to be capable of increasing Brazilian exported goods, which today correspond to only 1% of the world’s total exports. RW-Key believes that the Brazilian values are a ‘positive building box,’ but that they do not build an image of Brazil as somewhere to do business. Moreover, he says that Europeans still see Latin America as a place that does not have a well-educated and reliable workforce as well as a place where language is an issue, because the majority of the population can’t speak English. Within the economic scenario, the Key informant also points out that the export of global brands is a very strong tool to brand countries, but that the Brazilian enterprises are doing nothing about it.

Research question 2: Can a country brand be developed through city branding (for instance as it happens in the case of Paris and France / NY and USA / Barcelona and Spain)? & Research question 3: Do the cities of Bahia and Rio de Janeiro contribute to Brazil’s image perception by representing the country in the international scenario?

The code ‘place’ alone will address the second and the third research objectives. Place: The idea to introduce this code came from the gap found in the place brand literature. The aim was to identify
whenever the interviewees address this concept of the city brand contributing to the country brand image, in order to give a pragmatic approach to what has being written about place brand theories. Half of the respondents recognize that foreigners wishing to go to Brazil only think about visiting Rio and Salvador (Bahia), as these are the only Brazilian cities promoted and recognized abroad. RW-Key assumes that a country image most of the time is the reflection of its main cities values. It is clear for the majority of the respondents what the theories of the country-of-origin effect defend (P. Kotler & Gertner, 2002), but most of them can only mention the case of Havaianas, when talking about Brazilian global brands.

Drouvot states in his book that some industrialized Brazilian goods are already being exported successfully - like Embraer Aircraft and furniture - but that there is a lack of information regarding these products’ provenance, which could contribute to enhance the image of the country (Drouvot, 2005). The author also says that in the case of furniture, the hidden provenance is intentional since the lack of a positive Brazilian image could be a barrier for the final consumer consumption. Two of the respondents reveal the case of footwear and textile industries, which produce products as good as the Europeans and at cheaper prices, but because of their provenance it becomes impossible to enter the competition with the established countries within these industries. To avoid this vicious circle - where Brazilian exporters should promote the product provenance to enhance the country image, but they do not because they fear losing to the stronger properly branded competition - a model was created joining the ideas of Iversen and Hem (2007) regarding umbrella branding applied to products’ provenance and the assumption that cities could add instrumental values to the image perception of a country. The idea was to add another level to the model, assuming that in the case of a complex place such as Brazil; the country perception should be improved by the values its main cities carry (Figure 2). Note that, as suggested by the researchers, the ‘place equity’ of the places was opened, since this complex country is composed of a larger set of values compared to their model. It is also important to say that their model was developed with the goal of talking about branding coordination, but here the same model is used to talk about brand perception alone.

Research question 4: Would the promotion of São Paulo city add value to Brazil’s country brand image?

The ‘opportunities’ code refers to the fourth research objective when combined with the code number five, ‘São Paulo’, as the aim from the beginning of this research was to investigate if the promotion of the city of São Paulo would be considered to be a solution to improve the ‘Brand Brazil’ perception. Opportunities: This code will gather all the predictions and suggestions from the interviewees when talking about the future of Brazil as a country and as a brand. São Paulo: This code was created to identify when the city of São Paulo was mentioned amongst the previous codes, in order to measure if its perception is more significant to the interviewees when talking about the ‘image’/past, the ‘self-promotion’/present or ‘opportunities’/future.

LP-Cult and DT-Edu mention that there is no point in making a promotion of the country if real social and structural changes do not happen. AF-Pol believes that an effective promotion of the country will only happen after the enhancement of the Brazilians’ national self-esteem. RA-Pol believes that promoting a country through culture is no news, since it was already done efficiently by places like China, France and the UK. LP-Cult explains that Brazilian culture is made for Brazilian people and maybe that is where the authenticity that authors defend as being essential to attract foreigners looking for new sources of inspiration alternatively to the universal mass culture of the USA lies (Avraham & Ketter, 2008; Kolb, 2006; Mintel, 2004).
In the economic field there is no agreement amongst respondents regarding the opportunities of Brazil. Everyone has a different opinion varying from the need of private investment in the creation of Brazilian Global brands, to the opportunities in the agriculture area development, while another respondent sees culture as the easiest Brazilian exportable good, since there is already sympathy from foreigners to consume it. Three of the interviewees indicate ‘The year of Brazil in France’ as an example of an effective marketing strategy that happened during the year of 2005. Several events took place in France during that year to promote Brazilian culture and export goods to the French final consumer and trade. The platform resulted in the increase in exports and the awareness of Brazil in France according to RA-Pol. He was personally taking care of the event at the Brazilian Embassy in Paris and wrote a thesis about the impacts of this event. Some of the respondents also recognize that bringing events like ‘The year of Brazil in France’ to the target country seems easier and more effective than trying to attract people to a distant and mysterious country.

RA-Pol defends the creation of an independent non-profit institution connected with the Brazilian Ministries of Culture and Foreign affairs that would receive public and private funds to promote the diversity of Brazilian culture abroad. This organization would prioritize the interests of these ministries in developing the Brand Brazil without having to compete for funds with internal structural basic needs of the country, such as hospitals and schools. An institution detached from the bureaucratic public administration would also guarantee a continued branding process in spite of the government changes every four years, besides being able to enhance its know-how and become a professional in place branding by accumulating experience from previous works (Amaral, 2007).

Even if the Brazilian Government makes an effort to send the ‘diversity’ message through its current tourism campaigns promoted in Europe, there is a common sense between the non-Brazilians interviewed - including the key informer - that the diversity of Brazil would be better shown through the diversity of its people and not through the difference between meaningless landscapes. This could represent the uniqueness Kotler and Gertner (2002) defends that every place needs to find in order to differentiate itself from others, as there is no other country with such a racial mix as Brazil.
Speaking from experience of applying all these assumptions in real life, RW-Key believes that running a project for the whole country could take ages due to the endless political interests involved on changing a country’s strategy, but if the focus becomes the efforts of a city, supported by a mayor or a governor this could be an advantage for this politician’s campaign and would certainly be followed by other cities. When talking about São Paulo, half of the respondents see the city as already contributing to Brazil’s image, but only within the fields of business - where the majority of worldwide companies are placed, and culture - for being the ‘exporter’ of the Brazilian graffiti, underground music, design, and fashion. When the name of the city is probed, São Paulo is cited several times by having the potential to represent what London is for the UK and New York is for the USA even if only in the future - as all the respondents believe that São Paulo needs a lot of changes before starting to be compared with those cities. Two of the respondents affirm that São Paulo looks like New York in the field of business. Another two see the city environment as being much closer to London for its multiculturalism and cultural scene. When asked about the contribution of Brazilian cities to Brazil’s perception, RW-Key naturally suggested a ‘branding exercise’ on São Paulo. He also agrees that foreigners do not recognize São Paulo as a developed Brazilian city yet.

It is curious to observe that when all the respondents were probed about São Paulo or naturally cited the city for the first time during the interview, the earliest comments were always negative - focusing on the way the city should work harder in infrastructure in order to become like London or New York one day. But after a while talking about the city, all of the respondents recognize that at the same time São Paulo has potential to have its image developed towards the opportunity of showing Brazil to the world as a country with an important economic powerhouse. DT-Edu refers to the topic of urban regeneration as a solution for São Paulo to differentiate itself from other world cities and at the same time attract visitors as well as Rio and Bahia. The idea is to develop the city creating spaces for its citizens rather than places for tourists, different from what has been happening in the developed cities from around the world.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to explore what the current image of Brazil from a Brazilian or Brazil-representative point of view in a European context is and investigate if there is a possibility to enhance the country image though the São Paulo city promotion. There was a clear answer to all research questions during the work that brought forward insights surrounding the confusing current image of Brazil. The country is seen as at the same time very happy and very poor, out-of-date and authentic or very creative but unreliable. This is due to the lack of understanding of what the country really is and its potential to become a better place. An analysis of the current ‘Watercolour plan’ created by the Brazilian government was proved to be non-effective in helping the country to grow in other fields besides leisure tourism, as there was never an intention of reflecting in the ‘Brand Brazil’ what the country ‘wants to be’, rather than what it already represents for foreigners. This is how the city of São Paulo - being promoted in parallel with the ‘Watercolour Plan’ - would help Brazil to make its brand understandable for foreigners - tourists, investors and workers - but at the same time would add a sense of maturity and future to the country’s set of values. Although limited in extent this research demonstrates the opportunity for further work in the field of place branding for developing countries as well as more in-depth studies on the real influence of the city-promotion contribution to the country brand image - making use of other methods such as focus group with final consumers and case study analysis between successful cities and the true contribution for their countries as well as more precise analysis of what more successful cities and countries use as a brand.

REFERENCES


SUSTAINABILITY AS DIFFERENTIATION TOOL IN DESTINATION BRANDING:
AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

With increasing awareness of the environmental issues, sustainability has become an important element of destination management. The present study examines the effect of the availability of sustainable information on website and the use of sustainable claims in promotion on the perceptions and evaluations of a destination. A total of 153 golf resorts were evaluated, including 86 North America golf resorts and 67 resorts outside North America, by student reviewers. The results indicate that resorts with sustainable information on website receive more positive perceptions than resorts without. Additional tests reveal that resorts with tangible sustainable claims receive more positive perceptions than resorts with only intangible sustainable claims. Surprisingly, resorts without sustainable claims receive higher mark than resorts with only intangible claims. Furthermore, the inclusion of sustainable claims in promotion results in significantly favorable perceptions. However, further investigation reveals that tangible sustainable claims used in promotion yield stronger positive effects in perceptions. These results suggest a significant, positive effect due to the inclusion of tangible sustainable information and the use of tangible sustainable claims in promotion among trained student reviewers. Important implications for resort management and future research directions are provided.

Keywords: destination marketing, sustainability, website evaluation, golf resorts

INTRODUCTION

Destination branding has become an important strategic planning component in destination management. With increasing competition among alternative destinations, tremendous effort has been devoted to successfully differentiate oneself from others and build a strong loyal customer base. A positive destination perception helps not only the destination itself, but also a country’s export brands (Gnoth 2002). Some municipalities have also employed marketing campaigns to build their cities as destinations of choice (e.g., Warnaby, et. al. 2002). Alternative approaches and models have been developed to gauge the pre-visit and post-visit perceptions of a destination (e.g., Baloglu and McCleary 1999; Beerli and Martin 2004; Echtner and Ritchie 1993; Gartner and Shen 1992; Walmsley and Jenkins 1993). Among important factors that form destination image, Beerli and Martin (2004) group those factors into nine dimensions: natural resources; general infrastructure; tourist infrastructure; tourist leisure and recreation; culture, history and art; political and economic factors; natural environment; social environment, and atmosphere of the place. The ability of destination manager to promote selected discriminating factors to tailor to the customer’s travel motivation can play a key role in the destination performance.

An emerging discriminating factor that has received significant attention is the sustainability factor, which has increasingly become an important consideration in destination branding management. In recent years, there have been consistently increasing concerns over the general health of the natural environment, e.g., the issue of global warming and the damage to a natural beauty due to human activities. As destination management has the ultimate result of inducing visitors traveling to a destination, a number of sustainable issues have become apparent. First, various forms of traveling will lead to the use of energy and population. Second, as traffic count increases at a destination, the impact on the destination’s natural environment could become a major concern. Finally, growth in traffic count at a destination is likely to directly affect the welfare of local residents as their quality of life can be severely altered (Giannoni 2009). In order to gauge the impact on the environment, Schianetz and Kavanagh (2008) propose a complex adaptive system approach to select and evaluate sustainable indicators that tourism destinations can use.
As most forms of traveling result in pollution, consumers who are adverse to pollution are likely to seek out alternatives that are more environmentally friendly. As a result, many in the destination management have started to embrace the concept of sustainable tourism to strike a harmony among various constituencies. As more destinations adopt a more environmental friendly approach, it becomes necessary for destination managers to incorporate the sustainability factor into strategic considerations. Issues such as the extent to which sustainable measures should be built into its destination offerings and how effective the sustainability component is in attracting travelers have to be managed properly. Other emerging issues include the required investment, financially and managerially, its returns on investment, and what actions to take to make it sustainable. While it might be possible to make a destination sustainable without a significant increase in operation expenses, some have found that being green costs more. As cost rises, an ensuing question is whether or not to pass on the cost increased to its customers.

However, prior research also shows that there is a general lack of willingness to pay for such sustainability factor by the mass market (Taylor 2009). On the other hand, there is a niche of consumers who are willing to pay more for green products. Chitra (2007) reports that majority of subject in the study of green consumers are aspirants who send out a positive signal to eco friendly marketing mix. Therefore, destinations that incorporate sustainability in its brand image building process might have to attract such niche customers, who are likely to be affluent with a concern for environmental issues and are willing to pay more for a destination that is environmentally friendly. Based on a study of six ecologdes in the Cayo District of Belize, Kwan, Eagles, and Gebhardt (2008) found that visitors there are middle-aged, highly educated, and employed with high levels of income, consistent with those of ecotourists found in other studies.

Another significant factor in destination management is the dominance of web applications, which have two important effects. First, as many destination marketing organizations have found, the customer has taken over the booking process with the assistance of web technology (King 2002). Furthermore, web-based communication has effectively promoted the sustainability concept and facilitates new forms of consumer citizenship in that sustainable consumption is valued (Rokka and Moisander 2009). As a result, there is a potential for a destination to enhance its image by connecting with potential customers via the Internet with cues on its care of and concern for the environment and the sustainable experience the customers will enjoy during their visit.

The purpose of this research is to examine whether sustainability can be used as a segmentation tool and how the presence and emphasis on sustainability factors affect the consumer’s subjective evaluations of a resort destination and related perceptual measures. As managers often lament that sustainability adds to operation cost, an ensuing managerial question is the return on investment. The costs of designing and developing desirable eco-friendly golf resorts could be seen as barriers in the short run. Based on an empirical study on consumer products in UK, Wong, Turner, and Stoneman (1996) cited costs as key barriers for product diffusion. However, the overall sentiment toward environmental issues has vastly improved with greater acceptance in 2000s, especially after the run-ups of energy prices in 2007, it is expected that investment in sustainability could lead to improved perception and thus stronger intention for visit. Furthermore, a resort may incorporate its effort in sustainability into its promotional message. Such promotional usage could effectively alter visitors’ perceptions. A general conceptual model is presented in the Figure 1, which suggests three possibilities. First, a resort may have sustainable features and use them in promotion (A). Second, a resort may have sustainable features and do not use them in promotion (B). Third, a resort may not have sustainable features, yet use sustainability claims in promotion (C). It is expected that resorts with investments in sustainability and use sustainability in promotion will result in stronger quality perceptions. If the presence of sustainable features and the use of sustainability in promotion have significant and positive effect on quality perceptions, it will provide empirical support for using sustainability in distinguish a resort from its peers that are without such features or do not use sustainability in promotion. In other words, sustainability can be used to be a segmentation base in promotion and market positioning. Furthermore, embracing eco-friendly measures in resort management could provide important synergy that not only enhance the image of a resort, but also lead to more efficient operations as suggested by Pujari, Wright, and Peattie (2003), who found more synergy than conflict between the traditional and environmental product development programs. Similarly, Ginsberg and Bloom (2004) argue an eco campaign can be more effective if firms understand that a universal strategy does not exist.
METHOD

To investigate the research questions, it is necessary to identify resorts based on the presence of sustainable features and the use of sustainability claims in promotion on resort websites. Cobos, Wang, and Okumus (2009) have suggested the importance of using web-based destination marketing activities, such as information, communication, transaction, and assurance, to build a long-term relationship with potential visitors. Hyun, Lee, and Hu (2009) also call for more attention to the use of virtual experience in tourism. As online shopping has become a staple in many developed economies, utilizing the internet technology to communicate with consumers has become a basic requirement in today’s resort management. Furthermore, with an increasing awareness of various environmental issues, there is an escalating demand of greener technologies and products.

Facing mounting environmental concerns and increasing sensitivity toward sustainability issues, embracing sustainable features in resort management represent a potential business opportunities. A resort’s website is often the first point of encounter with potential visitors who are searching for alternative travel destinations. Therefore, incorporate sustainability messages into website design could be a valuable marketing tool for resort managers to build a positive impression with potential customers. For resorts having significant investment in sustainability measures, it might be beneficial to communicate such green measures with site visitors. Therefore, it is very important to learn the extent of influence due to sustainable environmental features and the effectiveness of such measures in forming quality perceptions. Among various resorts, golf resorts have been cited as one of the major environmental offenders because golf resorts often require substantial land use. For example, in 2008, billionaire Donald Trump faced serious criticism for a plan to develop a $2B golf resort on an environmentally sensitive stretch of coastline in Scotland. Therefore, golf resorts are chosen as the research subject, though similar effects are expected for other resorts or tourist destinations.

Golf resorts within the U.S. and outside the U.S. are selected from listings provided by various resort information websites, including Resort Online, Golf.com, among others. The inclusion of U.S. golf resorts and non-U.S. golf resorts will allow cross-national comparisons. Student reviewers were recruited and trained during summer 2009. Each student reviewer went through a one-hour orientation and information session. During the session, they were given basic information regarding golf resorts, golf course development, related environmental issues, and general appeal for destination tourists. Then student reviewers were given the destination review questionnaire, which the evaluation would be based on. They were told to evaluate three pre-selected benchmarking destination golf resort websites. The followings were used to assist in the evaluation: a resort with tangible sustainable features, another resort with intangible sustainable features, and the third resort without any sustainable features. Using available information on sustainability and promotion messages, reviewers were told the difference between tangible sustainable features, such as recycled water, bio-degradable chemicals, solar power panels, energy-saving LED lighting etc., and intangible sustainable claims, such as “eco-friendly,” “we care,” “certified,” etc. The distinction of tangible and intangible sustainable claims is similar to the
substantive and associative environmental claims used by Chan, Leung, and Wong (2006), who found that substantive environmental claims generate more favorable responses than do associative claims.

Trained student reviewers are randomly assigned to selected resorts and make evaluation based on the destination review questionnaire, which includes measures related to the degree of involvement in sustainability and the use of promotional sustainable messages on a resort’s website. In addition, the reviewer reports the presence of tangible sustainable features in its website promotional message. Among both tangible and intangible features, it is deemed as using tangible features in promotion. Similar to many consumer goods, a product can be promoted to consumers with specific tangible eco-friendly features or with only abstract, unsubstantiated promotional statements. The following are related research questions addressed in the study:

1. Does the presence of tangible sustainable features in website descriptions enhance the image of a destination and purchase intention?
2. Does the use of promotional statement or marketing claims on sustainability enhance the image of a destination and purchase intention?
3. Does the presence of tangible sustainable features have a stronger positive effect in destination image and purchase intention than the use promotional statement or marketing claims?
4. What are the differences and similarities between US destinations and non-US destinations?
5. What are the prominent sustainable features and promotional statements or marketing claims used by US and non-US destinations?

A total of 153 resorts were evaluated, including 86 North America golf resorts and 67 resorts outside North America. Among the resorts reviewed, 60% located within or near a major metropolitan area, 77% near a national/state park or recreational areas, 67% near a well-known natural wonder, only 10% could not be reached by mass transportation or motor vehicles, and 37% attracts mainly international visitors. The following were key measures in the review process:

- The inclusion of information or statements related to environmental sustainability;
- The use of sustainability statement in promotion and the tangibility or intangibility of such statement;
- Reviewer’s assessment on the resort’s accomplishment in sustainability; and.
- Subjective quality assessment on overall quality, appeal, and recommending to others.

RESULTS

To examine whether or not the presence of sustainable claims on resort website descriptions enhance the image of a destination, t-tests were conducted on the three subjective quality measures. All tests were shown significantly superior perceptions for resorts with such claim than for resorts without. Further, tests reveal that resorts with tangible sustainable claims receive more positive perceptions than resorts with only intangible sustainable claims. Surprisingly, when comparing resorts with only intangible sustainable claims with resorts without sustainable claims, none of the t-tests were significant. Further examination reveals that resorts without sustainable claims receive higher mark than resorts with only intangible claims. The next research question is regarding the effectiveness of the use of sustainable statements in promotion. Overall, the inclusion of sustainable claims in promotion results in significantly favorable perceptions. However, further investigation reveals that tangible sustainable claims used in promotion yield stronger positive effects in perceptions. This result is consistent with the findings by Chan, Leung, and Wong (2006). In fact, there is a general lack of significant difference between when comparing resorts using intangible sustainable claims with resorts using no claims at all. Overall, 51% of US resorts and 43% of non-US resorts include information or statements related to environmental sustainability. However, the difference is not statistically significant. It should be noted that the lack of such information does not indicate the lack of effort in sustainability. Further analysis reveals that among resorts including such information, US resorts are more likely to list tangible sustainability features ($\chi^2=7.81, p<0.01$, Table 3). Finally, what are the prominent sustainable features and promotional statements or marketing claims used by US and non-US destinations? Selected prominent sustainable features are provided in Table 4.
### Tables 1A
The Effect of the Presence of Sustainable Claims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainable Claims</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Diff.</th>
<th>t value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
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<tr>
<td>Overall Quality</td>
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<td>0.72</td>
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<td>Appeal</td>
<td>5.61</td>
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<td>0.77</td>
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<td>5.51</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>0.69</td>
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### Tables 1B
The Effect of the Presence of Tangibility of Sustainable Claims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Claims Are</th>
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<th>Intangible</th>
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<td>Dependent Measures:</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Quality</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Appeal</td>
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<td>1.54</td>
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### Tables 1C
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<tr>
<td>Overall Quality</td>
<td>7.36</td>
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<td>-0.14</td>
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</tr>
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<td>4.50</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>-0.92</td>
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<td>-1.28</td>
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### Tables 2A
The Effect of the Promotional Use of Sustainable Claims: Any Claims vs. None

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use Sustainable Claims in Promotion</th>
<th>Any</th>
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<th>Diff.</th>
<th>t value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
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<td>&lt; 0.01</td>
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<td>0.86</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommend to others</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>&lt; 0.01</td>
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### Tables 2B
The Effect of the Promotional Use of Sustainable Claims: Tangible vs. Intangible

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<th>Intangible</th>
<th>Diff.</th>
<th>t value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dependent Measures:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Quality</td>
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<td>0.76</td>
<td>1.44</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal</td>
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<td>4.92</td>
<td>1.20</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4.42</td>
<td>1.83</td>
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### Tables 2C
The Effect of the Promotional Use of Sustainable Claims: Tangible vs. All Others

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<th>p-value</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Quality</td>
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<td>7.57</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>&lt; 0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal</td>
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<td>4.93</td>
<td>1.19</td>
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<td>&lt; 0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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### Tables 2D
The Effect of the Promotional Use of Sustainable Claims: Intangible vs. None

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<th>Use Sustainable Claims in Promotion</th>
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<th>p-value</th>
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<td>Appeal</td>
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<td>4.94</td>
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<td>Insig.</td>
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<td>Recommend to others</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>-0.92</td>
<td>Insig.</td>
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Table 3
Use of Tangible and Intangible Sustainable Claims in Promotion– US Resorts vs. Non-US Resorts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability Claims Used in Promotion:</th>
<th>US Golf Resorts</th>
<th>Non-US Golf Resorts</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>35 (81.4%)</td>
<td>14 (50%)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intangible</td>
<td>8 (18.6%)</td>
<td>14 (50%)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43 (100%)</td>
<td>28 (100%)</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4
Prominent Sustainable Features

2. Partnership:
3. Education Programs: Jean-Michel Cousteau’s Ambassadors of the Environment, Outdoor Education programs
4. Membership: Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program member, Green Path Program member,
5. Label: Eco-Friendly Resort, "Edible Ecosystem" using local organic produce, "Greener Inn"
8. Statistics: reduce energy consumption by, reduce water usage by, recycle % of waste
9. Employee Involvement: “Green Team”,
10. Actions: recycles trash for heating, biodegradable containers, CFLs and LEDs, low flow water saving devices, solar panels, motion sensors, optional linen/towel changes, local product usage, energy efficient machines, planted areas, bio-rational pesticides, water reuse, composting, restrictions on motorized vehicles, biodegradable cleaners, natural construction with heavy equipment, electric golf and service vehicles, Hydrolix wastewater treatment,

DISCUSSIONS

The present study provides rare evidence of the effect of sustainability and its use in promotion on quality perceptions. The results show a palpable support for the positive effect of sustainable features on consumer perceptions, which might provide resort managers an incentive to employ sustainable features in enhancing resort image. Further, it shows that there is a lack of effect due to abstract sustainable claims.

There are limitations associated with the research. The observed effects might be more evident among informed visitors as reviewers were trained so that they could be more likely to be influenced by uninformed visitors. Furthermore, the evaluation was based on the presence of sustainable features on resort websites. A resort could have significant investments in sustainable features, yet did not provide
such information online. Therefore, the reviewers’ evaluations do not necessarily reflect the actual level of environmental friendliness of a given resort. It can only state that, the observed effects are based on information provided on the resort website. Therefore, it is directly related to the website information, not the actual resort qualities. Finally, the observed effects based on golf resorts may not be readily applicable to other resorts or businesses due to its unique characteristics.

Further research is needed to better understand the significance of sustainability in resort management in terms of quality perceptions, visitation intentions, return on investment, etc. The present study provides an important piece of empirical evidence to document the effect of the presence of sustainable features on resort websites and the effect of sustainable promotional claims, tangible or intangible. The results suggest a positive effect due to the presence of sustainable features presented on resort websites and a positive effect due to the use of tangible sustainable features in promotion on resort websites. At the same, the present study found an insignificant effect when intangible sustainable claims are used in promotion by the research subject, in this case, trained (or informed) reviewers.

REFERENCES


A META-COMPARISON OF EMPIRICAL BRAND METRICS AND MODELS FOR TOURISM DESTINATIONS

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Sweden

ABSTRACT

The concept of customer-based brand equity (CBBE) and related measurement issues have recently attracted significant attention in tourism research (Pike, 2009; Boo et al., 2009). However, the complex and multi-dimensional nature of tourism destinations challenge the traditional approach towards the brand, its constructs (e.g. awareness, image, quality, loyalty, etc.) and measurement scales. Nevertheless, a number of empirically validated destination performance models found in the recent tourism literature share many similarities with the CBBE model in terms of structure and employed survey-based metrics. The aim of this study is to conduct a meta-comparison between a set of destination performance models and the CBBE model proposed and verified in a tourism destination context by Boo et al. (2009). The proposed comparison framework grounded in marketing and tourism literature is utilized in order to deduce a parsimonious and comprehensive set of destination brand metrics, relevant model dimensions, as well as empirically validated causal relationships.

Keywords: destination branding, customer-based brand equity, brand performance, brand metrics, comparison framework

INTRODUCTION

While interest in the destination branding topic grows continuously, the issue of destination brand performance measurement based on the customer-based brand equity model (CBBE) has recently attracted attention in tourism research (Pike, 2009). The study of Boo et al. (2009) is the first one that investigates causal structures between various dimensions within the customer-based brand equity constructs related to tourism destinations. However, in their study they particularly point at the lack of empirical research in brand measurement, which they explain primarily by the huge complexity and multidimensionality of tourism destinations compared to goods and services (ibid. 2009: 2). Moreover, also in the field of marketing of goods and services a lack of homogeneity in measurement scales and blurred boundaries between constructs of the CBBE model are recognized as acute problems. Lehman, Keller and Farley (2008), for instance, proclaim that a wide range of possible, but often overlapping measures remains a challenge in developing survey-based measurement of brand performance due to discrepancies in interpretation of measures on the level of the item, and diverse beliefs about branding and consumer behavior. Already Gallarza et al. (2002) addressed a similar issue in connection with the tourism destination image concept. They argue that despite of a constantly growing body of interdisciplinary research during the last three decades, there is still a lack of a conceptual framework of tourism destination image, which, in turn, restrained operationalization of this construct. In order to overcome the mentioned theoretical and empirical challenge this paper proposes the following research approach. By considering both the marketing and relevant tourism literature a framework will be established to identify and remove methodological overlaps and differences among existing destination brand models. The final aim is to deduce a parsimonious and comprehensive set of destination brand metrics, relevant model dimensions, as well as empirically supported causal relationships.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pike (2009) identifies three major research streams in the field of destination branding, namely destination brand identity development, destination brand positioning and destination brand equity
measurement and tracking. In the destination context brand equity is typically studied from the customers’ perspective. Moreover, the customer-based brand equity concept is considered to be more relevant and valuable from the managerial point of view than the financial evaluation of brand equity. Consequently, destination brand equity research primarily focuses on the development of destination brand performance models, thus enabling the measurement of the marketing effectiveness on the level of destinations, as well as the prediction of the future performance of the destination as a brand. However, despite its particular importance, brand equity research in the tourism destination context remains in its infancy and there exist only few studies on the topic so far (Pike, 2009; Konechnik and Gartner, 2007; Boo et al., 2009).

The concept of customer-based brand equity is well-established in the general context of marketing of goods and services (Aaker, 1991, 1996; Keller, 1993, 2008). Keller (2008) describes the CBBE model as the pyramid (i.e. hierarchy) consisting of six brand building blocks corresponding to four stages of brand development. The first stage is the establishment of the brand identity, which corresponds to the brand salience block of the CBBE model and has brand awareness as the branding objective. The second stage is defined as the brand meaning creation. This stage corresponds to two building blocks of the model, namely performance, which is the product as it is, and imagery representing intangible aspects of the brand. Response is the third stage. This stage is aimed at receiving positive reactions towards the brand and also consists of two blocks: judgements and feelings. Resonance is the brand building block placed on the top of the CBBE pyramid. This block corresponds to the final fourth stage of brand development labelled as “relationships”, which aims primarily at the establishment of intense and active loyalty. Therefore the fourth stage of brand development bridges the CBBE model and the concept of customer relationship management (CRM) along with the technological implementation of CRM on the level of companies (Keller, 2008).

Although the CBBE model for goods and services is extensively elaborated on both theoretical and methodological levels, further development and harmonization of the survey-based brand metrics remains an acute issue in the general marketing field. Studies in this area brought forth a broad range of competing CBBE models and instruments for their measurement. However, the boundaries between dimensions of CBBE models are often vague and overlaps in measuring different constructs may be observed (Lehman et al., 2008). Lehman et al. (2008) addressed this issue by suggesting a parsimonious set of survey-based brand metrics and by examining relationships between them in order to deduce a measurement instrument valid for any product or service being sold on any geographical market. They further established a set of brand performance metrics by thoroughly examining several different research models and findings. More precisely, they extracted 27 dimensions of brand performance attempting to balance parsimony and completeness. The resulting set of brand performance measurement consisted of 84 items. Based on the pilot study results the authors slightly modified the measurement scales and examined the underlying factor structure of selected brand performance measures. The study identified six brand performance factors: comprehension (i.e. presence, awareness and knowledge: “how much the brand is seen and thought of”), comparative advantage (i.e. difference, esteem, performance, advantage and acceptability: “how favorable regarded and well differentiated the branded product is?”), interpersonal relations (i.e. caring, prestige, service and innovation: “interpersonal and social aspects”), history (i.e. heritage and nostalgia: “past brand-related events, episodes and emotions”), preference (i.e. bonding, loyalty, intention, value for money, overall attitude, extension potential: “consumer attitudes toward the brand and its purchase”), and attachment (i.e. persistence and activity: “how strongly consumers connect to and interact with the brand”) (ibid., 2008: 49).

Finally, the analysis of structural relationships between the validated factors allowed for discovering four stages of brand performance, namely (1) awareness, (2) image and associations (i.e. represented by comparative advantage, interpersonal relations, and history), (3) preference and (4) attachment (Lehman et al., 2008).

In tourism research, destination brand studies remained in the shadow of image studies for decades (Konechnik and Gartner, 2007; Pike, 2009; Boo et al., 2009). Particularly, Konechnik and Gartner (2007) argue that image should not be viewed as the single factor explaining the process of tourism decision making, therefore it has to be isolated from other dimensions such as awareness, quality and loyalty. The authors propose and empirically validate the relationships between these four factors.
and the concept of customer-based brand equity for a destination (i.e. CBBETD). The equity concept is viewed as “the sum of factors (or “dimensions”) contributing to a brand’s value in the consumer’s mind” (ibid., 2007: 401). However, the authors admit that the number of underlying dimensions of the CBBETD model can be extended.

The study by Boo et al. (2009) is the next step towards elaboration of the CBBE model in the tourism destination context. The authors complemented the concept proposed by Konechnik and Gartner (2007) with the additional dimension of destination brand value, arguing for its importance in creating customer loyalty. They empirically tested the CBBE model with two visitor samples from two destinations in the same product category (i.e. casino gambling). The initially selected set of model dimensions included awareness, image, quality, value and loyalty. However, the authors revealed that previous tourists’ experience overshadows the model’s image dimension, while the importance of the value dimension on tourist’s loyalty increases. Thus, an alternative model has been tested which empirically supported the existence of four first-order constructs, namely (1) awareness, (2) experience, (3) value and (4) loyalty.

The elaboration of the theoretical CBBE concept in the tourism destination context goes in parallel with the development of measurement instruments. The delays in this process and the limited number of studies on this topic so far is primarily explained by the peculiarities of tourism destinations compared to goods and other services (e.g. their enormous complexity and multi-attributiveness). Therefore, there is consensus among tourism researchers that the methodology of CBBE measurement elaborated within the field of marketing of goods and services should not be directly transferred to the destination context but rather has to be appropriately adjusted (Boo et al., 2009; Konechnik and Gartner, 2007; Pike, 2009). In destination image studies the specificity of tourism destinations is traditionally addressed by employing the framework proposed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993). Their measurement approach considers the use of a comprehensive set of components including attribute-based, holistic, functional, psychological, unique and common characteristics of destination image. This approach was promoted by Gallarza et al. (2002), who further developed the conceptual framework of destination image particularly focusing on attribute-based image metrics. The authors identified 20 most common attributes used in tourism destination image studies and organized these attributes along a functional (i.e. tangible) / psychological (i.e. intangible) axis. The most frequently found attributes were “residents’ receptiveness”, “landscape and/or surroundings”, “cultural attractions”, “sport facilities” and “price, value, cost” (ibid., 2002: 63). More recently Echtner and Ritchie’s (1993) framework was enriched by Stepchenkova and Morrison (2008), who applied software-assisted content analysis to examine stereotypical holistic, affective, uniqueness and attribute-based images of Russia, respectively.

So far Boo et al.’s (2009) study is the only one, which empirically examines the causal structure of CBBE for a tourism destination. Nevertheless, tourism literature has accumulated a number of topical studies examining selected causal relationships between various constructs of the CBBE model and hereby defining loyalty (i.e. behavioral intentions) as the endogenous construct (see, for example, Chen and Tsai, 2007; Chi and Qu, 2008). However, there is a lack of homogeneity among studies examining the structural relationships between loyalty and its antecedents, such as image, quality, value and satisfaction. Moreover, they vary in terms of both the selection of constructs, design of theoretical models and the choice of measurement scales.

**METHOD**

The task of integrating empirical results and cumulating knowledge obtained in previous studies is typically solved by employing methods of meta-analysis (Hunter and Schmidt, 1990). Meta-analysis is widely used in marketing studies (see, for example, DelVecchio et al., 2006) and in tourism studies as well (Crouch, 1995). However, meta-analysis procedures in their pure form are hardly applicable for our purposes, since the number of available studies is rather limited, and the studies show a high degree of diversity. At the same time, however, the narrative approach, which is opposed to meta-analysis, is also problematical due to the high complexity of empirically tested structural relationship models and consequently the obtained research findings. Therefore, we propose to conduct a meta-comparison of previously employed measurement instruments. More precisely, inspired by Gallarza et al. (2002) and Lehman et al. (2008), content analysis was carried out with respect to survey-based brand metrics (i.e. 132
measurement items) of the CBBE model and related models examining dependency structures between destination loyalty and its antecedents.

In order to identify studies for inclusion into analysis, we searched electronic databases using keywords related to destination loyalty and behavioral intentions. In addition, manual search of leading journals both in the marketing and tourism fields have been conducted. After examining the collected literature base, the following criteria have been applied prior to inclusion of studies into the analysis: (1) relationships between model dimensions are examined using structural equation modeling (SEM); (2) tourist’s judgment of destination performance is included as antecedent of loyalty; (3) loyalty is the endogenous construct. As a result, in addition to Boo et al.’s (2009) study we have identified a totality of 10 destination brand studies examining causal relationships between destination loyalty and its antecedents, published in Tourism Management (i.e. 7 studies), as well as Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research, Annals of Tourism Research and Managing Service Quality.

To start with, the loyalty construct is directly or indirectly influenced by the following 12 first-order constructs: pull and push motivation, novelty seeking, awareness, image, expectations, quality, experience, equity, value, disconfirmation, positive and negative emotions and satisfaction (Bigne et al., 2001; Boo et al., 2009; Back and Parks, 2003; Yoon and Uysal, 2005; Chen and Tsai, 2007; Jang and Feng, 2007; Lee et al., 2007; Chi and Qu, 2008; del Bosque and Martin, 2008; Faullant et al., 2008; Hutchinson et al., 2009). However, the used labels of the constructs often vary between the compared studies, such as quality (Bigne et al., 2001), trip quality (Chen and Tsai, 2007) or service quality (Hutchinson et al., 2009). In other cases, certain constructs are considered as different first-order constructs: for instance, attribute satisfaction and overall satisfaction (Chi and Qu, 2008), emotional value, functional value and overall value (Lee et al., 2007). Furthermore, the inner structure of the endogenous loyalty construct attracted significant research attention. Some authors consider intentions to return and recommend as distinct constructs (Bigne et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2007; Hutchinson et al., 2009) Back and Parks (2003) or distinguish between cognitive, affective, conative and behavioral loyalty. Finally, Jang and Feng (2007) differentiate between short-, mid-, and long-term intention to revisit. By considering all the sketched peculiarities of previous destination brand research, the total number of unique labels for the considered first-order constructs amounts at 44.

In order to compare the selected eleven models a list comprising 319 measurement items was built based on the analysis of measurement instruments. Every item was coded and assigned the following information:
- authors and year of the study;
- exact label of first-order construct (i.e. 44);
- correspondence to the stage of brand performance identified by Lehman et al. (2008) (i.e. awareness, image and associations, preference and attachment);
- correspondence to the CBBE model dimensions for tourism destination suggested by Boo et al. (2009) (i.e. awareness, experience, value and loyalty)
- correspondence to the 20 destination attributes identified by Gallarza et al. (2002).

Since the labels found in Lehman et al. (2008), Boo et al. (2009) and Gallarza et al. (2002) were not sufficient to code all items from the analyzed tourism studies, additional coding labels were introduced. Particularly, the labels corresponding to Lehman et al.’s (2008) stages of brand performance and Boo et al.’s (2009) brand equity model for tourism destination were complemented with further labels based on the list of first-order dimensions found in selected studies (i.e. push motivation, emotions, satisfaction and alternatives). Besides, the “attribute value” label was additionally introduced to distinguish items measuring the price-based value of destination attributes, for instance, price of accommodation or affordability of restaurants. Finally, these two adjusted lists of labels were semantically combined and the comparison framework in Figure 1 has been established.

The functional / psychological axis used by Gallarza et al. (2002) to group the 20 most common attributes of tourism destination image was modified as follows: 15 out of 20 attributes were preserved, one attribute (i.e. originality) was excluded, 4 attributes’ labels were grouped or insignificantly modified and, finally, 10 new attributes were added. Finally, in order to consider items which are not attribute-based, they were coded as “holistic items”.

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**FINDINGS**

The proposed comparison framework allowed for evaluating the measurement instruments employed by each selected study. Table 1 shows the number of measurement items used by respective authors to measure chosen model dimensions (rows). Furthermore, the table illustrates, whether the construct measurement matches the proposed comparison framework (columns). The suggested procedure reveals the use of constructs, which differ by label, but are similar by measurement items, across the eleven models. The table also highlights possible measurement overlaps. Therefore, analysis of the table allows for making a number of important observations.

Push motivation (Yoon and Uysal, 2005) is a construct which goes beyond the borders of the CBBE model. However, it brings into the model a tourist himself, his needs and desires. Authors employ 21 items, covering various aspects of emotional needs, intentions and desired attributes. Novelty seeking (Jang and Feng, 2007) therefore is a part of the push motivation construct. Boo et al. (2009) is the only study which includes awareness as a model construct. They used three items measuring different aspects of the top-of-mind awareness and one item measuring whether the “destination has a good name [and] reputation” (ibid., 2009: 5). At the same time, Chen and Tsai (2007) include a similar item in the measurement of image. Six out of eleven models include an image construct. The model proposed by Yoon and Uysal (2005) on the contrary does not include this dimension. However, content analysis of items used by them to measure pull motivation indicates, that this construct is very similar to image. The authors define pull motivations as “external, situational, or cognitive aspects” (ibid., 2005: 46) of destination attributes, such as recreational facilities, entertainment, landscapes etc., which influence tourists’ choices. Del Bosque and Martin’s model (2008) includes image and expectations as distinct constructs. The authors operationalized image by using the functional-psychological axis of destination attributes proposed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993) and extended by Gallarza et al. (2002). Furthermore, del Bosque and Martin (2008) measured expectations by asking tourists to recall their thoughts about
main destination attributes and overall experience. The authors claim, that “image is an expectations-generating factor” (ibid. 2008: 558). In this respect we suggest that the distinction between image and expectations requires more precise research attention.

### Table 1
Identification of differences and overlaps between dimensions of destination brand performance models

<table>
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<th>Authors’ constructs</th>
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<th>destination image</th>
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<th>satisfaction</th>
<th>behavioral intention</th>
<th>novelty seeking</th>
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<th>mid-term revisit intention</th>
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Table 1 (continued)

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- potentially synonymic constructs

- possible overlaps in measurement of constructs

According to Boo et al. (2009), quality is one of the key constructs of the CBBE model for tourism destinations. Three other studies also include quality as the model construct, i.e. Bigne et al. (2001), Chen and Tsai (2007) and Hutchinson et al. (2009). However, analysis of items used by Chi and Qu (2008) to measure attribute satisfaction, indicates that this construct is very similar to quality. Another construct, which measurement items are similar to quality, is disconfirmation (del Bosque and Martin, 2008), defined as an outcome of consumer’s comparison of actual performance and prior beliefs. Hutchinson et al. (2009) distinguish between quality and equity. Quality was operationalized with five items measuring various aspects of services provided by customer contact personnel. Equity defined as the tourist’s feeling of being treated fairly, justly and honestly was measured with two items. Quality metrics by Chen and Tsai (2007) and attribute satisfaction by Chi and Qu (2008) include items measuring whether the price of some destination attributes is reasonable (i.e. prices of activities, accommodations, dining, sightseeing and merchandise). Therefore we suggest, that attribute value might be potentially considered as a distinct construct.
Boo et al. (2009) employed a price-based approach to measure value (i.e. prices, affordability etc.). Chen and Tsai (2007) used three items to measure this model dimension, including “money value”, “time value” and “effort value” (ibid., 2007: 117). Lee et al. (2007) and Hutchinson et al. (2009) also included value. However, the use of our proposed comparison framework revealed measurement overlaps between quality, value, emotions, satisfaction and even loyalty. Particularly, Hutchinson et al. (2009) used 3 items to measure value. But in accordance with our coding procedure, only one item was identified as univocally belonging to value (“paid a reasonable price”, ibid., 2009: 304). Lee et al.’s (2007) model included different aspects of value as three distinct model constructs, i.e. functional value, emotional value and overall value. Though, in accordance with the comparison framework, only four out of six items employed to measure functional value should belong to value. Other two items measure the quality of tourism products and quality of received service and therefore overlap with the quality construct not included into the model. The use of the comparison framework did not allow to associate Lee et al.’s (2007) overall value and emotional value items with value construct.

Three out of four items used by Lee et al. (2007) to measure emotional value (i.e. enjoyment with the destination, being pleased and feeling better) were labeled as “emotions”. Therefore we suggest that emotional value and positive emotions (del Bosque and Martin, 2008) are similar constructs. However, in their study del Bosque and Martin (2008) used the enjoyment of stay item to measure satisfaction. Moreover, a similar item appears in satisfaction measurement in Faullant et al. (2008), while Boo et al. (2009) use it to measure loyalty. Hutchinson et al. (2009) also include items measuring delight and pleasure when having operationalized satisfaction. Lee et al.’s (2007) emotional value item “After I visited [destination xy], my image of the [destination xy] was improved” (ibid., 2007: 209) was coded as an item belonging to the satisfaction level in our proposed comparison framework.

All studies except Boo et al.’s (2009) include satisfaction as the direct antecedent of loyalty. The disconfirmation construct (del Bosque and Martin, 2008), which in our opinion is similar to quality, also includes one item, which we consider semantically close to satisfaction, i.e. “differences between perception and beliefs” regarding “overall experience” (ibid., 2008: 560). Jang and Feng (2007) include one value for money item and Yoon and Uysal (2005) include a time and effort value item for the measurement of satisfaction. In the process of coding overall value (Lee et al., 2007) items were labeled as similar to satisfaction (i.e. four items: “I obtained good results from visiting the [destination]”, “Overall, visiting the [destination xy] was valuable and worth it”, “The value of visiting the [destination xy] was more than what I expected” and “The choice of visiting the [destination xy] was a right decision”, ibid., 2007: 209) and loyalty (i.e. one item: “The [destination xy] is a place where I want to travel", ibid., 2007: 209). However, a more precise analysis raises the issue, whether overall value is in fact a distinct construct, which, however, deserves additional research attention, or it should be considered as a component of satisfaction or value constructs. For instance, Hutchinson et al. (2009) included “a superior net value” (ibid., 2009: 304) into the measurement of value.

Hutchinson et al. (2009) include a search alternatives construct and measured it with two items, i.e. “Continuously look for alternatives to […] destination” and “Effort looking for alternative […] destination (ibid., 2009: 304). The cognitive brand loyalty construct used by Back and Parks (2003) is measured by three items evaluating the brand performance in comparison with other brands in the similar category. Thus, we suggest that these two constructs may be grouped into one category, i.e. alternatives.

Table 2 and Table 3 reveal the importance of attribute-based items in measuring tourism destination brand performance and demonstrate different approaches towards their utilization across the set of selected studies. Only 90 out of 319 items in the dataset belong to the group of holistic items. For instance, the 118 items labeled as image metrics include 4 holistic items measuring overall image of the destination (Bigne et al., 2001; del Bosque and Martin, 2008; Boo et al., 2009) and the remaining 114 image items belong to 25 out of 28 destination attributes. Further analysis revealed that attribute-based items are important for measuring constructs such as push motivation (i.e. 30 items labeled as “push motivation” are associated with 10 destination attributes), quality (i.e. 2 holistic items and 58 items associated with 21 destination attributes) and attribute value (i.e. 8 items, 5 destination attributes). Value is measured by 12 items representing value for money and 3 items representing time and effort value. Finally, items labeled as satisfaction or loyalty only belong to the group of holistic items.
Table 2
Use of attribute-based and holistic items in measurement of destination brand performance

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(1) - Bigne et al, 2001; (2) - Back and Parks, 2003; (3) - Yoon and Uysal, 2005; (4) - Chen and Tsai, 2007; (5) - Jang and Feng, 2007; (6) - Lee et al., 2007; (7) - Chi and Qu, 2008; (8) - del Bosque and Martin, 2008; (9) - Faullant et al., 2008; (10) - Boo et al, 2009; (11) - Hutchinson et al., 2009.
Table 3 illustrates, that selected studies vary not only by number of items and choice of model
dimensions, but also by the ratio between attribute and holistic items used to measure different
constructs. The table also demonstrates that the functional-emotional axis of destination attributes based
on Echtner and Ritchie (1993) and Gallarza et al. (2002) is applicable not only to the image construct, but
to push motivation and quality constructs as well. Finally, table 3 allows comparison between the number
of destination attributes chosen by different authors and the number of associated items (in parenthesis).

Table 3
Importance of attribute-based items for measurement of destination brand performance

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(1) - Bigne et al., 2001; (2) - Back and Parks, 2003; (3) - Yoon and Uysal, 2005; (4) - Chen and Tsai, 2007; (5) - Jang and Feng, 2007; (6) - Lee et al., 2007; (7) - Chi and Qu, 2008; (8) - del Bosque and Martin, 2008; (9) - Faullant et al., 2008; (10) - Boo et al., 2009; (11) - Hutchinson et al., 2009.

Comparison of destination brand performance constructs based on the conducted content
analysis of brand metrics allowed for identifying similar constructs, which could be grouped together,
and reveal unique constructs, which should be preserved as distinct model dimensions. This allowed for
the final step of the analysis, i.e. the comparison and the summary of empirically supported relationships
between model constructs. The summary of the causal relationships found across the set of studies is
shown in Figure 2. Pull motivation (Yoon and Uysal, 2005) is included into the image construct, while
attribute satisfaction (Chi and Qu, 2008) and disconfirmation (del Bosque and Martin, 2008) are viewed
as part of quality. Emotional value (Lee et al., 2007) is combined with the emotions construct and
functional value is grouped with value construct. Hutchinson et al. (2009) did not find empirical support
for relationships between the search alternatives construct and three hypothesized antecedents (i.e.,
quality, value and satisfaction). Therefore, this construct was excluded, while a similar cognitive brand
loyalty construct (Back and Parks, 2003) is viewed as part of the general loyalty construct, which
aggregates all sub-constructs of loyalty identified across previous studies.

Figure 2 also reflects the structure of Boo et al.'s (2009) CBBE model. However, satisfaction
was included into the main model structure since ten studies empirically supported the hypothesis, that
satisfaction is the direct antecedent of loyalty. Other important antecedents – consequent relationships
found across the eleven analyzed studies are as follows: image – quality (Bigne et al., 2001; Chen and
Tsai, 2007; Chi and Qu, 2008); image – satisfaction (Bigne et al., 2001; Yoon and Uysal, 2005; Chi and
Qu, 2008; Faullant et al., 2008); image – loyalty (Bigne et al., 2001; Chen and Tsai, 2007; del Bosque and
Martin, 2008; Faullant et al., 2008); quality – value (Chen and Tsai, 2007); quality – satisfaction and
quality – loyalty (Bigne et al., 2001; Chi and Qu, 2008); value – satisfactions (Chen and Tsai, 2007; Lee
et al., 2007; Hutchinson et al., 2009); value – loyalty (Boo et al., 2009; Hutchinson et al., 2009); emotions
– satisfaction (Lee et al., 2007; del Bosque and Martin, 2008) and push motivation – loyalty (Yoon and
Uysal, 2005; Jang and Feng, 2007).
CONCLUSIONS

To summarize, for future purposes to empirically validate the CBBE model in tourism, the performed assessment of survey-based brand metrics offers a valuable framework for both, the selection of relevant model constructs, the operationalization of parsimonious model dimensions as well as the formulation of appropriate measurement items. However, the proposed approach has its own limitations. First of all, the meta-comparison grounds on the assumption of similarity between Boo et al.’s (2009) CBBE model and the selected set of destination brand performance models examining relationships between destination loyalty and its antecedents. Therefore, the question whether brand equity and brand performance are synonymic or highly overlapping concepts deserves further theoretical discussion. Besides, the similarity of constructs and identified measurement overlaps requires further theoretical and empirical examination to overcome the limitations and insufficient preciseness of manually conducted content analysis. Finally, this approach, which is similar to those employed by Gallarza et al. (2002) and Lehman et al. (2008), may also be viewed as a pilot study aimed at creating a framework for comparison of research findings in the field, which can be further utilized as a first step of a full-scale meta-analysis.

REFERENCES


**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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POTENTIAL NICHES IN THE CHINESE OUTBOUND LEISURE MARKET: EVIDENCE FROM FACTOR ANALYSIS

Ivy Chow
La Trobe University
Australia

ABSTRACT

Chinese outbound tourists have emerged as a major target market for many international destinations. Identification of Chinese tourists’ specific activity preferences in overseas destinations and the segmentation of this market into specific niches can help destinations to target particular Chinese tourists. This study examined the general travel activity preferences for overseas destinations of 397 Chinese tour group tourists from Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong Province in China. The original 55 preferential variables were successfully reduced into 7 niche leisure markets by Factor Analysis without losing too much information. 66% of the variance was explained by the 7 factors; and the reliability coefficient indicates a consistent reliability across the entire factor structure (0.93). The seven niche leisure markets so identified are Shopping (36%), Entertainment (10%), Nature Travel (5%), Culture and Heritage (5%), Rural Travel (4%), Coastal Travel (3%) and Participatory Travel (3%).

Shopping was the dominant segment and deserves special attention. At the other end of the spectrum, special interests in Participatory Travel could be a useful niche for some destinations with specific resources. Market strategies for attracting specific Chinese niche leisure markets are recommended for destinations and the tourism industry, based on this study.

Keywords: niche leisure market, Chinese outbound tourist, segmentation, destination marketing

INTRODUCTION

China is recognized as one of the fastest growing outbound travel markets in the world, with nearly 41 million Chinese travelling overseas in 2007. China is currently the largest outbound tourist source nation in Asia, overtaking Japan, the previous leader in the Asia-Pacific region (Verikios, 2008a). During the recent global financial crisis, Chinese consumers were amongst the top ten most confident in the world (Nielsen China, 2009). This could be due to their near US$3 trillion in household bank savings and the RMB$4 trillion (US$0.6 trillion, converted at RMB$6.8=US$1) domestic stimulus package by the Chinese Government, one of the largest rescue packages globally, which was about 13% of China’s GDP (Barriaux, 2009; Nielsen China, 2009). According to a Nielsen China survey (2009), about 16% of their Chinese respondents plan to pursue international travel over the next 12 months and about 30% of the sample pointed out that the current economic crisis had not affected their international travel plans, while a further 25% indicated they may adjust down the budget on their international travels. It is believed that the recent appreciation of the Chinese currency against the US dollar would not only boost Chinese outbound travel, but would also provide them stronger purchasing power in overseas destinations (Verikios, 2008a). Chinese outbound tourists could become therefore one of the markets to lead the recovery of international travel.

Due to the rapid growth of Chinese outbound tourism, many destinations consider it an important international market for their tourism development. As noted by Tourism Australia (cited in Travel Daily News, 2006, p. 1), “China is one of the world’s strongest performing markets. China’s forecast growth, in both outbound travel and expenditure, make this market critical now and in the

1 For the specific purposes of the research, “overseas destinations” refer to places outside Mainland China, hence, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan are considered overseas destinations in this study. In the Chinese language, these three places are considered “beyond the border of Mainland China,” and the closest term in English to convey this meaning is “overseas.” So the word in this context should not be interpreted in a literal manner.
future”. China is portrayed as a major and growing player in global international tourism, with many nations eager to establish their business in this trade through ‘Approved Destination Status (ADS)’ agreements. By mid 2008, there were a total of 134 overseas countries/regions open to the Chinese outbound leisure market through the ADS system (Verikios, 2008a). In addition, Chinese group leisure travel to the United States also commenced in 2008 under a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed by both countries (Verikios, 2008b).

Under the ADS agreements all international leisure travel to the selected countries/regions is to be conducted via organized tour groups, with the exception of Hong Kong and Macau, where an ‘Individual Visit Scheme’ (IVS) was introduced in 2003, which allows Chinese residents to visit these two places as individuals in addition to joining tour groups (Hong Kong Tourism Board, 2004). According to Tse (2007) there were more than 13 million Chinese visitors had travelled to Hong Kong as individual visitors by April 2006. It is anticipated that a similar IVS policy will be implemented to some select overseas destinations in the future. The international tourism industry expects China to be a major new business opportunity for them (Koumelis, 2007). Although tour groups are the major form of international leisure travel by the Chinese (Du & Zhang, 2003), in order to meet the tourists’ variety of interests, different tour groups offer various itineraries for overseas travel and a range of optional activities in various international destinations. Chinese tourists have the freedom to choose the tours they like to join. Moreover, they are free to undertake any optional activities offered at the overseas destinations. Within the constraints of experiencing the same environment, sampling the same food, and participating in similar activities, research (Chow & Murphy, 2008; Douglas & Douglas, 1999) has shown there is a significant number of variations in the behaviours and preferences of tour group tourists and cruise passengers. As reported in The Economist’s (2007, p. 92) review of Carl Crow’s biography, this pioneer of marketing in China noted: “it is foolish to treat the vast country (of China) with its differences in income, climate and tastes as a single, giant market”. Due to different economic development policies in some coastal cities and inland rural areas, the preferences and lifestyles of Chinese in various regions are different (Pui, 1996).

According to Du and Zhang (2003, p. 69), “the preference of Chinese tourists is shifting towards individual travel rather than joining organized tour groups, especially for frequent overseas travellers and for short-haul travel”. Due to this increasing demand for overseas FIT travel, it is believed that China will open international FIT leisure travel in the future. If so, more Chinese tourists are likely to travel to overseas destinations as individual leisure travellers, without the constraints of joining tour groups as they gain more experience and confidence. These Chinese tour group tourists with international travel experience will be the pioneer FITs of the future. Thus, it is important to study the emerging preferences of Chinese tour group tourists, in order to prepare for the future opening of FIT travel by the Chinese Government. It is suggested that in a large and populated country like China, evolving niche markets require special attention (Verikios, 2007). Hence, the purpose of this study is to segment Chinese tour group tourists into potential niche leisure markets, according to their general activity preferences in overseas destinations. Market strategies are suggested to attract such niches for present day tour groups and future FIT travellers.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE OUTBOUND MARKET

Being the most populous nation in the world, China has attracted the interest and attention of world marketers, not only due to its large population, but also due to the fact that it is the fastest growing economy in the world (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2001; King & McVey, 2003). The number of Chinese outbound visitors increased dramatically over the past decade. However, the nearly 41 million Chinese outbound visitors in 2007 represented only about 3.1% of China’s total population (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2009). This indicates there is huge potential for the continued development of the Chinese outbound market. China’s strong gross domestic product (GDP) growth is also a factor arousing the interest of international destinations. According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2009), the GDP of China was near RMBS25 trillion (US$3.7 trillion) in 2007, a 17.7% growth from 2006.
According to the forecast of the World Tourism Organization (1998), China will be the fourth largest outbound market in the world by 2020, after Germany, Japan and the United States. There will be approximately 100 million Chinese travelling worldwide, which will account for 6.2% of the world’s outbound market share. In view of China’s huge population and its rapid economic growth, it is not difficult to imagine that China could overtake the three top countries and become the world’s top outbound market one day. International destinations and travel suppliers are continuing to tap into this new and growing Chinese outbound market. According to reports in The Economist (2006) and the Travel Daily News (Roku, 2009), across the world, tourism suppliers such as hotels and shops are adjusting to attract Chinese tourists. For example, Accor, a French hotel group, has adapted some of their hotels in Europe for Chinese tourists by offering Chinese food, Chinese TV channels and Mandarin-speaking staff. A leading hotel booking site Hotels.com has launched a Chinese language site in China, offering local currency pricing and payment methods, supported by Chinese-speaking call centre specialists. Destinations and retail shops around the world are also taking steps to gain a larger share of the Chinese outbound market, for instance some department stores in UK, France and Germany employ Mandarin-speaking staff to assist their Chinese clients (Heyer, 2006).

A few segmentation studies of Chinese tourists have been found. Tourism Australia (2005) interviewed 1,016 Chinese residents from the cities of Guangzhou, Shanghai and Beijing, who were interested in visiting Australia. Five segments: ‘Self Challengers’, ‘Sightseers’, ‘Family Connections’, ‘Close to home’ and ‘Ready to Leave’ were identified. Choi, Lehto and Morrison (2008) interviewed 685 first-time Chinese visitors travelling to Macau for sightseeing or gambling in 2005. Four segments were identified according to the information acquisition patterns of the Chinese. They were ‘Minimal Information Seekers’, ‘Active Seekers’, ‘Package Travelers’ and ‘Independent Travelers’. These studies concentrated on particular countries/destinations rather than the Chinese tourists’ preferences for overseas destinations in general. In an attempt to fill the gap, this study examines the general travel activity preferences of the long-haul Chinese outbound leisure market, using a sample of travellers to Australia; and segments the Chinese tourists into potential niches according to their specific travel activity preferences. Identification of potential niches of Chinese tourists can help international destinations to target particular niches according to destinations’ strength and resources.

**METHODOLOGY**

In order to gain insight into the general travel activity preferences of Chinese long-haul leisure tourists for overseas destinations, Chinese tour group tourists who were 18 years old or above and who had joined an organized tour to Australia were targeted for this study. Building on the literature and tourism experts’ opinions (Chow, 2007), this study used a self-administered questionnaire where a 10-point scale ranging from ‘1’ (Strongly Disagree) to ‘10’ (Strongly Agree) was applied to assess the tourists’ level of agreement with fifty-five statements regarding their general travel preferences for overseas destinations.

A convenience sampling method was applied. The data was collected between October 2005 and February 2006 after a pilot test was conducted with a group of 20 Chinese tour group tourists travelling from Guangzhou city to Australia in September 2005. Questionnaires were distributed and collected on flights to Australia by tour escorts from 13 principal China-Australia travel agencies in China. Respondents were given a small koala key chain as a thank you gift for completing the questionnaires. A total of 397 usable questionnaires were collected. This sample can be considered a good representation of outbound Chinese tourists to Australia, as a comparison of their major demographic profiles with two past surveys showed strong similarities (Du & Zhang, 2003; Tourism Australia, 2006).

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used as the instrument for data analysis in this study. Principal Factor Analysis and Varimax rotation methods were applied to factor analyse the travel activity preferences of the Chinese tourists in this study. Eigenvalues and Scree Test were applied as the criteria to decide the appropriate number of factors to be retained (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The Factor Analysis successfully reduced and segmented the 55 preferential variables into 7 niche leisure markets, which explained 66% of the variance and the reliability coefficient indicated a high level of consistent reliability across the entire factor structure (0.93). This is considered to be a
good factor analysis result (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). There were a total of forty-one travel preferential variables remaining for the final factor analysis after deleting variables with weak factor loading (<0.30). In the elimination process, the sample size of the final run of factor analysis was 351, excluding multivariate outliers, which met the recommendations of a minimum sample size of 300 and a minimum five-times ratio of the number of variables (Hair, et al., 1998; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

RESULTS

The general travel activity preferences of Chinese tourists are segmented into the seven niche leisure markets of ‘Shopping’, ‘Entertainment’, ‘Nature Travel’, ‘Culture and Heritage’, ‘Rural Travel’, ‘Coastal Travel’ and ‘Participatory Travel’ according to factor analysis results (Table 1).

The first and dominant niche ‘Shopping’ accounted for 36% of the total variance. The sampled Chinese like to buy jewellery, clothes, brand name products and personal care products. The second segment ‘Entertainment’ explained about 10% of the total variance. This is a group of Chinese who like to watch shows with local features (e.g. Kathoey and table top dancing), going to horseracing and casinos. Moreover, they like to experience local nightlife and attend live theatre/musical performances.

The third niche market is ‘Nature Travel’. These Chinese tend to visit places with open spaces such as national or state parks. They also like to take harbour cruises and visit beaches. This segment explained more than 5% of the total variance. ‘Culture and Heritage’ is the fourth niche, which explained about 5% of the total variance. This niche appreciates the indigenous culture and is keen on visiting famous museums and churches/temples.

The fifth and sixth leisure niches are ‘Rural Travel’ and ‘Coastal Travel’, which accounted for about 4% and 3% of the total variance respectively. The ‘Rural Travel’ segment is fond of visiting farms and wineries while the ‘Coastal Travel’ niche like fishing and beach combing. The last segment is the ‘Participatory Travel’ niche. This niche explained about 3% of the total variance. These Chinese like to participate in activities that are seldom available in China, such as local water activities which are available in overseas destinations. They also enjoy driving around destinations by themselves.

DISCUSSION AND MARKET IMPLICATIONS

These seven niche Chinese leisure markets offer in-depth information to destinations regarding the specific travel activity preferences of various Chinese tourist segments. In this section, the market implications are discussed and suggestions for international destinations are provided to assist them to target particular niches.

The largest segment ‘Shopping’ confirms previous reports that show Chinese love to shop when travelling overseas (Cai, Lehto, & O’Leary, 2001; Jang, Yu, & Pearson, 2003). There is also a report that about 50% of Chinese international travellers purchase luxury brands when they travel overseas (Koumelis, 2008). It is widely accepted that ‘shopping’ is considered to be the most popular activity for Chinese tourists, as research has found that shopping is their top spending area in overseas destinations, ranging from 39% to 65% of their total expenditure (Du & Dai, 2005; Hong Kong Tourism Board, 2006). In fact, many Chinese visitors travel to Hong Kong mainly to shop (Huang & Hsu, 2005). The Chinese culture of ‘gift giving’ is believed to be a major contributor to this phenomenon. For them, “gifts express friendship and can symbolize hope for a good future relationship” (Yau, Chan, & Lau, 1999, p. 98). Therefore, Chinese tourists usually purchase gifts for their families, relatives and friends at home when travelling abroad (Du & Zhang, 2003).
Table 1
NICHE LEISURE MARKET OF CHINESE OUTBOUND TOURISTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Travel Preferences for Overseas Destinations</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
<th>Eigenvalue</th>
<th>% of Variance</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
<th>Reliability Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Niche 1: Shopping</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.70</td>
<td>35.84</td>
<td>35.84</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy jewellery</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy clothes</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy brand name products</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy personal care products</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy health food products</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go shopping</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy electronic products</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy local snack products</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niche 2: Entertainment</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>9.80</td>
<td>45.64</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch shows with local features</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to horserace</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to casinos</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience local nightlife</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend live theatre/musical performances</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in activities for relaxation</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in activities organized for the local festivals</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit theme parks</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niche 3: Nature Travel</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>51.02</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit places with open space</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit national/state parks</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take harbour cruises</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit wildlife parks</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit beaches</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like bushwalking</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit places that are lack of pollution</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niche 4: Culture and Heritage</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>55.86</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit famous museums</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like indigenous cultures</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit famous churches/temples</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit places related to history of local Chinese</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit famous heritage sites</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in activities with animals</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niche 5: Rural Travel</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>59.65</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit farms</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit flower farms</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit wineries</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience the local countryside lifestyle</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niche 6: Coastal Travel</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>63.00</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like fishing</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go beach-combing</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pick fruit in farms</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in physically challenging activities</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niche 7: Participatory Travel</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>65.99</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in activities that are seldom available in China</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in the local water activities</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drive around at the foreign destinations by myself</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit night markets</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Variance Explained</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>65.99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Scale Reliability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This group of Chinese represents a high yield market which has strong purchasing power and likes to shop. Special attention and consideration should be given to this leading niche market. In order to attract this Chinese niche, quality products and services should be tailor-made to their specific preferences, such as products seldom available but well-known in China, promotional materials in the Chinese language, Mandarin speaking staff and the availability of Chinese food. Marketing efforts should also put to increase Chinese residents’ awareness of the brands and enhance the images of the products and the destinations.

The second niche ‘Entertainment’ is a group of Chinese seeking local entertainment and gambling opportunities. They like to experience a variety of entertainment associated with the destination’s lifestyle. Destinations can package various local activities and entertainment, which allow Chinese tourists to experience the destination’s specific lifestyle and culture. This group of Chinese also seeks gambling experiences. This coincides with research that finds that Chinese like gambling (Schuman, 2005). Although gambling is illegal in China, gambling has been legalised and casinos are abundant in Macau, a special administrative region of China. Approximately 17.5 million Chinese visited Macau in 2008 (Koumelis, 2009). It is suggested that a large proportion of these were more or less involved in some sort of gambling. Therefore, providing an opportunity for Chinese to gamble, for instance horseracing, lottery or casinos could assist in attracting this group of Chinese.

The ‘Nature Travel’ niche confirms previous Australian studies showing that Chinese like nature and visiting national parks (Tourism Australia, 2005, 2008). This preference could be influenced by the crowded metropolitan living conditions and pollution in China. It is believed that the lifestyles of Chinese are changing rapidly. They are experiencing increasing pressures from longer working hours due to strong competition in modern cities such as Shanghai and Guangzhou. Hence, they feel a need to escape and relax from their routines. When they travel overseas, they look for different environments, especially places with open spaces and beautiful nature.

There is also a Chinese niche which seeks ‘Culture and Heritage’ while travelling overseas. Previous analysis of the same respondents of this study (Chow, 2007) shows that those Chinese with more overseas travel experience undertook more cultural and heritage activities in their Australian trips. Destinations which plan to target this ‘Culture and Heritage’ niche should promote their products and services to experienced Chinese international travellers. In order to attract the attention and raise the interest of these veteran Chinese travellers, the design and packaging of cultural and heritage products should be creative and emphasise the uniqueness of the particular destination.

The ‘Rural Travel’ segment likes visiting farms and wineries. This niche group would be perfect for rural destinations and wine regions. Farm-stays which offer the opportunity to experience the countryside and rural lifestyle, visiting beautiful wineries with gourmet food and local products, wine tasting and the opportunity to enhance wine knowledge would be attractive for this group of Chinese tourist. The ‘Coastal Travel’ niche is a potential market for coastal destinations that can provide an ideal place and opportunity for this group of Chinese to participate in coastal activities such as fishing and beach-combing.

‘Participatory Travel’ is the last niche. This experience-seeking segment may be small but has the potential to grow as the Chinese international tourists become more experienced and start travelling overseas as FIT tourists. Although international FIT leisure travel is not yet officially allowed by the Chinese Government, there is a growing affluent and high-yielding Chinese market who is wealthy and frequent international travellers. They travel in their own cars, play golf and have maids who take care of their family and do the housework (Chow, 2007). Tourism Australia (2009), in partnership with China Southern Airlines, put forward the first ‘Aussie Self Drive Holiday Package’ in China in 2009, which targets Chinese FIT travel. There is a niche Chinese market which is looking for comfort, quality and style both at home and when travelling abroad (Verikios, 2007). This ‘Participatory Travel’ niche could be a high-yield market for international destinations. Accurately anticipating the specific needs and demands of these affluent Chinese travellers is the key to attracting this niche market.

It is suggested that destinations which are targeting and developing one individual niche in the Chinese leisure market alone should be cautious, as each niche is relatively small in size, with the
exception of the ‘Shopping’ segment which explains about 36% of the total variance. However, it does not mean that these Chinese travel overseas only for shopping. Therefore, implementing strategies to target 2 or 3 niche Chinese leisure markets with a specific focus on one particular segment according to the particular strength of the destination is recommended. This not only enlarges the market size but also the market share by enabling destinations to focus on their target niches. For instance, rural destinations can target the ‘Rural Travel’ niche Chinese leisure market and package activities such as shopping for local products, participating in local festivals and experiencing local feature activities and entertainment shows – the common preferences of shopping and experiencing local lifestyles of various Chinese niches. By doing so, rural destinations could attract Chinese niches of ‘Rural Travel’, ‘Shopping’ and ‘Entertainment’.

CONCLUSION

Evolving Chinese leisure markets have peaked the interest of international destinations and tourism suppliers. Since many international destinations have acquired ADS agreements with the Chinese Government, it is time for these destinations to differentiate themselves in an increasingly competitive market and to look forward and prepare for the future opening of IVS markets among Chinese international leisure travellers. To gain a larger market share of this growing and global player of international travel, destinations should better prepare and focus on their ‘ideal’ target Chinese niches.

This study identified potential niches in the Chinese outbound leisure market according to their general travel activity preferences in overseas destinations. Market strategies for targeting these seven individual niches have been recommended for prospective destinations. It is believed that such segmentation of Chinese tour group tourists will not only help international destinations to better target their tour markets, but will also help them to attract potential FIT travel from China.

However some limitations should be noted. First, the respondents of this study were tour group tourists and the constraints of tour group travel should be noted. Second, this study only explored the general travel activity preferences of Chinese tourists from 3 areas of Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong province travelling to Australia. With the growing liberalisation of China’s international tourism policy, the preferences of Chinese tourists from other parts of China should be investigated further in future studies. Third, the lifestyles and preferences of Chinese tourists have continued to change since this study was conducted.

Chinese outbound tourists are an important market. Chinese tourists are different. Destinations and tourism experts should provide specific products and services to meet the particular needs of individual Chinese niches. As a result, customer satisfaction will increase and more business will be generated for international destinations.

REFERENCES


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MEMBER STATE PERSPECTIVES ON THE ASEAN REGION BRAND

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to investigate member states’ perceptions of the importance of the ASEAN region brand, not only in terms of tourism destination branding but also with regard to additional goals of place branding such as export promotion and the attraction of inward investment. The region brand effect remains relatively under-researched compared to the brand effect of other geographic entities such as nations and cities. Furthermore, the ASEAN region in particular is under-researched compared to other region brands such as the European Union. This paper aims to reduce these gaps in the literature. A qualitative methodological approach was judged appropriate for an exploratory study of this type. A series of in-depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted with key informants from five ASEAN member states. Respondents were drawn from a range of organizations involved in branding their respective nations, namely, Embassies, National Tourism Organizations, Export Promotion Organizations, and Investment Agencies. The study’s findings indicate that the salience of the ASEAN region brand appears to be low for tourism promotion but higher for trade and investment. An implication of such a finding is that policymakers should reflect on the desirability of this, given that the current situation appears to indicate that the ASEAN region brand may be under-recognised as a tourism destination brand. Limitations of the study include the small sample size, which limits the generalizability of the findings, and the restricted geographic scope of the study. Potential directions for future research are proposed.

Keywords: destination branding, region brand, ASEAN

INTRODUCTION

In comparison with longer established and higher profile regional groupings such as the European Union (EU) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is in the early stages of its establishing its region brand. The objective of this study is to assess member states’ perceptions of the importance of the ASEAN region brand, not only in terms of tourism destination branding but also with regard to additional goals of place branding such as export promotion and the attraction of inward investment. The ASEAN region brand is relatively under-researched (Cayla & Eckhardt, 2007) and this study aims to reduce that gap in the literature.

ASEAN consists of ten southeast Asian nations: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. A core objective of the organization is to establish ASEAN as a single market and production base, to be realized through a process of accelerated regional integration of priority sectors such as agro-based products, textiles and apparels, and tourism, amongst others. With a combined population of 560 million, the ASEAN region
has the potential to establish itself as a powerful region brand capable of attracting investment, promoting its exports, and increasing its tourism arrivals.

Our study investigates member states’ perspectives on the ASEAN region brand in terms of its relevance to the key investment, tourism, and export goals of place branding. The paper is structured as follows. First, we discuss the key concepts in the place branding literature and note that region branding is relatively under-researched compared to nation or city branding. Then we describe and justify the methodology used in the study, which is qualitative in nature as is appropriate for an exploratory study. Next, we present our findings and go on to discuss these and draw conclusions from the primary research phase. Finally, we acknowledge the study’s limitations and also indicate possible areas for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Place branding is now widespread (Hankinson, 2004) and may be conceptualized and practiced at nation, city or region level (Anholt, 2007; Moilanen & Rainisto, 2008; Morgan et al., 2004). Specific challenges arise when attempting to brand places rather than products, services or companies (Skinner, 2005). These challenges include the difficulty of achieving coordination between different stakeholders (Pike, 2004; Florek, 2005), designing an appropriate brand architecture (Olin, 1989; Douglas et al., 2001; Dooley & Bowie, 2005), and evaluating the extent to which commercial branding techniques can be applied to entities as complex and multidimensional as places (Hankinson, 2007). The reputation of places can impact upon important economic issues including the success of a place’s exports and also its ability to attract inward investment (Suh & Khan, 2003; Tesfom et al., 2004; Arregle et al., 2009).

However, the majority of research has focused on the importance of place branding in terms of tourism promotion, and the term ‘destination branding’ is used increasingly frequently when referring to the branding of places in order to attract tourism (Marzano & Scott, 2009; Bell, 2008; Peirce & Ritchie, 2007; Murphy et al., 2007; Pike, 2007; Henderson, 2007; Gertner et al., 2006). A balanced perspective on place branding requires recognition of its scope in terms of the objectives which it aspires to achieve, as well as its scale in terms of the geographic level at which the branding efforts are being made. The scope of place branding encompasses tourism promotion, export promotion, investment attraction, and more nebulously the desire to increase a place’s domestic and international influence (Dinnie, 2008). Such influence may, for example, be exercised in bidding to host high profile sporting, political, or cultural events from which many direct economic benefits may be derived (Berkowitz et al., 2007; Black & Westhuizen, 2004). Whereas the goal of tourism promotion has been extensively reported within the literature, considerably fewer studies have focused on the other potential objectives of place branding, in particular the related goals of export promotion and inward investment. Florek & Conejo (2006) have highlighted the role of export promotion within place branding, whilst Roth & Romeo (1992) in an earlier study identified the importance of aligning product category with country image perceptions. In terms of attracting inward investment, if a place is not clearly branded to its relevant audiences then it may struggle to attract economic and political attention (Van Ham, 2001). The interrelatedness of investment attraction and export promotion represents a key challenge for governments (Wilkinson & Brouthers, 2000), a challenge taken up by the French government through its campaign ‘The New France’, which attempted to brand France as an attractive destination in which to do business rather than just as a holiday destination (Favre, 2008).

Within the place branding literature the branding of regions has been relatively under-researched compared to the branding of nations and cities. This is a notable deficiency within the literature, given that foreign direct investment and export decisions are now frequently made at a regional rather than a national level (Aguilera et al., 2007; Buckley & Ghauri, 2004; Rugman & Verbeke, 2004). For countries that suffer from negative image perceptions, highlighting the region within which they belong rather than their individual nation may constitute an effective strategy to boost exports (Smith, 1993). Conversely, it has been argued that a supranational regional labeling scheme would add no value to already respected national marks and any such regional labeling should therefore be optional rather than compulsory (Pieterse & Kuschel, 2007). In order to investigate decision-makers’ perspectives on the relevance of region branding within ASEAN, we interviewed key informants from five ASEAN nations. The next section describes the methodology used in the investigation.
METHODOLOGY

This paper adopts a supply-side perspective and examines perceptions of the ASEAN region brand from the perspective of official representatives of member states belonging to organizations such as Embassies, National Tourism Organizations (NTOs), Export Promotion Organizations (EPOs), and Investment Agencies (IAs). The Tokyo-based informants were heads of their respective organizations and participated in the branding-related decision-making in their countries. The Kuala Lumpur-based informants occupied trade promotion posts within their Embassies and also participated in their countries’ branding-related decision-making. Our approach is in line with the contention of Konecnik and Go (2008: 177) that ‘investigations of tourism destination branding have primarily been conducted form a perceived-image perspective… the dearth of studies offering an insight into the supply-side perspective may lead to an unbalanced view, misunderstandings and oversights concerning the possibilities and limitations of tourism destination branding’. Primary data collection for the study comprised a series of ten semi-structured face-to-face interviews with key informants from five ASEAN nations. As the key informants must remain anonymous, the countries are represented by letters rather than their names. Respondents’ profiles can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1
Respondents’ Profiles

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>Export Promotion Organization</td>
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<td>National Tourism Organization</td>
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<td>National Tourism Organization</td>
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A qualitative, exploratory approach was adopted and operationalised through the use of open-ended questions, as such questions ‘have the virtue of allowing the subjects to tell the interviewer what’s relevant and what’s important rather than being restricted by the researchers’ preconceived notions about what is important’ (Berry, 2002; 681). The interviews were conducted in English. An interview guide detailed the questions to be asked, although respondents were free to move from one topic to another regardless of the sequence of questions in the interview guide. In this way it was possible to establish ‘a conversation-like dialogue rather than asking questions that impose categorical frameworks on informants’ understanding and experiences (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994: 492). Questions in the interview guide include the following: ‘Over the past 5-10 years, has the image of the ASEAN region improved, deteriorated, or stayed the same?’; ‘What is the impact of the ASEAN region brand effect in your country’s image? Positive, negative or neutral?’; and, ‘What impact does the ASEAN region brand effect have on your country’s efforts in tourism promotion/investment attraction/export promotion?’. When respondents agreed to allow the interview to be recorded, it was later transcribed; in cases where the respondent preferred not to be recorded, the researcher took detailed field notes and wrote these up after the interview. Thematic analysis was applied to the interview data in order to explore respondents’ perceptions of the ASEAN region brand effect upon tourism, trade and investment.

RESULTS

Overall, respondents perceived the image of the ASEAN region brand to have improved, or at least to have remained stable, over the past 5-10 years. However, the influence of the ASEAN region
brand on the image of individual member states was perceived to be weak, particularly in terms of
tourism destination branding. According to the majority of respondents, the ASEAN region brand exerts
a greater influence on trade-related issues such as export promotion and inward investment than it does
on tourism promotion.

When asked what they believe comes to people’s minds when they think of the ASEAN region,
respondents replied that although the ASEAN region brand is in its early stages of development, certain
perceptions appear to be forming. One respondent stated that “it has been a challenge for us in ASEAN to
project a unified brand. But first, I think the initial impression that many people get about ASEAN,
especially the non-ASEAN countries, is that this is an area of opportunity. 500 million people, 10
different markets….. all hungry for certain products and services in their own different ways.” The same
respondent went on to suggest that the diversity of ASEAN, although positive in some respects, may also
prove to be a perceptual barrier for potential foreign investors: “Even if we establish ASEAN economy
community, we are nowhere near the European Union type of arrangement. There is no custom union
yet, there is no single currency yet. So these are things that pose certain difficulties for foreign investors
when they look at ASEAN as a region and how they associate ASEAN with ….because there is still some
diversity. So we are getting there, I mean…the ASEAN leaders have met and they came with certain
targets and the ASEAN economic community is one of them and I think we are on track to achieving
them but I think as of now, the ASEAN brand is not a particularly strong one at the moment.”

The relative weakness of the ASEAN region brand compared to the strength of the nation
brands of some member states was alluded to by another respondent, who suggested that “the average
consumer will probably have a far stronger sense of what our country stands for even though it might be
quite limited… ASEAN to me would be a supplement, it’s not as visible as individual countries.”

Referring to tourists from outside ASEAN visiting the region, this respondent went on to say that “I don’t
think the average visitor goes to many ASEAN destinations in one go, so I would see it as something that
is complementing our work but I would not say that is part of the main work that we do. The average
visitor doesn’t think of visiting ASEAN…. they may visit two or three ASEAN destinations but in their
mind they are not visiting ASEAN, they are visiting Phuket or Singapore or Kuala Lumpur, which is a
different thing, isn’t it?”

Regarding the image of the ASEAN region over the past 5-10 years, most respondents stated
their belief that the image of ASEAN has either stayed the same or improved. One respondent described
his perception of the ASEAN region brand’s evolution as follows: “Definitely improved, I think what
had happened in 1997, 1998 actually created or rather gave ASEAN more confidence. A number of us
were affected by the economic crisis, the financial crisis … As a region we rebounded back quite strongly
and the relatively high growth rate in ASEAN has been very attractive for investors. So in that sense the
brand has been improved and also at the same, of course, we are having political initiatives to get
together, work together more closely on the economic front, social front, and security front. So all these
things have helped enhanced the image over the years.”

Another respondent echoed the positive assessment of the evolution of the image of ASEAN
over the past 5-10 years, saying “I think it has improved.” However, none of the respondents claimed to
have conducted any research on ASEAN’s image and most respondents made it clear that they were
offering only their personal opinions on perceptions of the ASEAN region brand.

The impact of the ASEAN region brand effect upon the country image of individual member
states was overall judged to be positive by our respondents. As one respondent pointed out, by belonging
to a large regional bloc of over 500 million consumers, each ASEAN member state greatly increases its
economic potential: “It has been positive. In fact, it is the real reason why we are pushing so hard on the
concept on ASEAN economic community and all that. If we can get ASEAN to become a sort of a
unified market, you will make each ASEAN member country member more attractive for foreign
investors… In fact this economic crisis that is affecting the region right now is not necessarily a bad thing
because it makes each of us realize that the US and Europe are slowing down and within ourselves there
are still spots of growth that we can tap into. So it hasn’t been all that bad.”
However, in the context of tourism, one respondent suggested that the impact of the ASEAN region brand is negligible, particularly when compared to the higher profile of Europe as a region brand: “I think one easy way to discern this is just go to a travel agent in Japan, how is a package trip to London, to Europe marketed? It’s marketed as Europe, it is a nine-day Europe package. Here in Japan, there are no ASEAN packages. People go to Asia, or they go to Thailand, or Malaysia… ASEAN as a concept is not used for marketing.”

As for the degree to which individual member states highlight or downplay the fact that their country is part of the ASEAN region, respondents explained that they generally highlight their membership of ASEAN. The ASEAN brand is seen to promise potential benefits in terms of attracting investors, although respondents qualified this by explaining that much work remains to be done in terms of developing the ASEAN region brand. When asked whether his country highlighted or downplayed their membership of ASEAN, one respondent stated: “Ahh… highlight … in many ways, I think we sell ourselves as a doorway or gateway to ASEAN, we do not downplay at all. But it is not as active as the EU, it could be. One of the reasons I would imagine is that there is still a lot of diversity, if you put the ASEAN brand up to scrutiny and for example if I am a foreign investor I will ask, ok, you say that your country means a bigger market for me because I can tap into the ASEAN region, does it mean that my goods that I make in your country would be transported easier, would it mean that I wouldn’t have custom’s hassle to go through, how about different taxation regimes, all these things are not there yet. We are headed there, the initiatives will bring us there but we are not there yet actually actively promoting that. It doesn’t quite stand up to scrutiny at this point of time but we hope to get there.”

For most respondents there was a clear hierarchy in brand emphasis, with the individual country brand being promoted significantly more than the ASEAN region brand. As one respondent described, “We highlight the fact that we are part of ASEAN, but it comes second after our own country. We promote that we are a stepping stone into ASEAN. First, we promote our country, secondly we promote ASEAN.”

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study suggest that policymakers need to analyze carefully the different dimensions of the emerging ASEAN region brand. Strategic decisions regarding the ASEAN region’s brand architecture should be informed by considerations related to issues of target audience, as well as by individual member states differing stages of economic development. The salience of the ASEAN region brand appears to be low for tourism promotion but higher for trade and investment; policymakers should reflect on the desirability of this, given that the current situation appears to indicate that the ASEAN region brand may be under-recognized as a tourism destination brand.

A key challenge identified by respondents regarding the ASEAN region brand lies in finding successful strategies for projecting a unified brand for what is in reality an association of nations at very different stages of economic development. In terms of tourism, respondents viewed the ASEAN region brand as distinctly secondary to individual nations’ own country brands. However, in the context of inward investment attraction, the role of the ASEAN region brand appeared to assume much greater importance, with respondents emphasizing the attraction of ASEAN as a market of over 500 million consumers. Policymakers should conduct further research into such perceptions of the ASEAN region brand in order to establish a platform from which to develop the ASEAN region brand over the coming years. Strategic decisions will need to be made regarding the desirability of allowing the ASEAN brand to be perceived strongly as an investment destination but weakly as a tourism destination.

Although the consensus expressed by respondents was that the image of the ASEAN region has improved over the past 5-10 years, this needs to be verified by ongoing longitudinal studies that track the image not only of ASEAN but also of its individual member states. Such tracking studies would help clarify whether the positive assessments of the ASEAN region brand by our respondents are shared by wider audiences. Target audiences should be clearly segmented so that perceptions are tracked on both the supply-side and the consumer side, as well as ensuring that the different dimensions of the ASEAN region brand are consistently monitored. The relative strengths and weaknesses of ASEAN should be measured in terms of its tourism brand, its export brand, and its investment destination brand.
Several respondents alluded to the higher degree of integration and brand strength enjoyed by the European Union compared to ASEAN. Although an increase in regional integration is a political and economic issue rather than a branding issue, the projection of ASEAN’s evolving integration represents a branding challenge that member states and ASEAN itself as an organization need to address. As one respondent pointed out in the context of tourism, package tours from Japan are clearly marketed as Europe tours whereas there is no equivalent marketing of ASEAN tours. This is one dimension of the ASEAN region brand that could potentially be strengthened regardless of the degree of economic integration of ASEAN. Within the domain of corporate branding, the benefits of a powerful and prestigious, overarching umbrella brand are well established; it remains to be seen whether the ASEAN region brand will over the coming years develop into an umbrella brand that its member states are happy to promote in support of the key place branding objectives of tourism promotion, investment attraction, and export promotion.

The usual caveats pertaining to qualitative studies apply to this paper. The small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings, as does the restricted geographic scope of the research. Also, we did not gain access to representatives of all ten ASEAN member states. Future studies on a larger scale may encompass the totality of member states. The study indicates a number of other potentially fruitful avenues for future research. For example, are other region brands equally skewed towards trade and investment rather than tourism, as the ASEAN region brand appears to be? How can region brands establish an effective brand architecture? What is the optimal balance between individual nation brand image and region brand image? Whereas our study takes a supply-side perspective, future studies should also adopt a consumer perspective. Comparative studies of domestic versus external consumer perceptions of the ASEAN region brand could reveal useful insights. Furthermore, comparative studies of ASEAN compared to other region brands such as the EU or NAFTA would enhance our understanding of the region brand effect. These and other related areas require further research by scholars within the ASEAN region and elsewhere.

REFERENCES


SUSCEPTIBILITY TO INTERPERSONAL INFLUENCE: A SOCIAL BASIS FOR DETERMINING THE STRENGTH OF TRAVELERS’ DESTINATION BRAND EQUITY PERCEPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effect of different types of social influence on travelers’ perceptions of a destination’s brand equity. The proposed model is tested using data obtained from a survey of 979 travelers in Macao. A brand equity measurement model previously developed for a tangible product brand is applied and validated in the context of a destination brand. The empirical results of the study will serve to strengthen the claim that branding principles can be readily generalized to tourism destinations.

Keywords: Social influence, reference group, destination brand equity, structural model

INTRODUCTION

The preponderance of studies in recent years laying or supporting the claim that destinations can be marketed and branded as tourism products in the same genre as tangible products have yet to establish the role social influence play in such a claim. At the very least, the effect of considering significant or referent “others” in a traveler’s choice of destination has not been substantially considered. This suggests a gaping deficiency in the nascent field of destination branding and marketing, considering that many studies in the field regard consumer evaluations of and meanings attributed to branded products to be embedded in socially relevant cues and relationships. At the general level, this study examines whether the effectiveness of destination branding outcomes is conditional on the level of travelers’ sensitivity to social influence. It seeks to investigate the relative strength of social influence as an individual-level difference variable in influencing travelers’ destination brand equity perception. It also attempts to identify whether specific types of social influence, normative versus informational (Bearden et al., 1989), have any differential bearing on perceived destination brand equity. The paper first reviews the connection between social influence and brand marketing. It then provides grounds for extending known social influence effects on branded consumer products in the context of destinations as branded goods, and postulates that social influence factors influence travelers’ perceptions of a destination’s brand equity. The paper then proceeds to present the theoretical framework of the study followed by the methodology, findings and discussion.

Social influence and branding

Social influence or how significant referent others affect individual decision making and preferences has emerged from earlier research work on conformity. Deutsch and Gerard (1955) first conceived social influence to be comprised of informational and normative types. They considered informational social influence as “influence to accept information obtained from another as evidence about reality” (p. 206-207) whereas normative social influence as “influence to conform to the expectations of another person or group” (p. 207). Later, Witt (1969) examined the social influence of others on consumer brand choice followed by Bonfield’s (1974) work that expanded the scope social influence plays in conjunction with other attitudinal variables on choice. Burnkrant & Cousineau (1975) formalized the differential effects of informational and normative types of social influence in the way consumers used others’ product evaluation to shape their own. In a later study, Park & Lessig (1977) posited value-expression as another type of reference group influence and demonstrated group differences (students versus housewives) in susceptibility to various types of social influence. In a
notable study, Bearden & Etzel (1982) specified conditions—whether the product is a luxury versus a necessity and whether it is consumed in private versus in public—and combinations thereof under which the influence of reference groups would be significant. More importantly, Bearden et al. (1989) developed the susceptibility to interpersonal influence (STI) scale as an individual difference variable and affirmed a two-factor structure of the construct designated as normative and informational types of social influence. The scale has become widely accepted and validated in various subsequent studies related to social influence on consumer decision-making (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1990; Netemeyer, Bearden, & Teel, 1992). Other studies (Miniard & Cohen, 1983) suggest that normative social influences on consumer behavior are distinct from personal factors and imply that these be considered as independently relevant variables.

Is social influence relevant in shaping travelers’ destination choice and destination brand equity perceptions? With the exception of a couple of recent studies (Currie, Wesley, & Sutherland, 2008; Hsu, Kang, & Lam, 2006) there is little thus far in the tourism marketing and destination branding literature that unequivocally suggest that the opinion and judgment of relevant social others matter in the formation of destination brand equity perceptions and evaluation. Currie et al. (2008) revealed how peers can influence evoked set formation and subsequent destination choice. Hsu et al. (2006) identified how interpersonal influences shaped the choice and behavior of Chinese travelers to Hong Kong out of which four distinct segments were described. Beyond these, however, other studies in tourism or hospitality consider the role of social influence in a more secondary or peripheral context. Examples include Butcher (2005), whose study examined social influence in the context of the hospitality service encounter, and that of MacKay & Campbell (2004), who considered social influence as having an effect on resident support for certain tourism products.

The limited attention given to social influence is understandable considering that the bulk of research undertaken on tourism destination choice has focused more on specific and mechanical aspects of individual decision making process, conceived as a logical sequence of reasoning and information processing. These aspects include, among others, perceived risk (Kozak, Crotts & Law, 2007; Sirakaya, Sheppard, & McLellan, 1997), destination image (Sirakaya, Sonmez & Choi, 2001), individual and personal level variables, including psychographics (Decrop, 1999; Lehto, O'Leary & Morrison, 2002; Sirakaya, McLellan & Uysal, 1996), and the outcome of various stages of sequential information processing and consideration (Nicolau & Más, 2008; Perdue & Fang, 2006; Rewtrakunphaiboon & Oppewal, 2008; Sirakaya et al., 1996). Recent studies aiming to integrate and evolve more inclusive choice models for destinations are promising as they somehow intimate certain roles played by social influence factors (Woodside & King, 2001; Woodside & Dubelaar, 2002).

There are possibly two reasons why social and interpersonal factors have been largely ignored in tourism destination choice. The first is that, until recently, destinations have not been seen in the light of brand marketing, that is, tourism destinations are not normally considered as branded products. This implies that branding principles such as those reviewed above in which social influence is implicated in consumer products do not apply to destinations. A second possibility is that destinations are seen as high risk, costly and, to many, luxurious forms of consumption products (as opposed to a necessity) thereby making destination choice more subject to very extensive and more highly involved information processing and logically sequenced consideration on the part of consumers. While this characterization of the destination choice process is general and does not necessarily preclude the role of significant interpersonal relations and socially relevant reference groups, it serves to prioritize factors other than socially relevant ones in analyses.

Destinations as branded products

There has been an increase in academic and practical interest of late in tourism destination branding (Gnoth, 1998; Gnoth, 2002; Pritchard & Morgan, 2001). Branding has become an important part of marketing tourism destinations and destination marketers now recognize how they can anchor their marketing programs by capitalizing on the underlying images and associative knowledge that visitors use to identify, distinguish and evaluate destinations (Blain, Levy & Ritchie, 2005). Ritchie and Ritchie (1998) reinforced the utility of destination branding by defining it and its core components as “the marketing activities that (1) support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other
graphic that both identifies and differentiates a destination; (2) that convey the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; and (3) that serve to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience, all with the intent purpose of creating an image that influences consumers’ decisions to visit the destination in question as opposed to an alternative one.” Recently, Hosany, et al. (2006) found that a destination’s image and personality are related concepts, a finding that lends support and efficacy to the need for branding destinations. Despite these developments, however, destination branding is a complex process and many issues have yet to be studied in the relatively nascent efforts to apply branding principles in the marketing of destinations (Morgan, Pritchard & Piggott, 2003; Pike, 2005; Pritchard & Morgan, 2001). If these recent studies indicate a developing consensus that destinations can indeed be branded, then they also suggest that destinations possess the characteristic of brand equity as conceptualized on the consumer marketing literature (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993; Schultz, 2000; Simon & Sullivan, 1993).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

On the basis of the above reasoning, this study posits that the concept of brand equity does apply to destination brands and may be measured in the same way as tangible product brands. The concept we propose is in line with that developed by Lassar et al. (1995). This multidimensional concept views a destination’s brand equity as having five dimensions namely, performance, value, image, trust and attachment. Adapting from Lassar et al.’s (1995) model, we define these dimensions in the context of a destination as follows: Performance refers to the visitor’s judgment about a destination’s fault-free and long lasting attributes. Image is the visitor’s perceptions of the social esteem in which a destination is held by the visitor’s social group. It includes the attributions that a visitor makes and a visitor thinks that others make to the typical visitor of a destination. Attachment is the relative strength of a visitor’s positive feelings towards a destination while value is the perceived utility that one derives from visiting a destination relative to the cost of doing so. Finally, trust refers to the confidence visitors place on the people, tourism bureaus and tourism service providers that market a destination.

In addition to the proposed brand equity concept just described, we also propose that like tangible products, the evaluation and choice of tourism destinations are significantly affected by social influence. More specifically, in the context of destination marketing, the study hypothesizes that travelers’ susceptibility to interpersonal influence as defined by Bearden et al. (1989) has an impact on the perceived brand equity of a destination. There are supporting grounds for this claim. Keller (1993) referred to the symbolic benefits of branding products, contending that brands serve as “badges” signaling to socially relevant others a certain level of status, self-concept, or marker that an individual can use in order to gain social approval or obtain self-esteem. Bearden and Etzel (1982) posited that perceived risk and expertise of referent others serve to enhance social influence and it is conceivable that in so far as traveling to destinations is high in risk and therefore in information requirements, travelers would be highly prone to social influence. In addition, their study examined how public (vs. private) and luxury (vs. necessity) consumption is highly predisposed to the influence of reference groups. Rosen & Olshavsky (1987) also found that consumers’ reliance on “recommended information” increased as time cost increased for products considered high in perceived risk, conditions highly apt in the context of destination choice. On this basis, the following hypotheses are formed:

H1: Informational influence has a positive effect on destination brand equity.
H2: Normative influence has a positive effect on destination brand equity.

As previous studies have shown that the effect of social influence is conditional on individual and personal factors (Hsu et al., 2006; Park & Lessig, 1977), this study also seeks to determine whether the hypothesized relationship between Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence (STI) and Destination Brand Equity (DBE) is moderated by type of visitors, segmented by purpose of visit. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: The effects of informational and normative influence on a destination’s brand equity are moderated by type of visitor.
The multidimensional concept of brand equity and how it is influenced by informational and normative influence is summarized in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**
Theoretical Framework

![Theoretical Framework Diagram](attachment://theoretical_framework.png)

**METHODOLOGY**

The main constructs of this study are Brand Equity (BE) and Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence (STI). The BE scale was adapted from that developed by Lassar et al. (1995). This scale incorporates the five dimensions of brand equity and has a total of 17 items which are rated on a Likert scale ranging from 1 = Disagree completely to 7 = Very much agree. The STI scale on the other hand, consists of statements designed to measure the normative and informational dimensions of interpersonal influence. Based on the scale developed by Bearden et al (1989), the normative items measure an individual’s level of conformity to the expectations of others whereas the informational items measure the extent to which an individual obtains information from others. The STI statements are rated on a seven category scale ranging from 1 = Does not describe travel behavior to 7 = Describes travel behavior well. Data collection was undertaken through personal interviews using a structured questionnaire. A total of 979 international visitors comprise the sample. The visitors were interviewed in various attraction sites and the major ports of entry in Macao during the month of March in 2009.

A two-step approach of first validating the measurement model prior to the estimation of the structural model recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) is adopted in this study. This approach is essential because it ensures that the structural theory test is undertaken with a valid measurement model and whatever the outcome, these would not be attributed to poor measures. The measurement model for the STI constructs and brand equity were subjected to a first order and a second order confirmatory factor analysis respectively. Following an assessment of the measurement model results, the testing of the study’s hypotheses was undertaken via structural equation modeling. The estimation of the measurement and structural models was conducted using AMOS 17.0. Prior to model estimation, data issues i.e. missing values and test for normality were addressed. Missing data were not a problem as out of the total sample size, only 2 respondents had missing values on a total of five variables and these were remedied by mean substitution. A re-estimation of the models with missing data which is possible in AMOS, showed no noticeable change in the results. Data normality was screened through an inspection of the univariate skewness and kurtosis indices which were found to be within acceptable limits (Kline 2005).
FINDINGS

Second order factor estimation: Destination brand equity. Brand equity is viewed as a second order construct that causes five first order latent factors namely, performance, image, value, trust and attachment which in turn determine the measured variables. The brand equity scale adopted in this study was developed by Lassar et al. (1995) and was originally applied and tested in the context of tangible products e.g. television sets and wristwatches. Some of the items in this scale have since been used in other studies (e.g. Buil et al., 2008) involving tangible product brands. In this study, the scale is used in its entirety and in the context of a destination brand. One issue that had to be addressed at the early stage of the validation process is that the question of whether Lassar et al.’s brand equity scale is formative or reflective. The answer to this question is important because formative measurement models require a different validation process (Hair et al., 2006). The manner by which this model is applied in practice i.e. using paper and pencil to rate a brand on the basis of each of the five dimensions and summing them up suggests that it is a formative scale. However, the results of the pilot studies conducted by Lassar et al. (1995) indicated that “consumers demonstrate a halo across dimensions” and that if consumers rate a brand as being high in one dimension, there is a tendency for them to rate it high in the other dimensions as well. This rating pattern of indicators moving together is consistent with that of reflective scales (DeVellis 1991). It also supports the theory that it is the consumers’ latent perception that drives their assessment of a brand with respect to any given dimension rather than the other way around. In effect, it is the latent construct that drives the measured indicators. On this basis, it is argued that the brand equity scale in question is a reflective model and thus the appropriate validation process is adopted.

Validation of the brand equity model was undertaken through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) in AMOS. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was considered not necessary because the factors determined by this construct are supported by theory and their respective indicators have been verified in previous studies (Lassar et al 1995). In addition, it is not appropriate to specify a CFA model on the basis of the results of EFA because EFA results tend to be affected by chance variations in the data and there is evidence that factor structures identified through EFA may not be supported by CFA results (Kline, 2005).

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Correlation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Information</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Norm</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>0.69</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Performance</td>
<td>5.33</td>
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<td>0.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Image</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Value</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.68</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Trust</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.43</td>
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</tr>
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<td>7 Attachment</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The measurement model was first constrained to be congeneric i.e. all measured indicators load on only one construct each and the measurement errors are independent of each other. A model that meets these requirements is hypothesized to have construct validity and is consistent with good measurement practice (Hair et al., 2006). The fit indices for this second-order model show a good fit (see Table 2) i.e. Chi-square = 681.93, d.f. = 114, p = 0.00; CFI = 0.94; GFI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.07. In an attempt to improve overall model fit, the modification indices supplied by AMOS (Arbuckle 1997) were examined. On this basis, the measurement errors of three pairs of indicators within a construct were allowed to co-vary. The results obtained are shown in Table 2 under the heading Model 2. A comparison of these results with those of Model 1 shows that while there is an improvement in the fit indices, this was minimal. On this basis, we decided to retain the sufficiently constrained model (Model 1) as it represents better measurement properties (Carmines and McIver 1981). All references to the BE measurement model in the remaining sections of this paper will thus refer to Model 1.
### Table 2

Brand Equity Measurement Model Validation Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs and Items</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th></th>
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<th>Model 1</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std</td>
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<td>VE</td>
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<td>Std</td>
<td>t value</td>
<td>VE</td>
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<td>CR</td>
<td>AVE</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.90</td>
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<td>0.72</td>
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<td>0.52</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>0.81</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.80</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.63</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.77</td>
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<td>0.59</td>
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<tr>
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<td>23.20</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>22.69</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fit Indices</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chi-square = 681.93</td>
<td>d.f. = 114</td>
<td>GFI = 0.92</td>
<td>CFI = 0.94</td>
<td>RMSEA = 0.07</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chi-square = 502.21</td>
<td>d.f. = 110</td>
<td>GFI = 0.94</td>
<td>CFI = 0.96</td>
<td>RMSEA = 0.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Item fixed to set the scale  ** All t values are significant at p<0.001  
CR= Composite Reliability  VE = Variance Extracted  AVE = Average Variance Extracted
The results presented in Table 2 show that the measurement model for brand equity meets the requirements for convergent and discriminant validity. The unstandardized factor loadings are all found to be significant at alpha < 0.001 while the standardized values are in the range of 0.49 to 0.91 for the first order latent factors and from 0.65 to 0.91 for the observed indicators. The requirements for discriminant validity are also met considering that the correlation coefficient between all pairs of first order factors (Table 1) are well below the 0.85 limit (Kline, 2005) and that except for the Image dimension, the variance extracted are higher than the squared inter-construct correlation (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The estimated composite reliability values are all above 0.70 which indicates that internal consistency exists (Kline, 2006). In addition, all the AVE values are above the 0.50 limit required to indicate convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Taken together, these results provide adequate evidence that the measurement model meets the requirements for validity and reliability. Considering that the measures of the various constructs are derived from self-reported data and the analysis involves interpreting correlations among them, the potential problem of common method variance (Fiske 1982) had to be addressed. Following one of the post-hoc remedies suggested by Podsakoff and Organ (1986), Harman’s one factor test was undertaken. A Principal Component Analysis based on the 17 items comprising the brand equity scale reveals three factors with an eigenvalue > 1, which together account for 63% of the total variance. The presence of three factors instead of one indicates that common method bias does not pose a serious problem in this analysis.

Having validated the model and tested it for common method variance, we proceeded to compare the results obtained in this study with those reported by Lassar et al. (1995), taking into account the fact that the current study has adapted the measurement scale to a destination brand. In 1995, Lassar et al. reported the following model fit indices: Chi-square = 161.17, d.f. = 109, p < .001, CFI = 0.87. In terms of reliability, the reported coefficient alphas are 0.75 (Performance), 0.77 (Image), 0.77 (Value), 0.79 (Trust) and 0.83 (Attachment). Considering the difference in sample sizes used in these two studies, CFI is considered to be the more appropriate measure of model fit (Hair et al., 2006). From this comparison it is evident that the current estimates have yielded higher CFI and higher reliability coefficients (see Table 2), which indicate that the measurement model has withstood the tests for validity and reliability even when applied to a destination brand. The results in Table 2 show that overall brand equity as expected, is positively related with all of its dimensions. Of the five dimensions, Image has the highest standardized loading followed closely by Value. The dimension with the lowest loading is Trust.

First order factor estimation: STI. The informational and normative dimensions of STI are well supported by theory (Deutsch and Gerard 1955) and previous results of replicated confirmatory factor analysis have demonstrated a stable two-factor structure (Bearden, Netemeyer and Teel 1989). In this study, a first order model of STI is particularly necessary because one of study’s objectives is to determine the impact of each factor (normative versus informational social influence) on destination brand equity. At first glance, the initial results of the CFA of the normative and informational influence scales indicated relatively good fit indices (Table 3). These results were based on all measured indicators loading on only one construct each and the measurement errors being independent of each other. Although most of the fit indices are within acceptable limits, there are indications that some modifications were in order. For instance the RMSEA value of 0.12 exceeded the maximum limit of 0.10 and the variance extracted for one of the indicators was less than the 0.50 limit. On this basis, one indicator was deleted (due to low variance extracted) and two measurement errors in the normative influence scale were allowed to correlate with each other. The modified measurement model as shown in Table 3 meets the requirements of a model with adequate fit. Convergent validity is indicated by the significant unstandardized factor loadings at alpha < .00, the high standardized factor loading values which range from 0.71 to 0.81, and the greater than 0.50 AVE values. Discriminant validity is indicated by the correlation of the two factors at 0.69 which is less than the upper limit of 0.85 (Kline, 2005) while reliability is also indicated as the composite reliability values are higher than the lower limit of 0.70 used for exploratory research (Kline, 2006). Harman’s one factor test results however show that it is possible that the data is affected by the common method variance problem. The PCA of the 11 items comprising the STI scale revealed two factors with eigenvalues > 1 explaining about 67% of total variance. One factor accounts for about 57% and the other, 10%. According to Podsakoff and Organ (1986), a substantial common variance is present if one factor accounts for majority of the
variance, which appears to be the case with this model. At this point, no solution is proposed except to keep this in mind when assessing the results obtained from this study.

### Table 3
STI Measurement Model Validation Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs and Items</th>
<th>Standardised Loading</th>
<th>t Value</th>
<th>Variance Extracted</th>
<th>Composite Reliability</th>
<th>AVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>20.12</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.54</td>
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<td>0.73</td>
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<td>19.94</td>
<td>0.51</td>
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<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative 2</td>
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<td>26.97</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative 3</td>
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<td>Normative 5</td>
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<td>25.02</td>
<td>0.58</td>
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</table>

| Fit Indices          | Chi-Square = 381.45 d.f. = 33 | GFI = 0.92 | CFI = 0.94 | RMSEA = 0.10 |

**Structural model estimation.** After validating the measurement model, the full structural model was estimated using path analysis in AMOS 17.0. In this estimate, the structural model and the refined measurement model were simultaneously tested. The results of the structural model shown in Table 4 indicate an adequate fit between the model and the data.

### Table 4
Structural Model Estimation Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesised Relationships</th>
<th>Standardised Regression Weights</th>
<th>P value</th>
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<tr>
<td>Informational influence → Brand Equity</td>
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<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative influence → Brand Equity</td>
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<td>0.001</td>
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</table>

Chi-Square = 1553.37 df=315 p=0.00; GFI=0.89  CFI=0.92  RMSEA=0.06

As expected with tests involving a large sample, the Chi-square value is large and significant which is contrary to what it should be for a structural equation model. For this reason, the other indices i.e. RMSEA and CFI are adopted. The RMSEA not only corrects for the effects of sample size but also indicates how well a model fits a population and not just the sample. An RMSEA of 0.06 which is less than the acceptable upper limit of 0.10 indicates that the model has a good fit (Hair et al., 2006). The CFI takes into account model complexity is estimated at 0.92 indicating also an acceptable model fit.

The structural model test results show that only one of the two hypothesized relationships is supported. As shown in Table 4, the relationship between informational influence and brand equity is not supported by the data. In contrast, normative influence has a significant and positive effect on brand equity. The standardized regression weight of 0.55 indicates a strong influence with variance extracted.
estimated at 0.24. In order to test the hypothesis about the possible moderating effects of the type of visitor on the impact of the informational and normative influence on brand equity, the full model was re-estimated using a two group analysis. One group consists of tourists whose main purpose of visiting Macao is for gambling and business purposes and the other is made up of those whose purpose is recreation based i.e. shopping, sightseeing, etc. The purpose of this analysis is to determine whether or not the pattern of structural relationships hypothesized in the structural model is applicable to both groups.

Prior to the estimation of the full model, a two-group analysis of the measurement model was first undertaken to determine measurement invariance i.e. if the set of indicators is measuring the same latent factors across groups (Kline, 2005). Two models, one that is totally free i.e. only the factor structure is constrained, and the other which constrains the factor loadings to be equal in both groups were estimated. If the model fit for the first model is adequate, then there is minimal evidence of cross validation and if the model fit of the second model is not significantly different from that of the first, then the evidence of cross-validation is stronger (Hair et al., 2006). This procedure was adopted in testing the brand equity and STI measurement models separately. A comparison of the fit indices obtained for the BE model showed that the change in Chi-square is not significant and the other indices i.e. GFI, CFI and RMSEA are similar for both totally free and constrained models. Both models had a GFI and CFI of 0.89 and 0.91 respectively while RMSEA = 0.05. The results for the STI model revealed similar indices for both groups i.e. GFI = 0.93, CFI = 0.94 and RMSEA = 0.07. Likewise, the difference in the Chi-square values is not significant for both the BE and STI scales. These results provide adequate evidence that these measurement models are invariant across the two groups.

Having tested for measurement invariance, the structural model was then estimated, also using a two-group analysis. The procedure adopted is similar to that for the measurement model in which a totally free, unconstrained model and a constrained model with equal regression weights across the two groups i.e. business and gaming group vs. recreation group were estimated. A comparison of the fit indices of these two models however showed that the change in the Chi-square values is not significant and likewise, the other fit indices i.e. CFI and RMSEA were equal or at worst, similar. Considering that the added constraint did not harm the model fit, the significance of visitor type as a moderator variable, is not supported. For purposes of rigor and taking leads from the literature that susceptibility to social influence could be affected by personal characteristics (McGuire 1968; Petty and Cacioppo 1981), the structural model was estimated using age, gender and education as moderator variables. In all three cases, no significant difference was found in the model fit of the totally free and the constrained models.

DISCUSSION

The results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis provide support to the validity and reliability of the brand equity scale developed by Lassar et al. (1995) and to the proposition that brand equity is the underlying construct of the five branding dimensions namely performance, image, trust, value and attachment. Each of the observed items loaded well on the hypothesized dimension and each dimension yielded a high degree of internal consistency among the measured items. The overall model fit was found to be adequate even under the strict conditions of a congeneric model where measurable indicators are constrained to have no covariance between and within construct error terms. The fact that the sample is large i.e. 979 respondents and that it is made up of visitors from 30 countries and of different age, gender and educational backgrounds only serve to strengthen our confidence on the results obtained. These empirical results also show that the two layered multidimensional concept of brand equity which was originally developed for tangible product brands can also be applied to destination brands.

Having addressed our first objective in the previous paragraph, we will devote the rest of the discussion to the structural model estimation results. Of the two hypotheses about the effects of social influence on brand equity, our results provide support only for normative but not informational influence. Susceptibility to normative influence has been found to have a significant positive effect on the perceived brand equity of a country while susceptibility to informational influence has been found to have no significant effect. This result implies that the perceived brand equity of a destination is affected by the propensity of a visitor to conform to the expectation of referent others but not by the
information that they obtain from them. Considering that brand equity consists of five dimensions which tend to be rated by consumers in a consistent pattern i.e. if one is rated high, the others are rated high too, it is logical to expect that the higher the consumer’s susceptibility to normative influence, the higher would be the perceived performance, value, image, trust and attachment of a destination. If the analogy is extended to power exerted by referent others, the results would indicate that these dimensions of a brand as well as the overall perceived brand equity are affected by referent but not expert power. This could imply that referent others are not perceived to have expert knowledge about a destination and as the survey data show, the respondents in this study had relied on various sources of information regarding Macao. The top five most influential sources of information are (1) friends, (2) family, (3) internet, (4) work colleagues and (5) travel books. This ranking is based on the average ratings respondents gave to each of these sources on a scale of 1 = most influential, 2 = second most influential, 3 = third most influential, 0 = not top three. Although friends and family are still the top two sources of information, the internet and travel books are also considered influential. The reliance on other sources of information has the tendency to weaken the influence that referent others exert through expert knowledge. The lack of significance of the moderator variables simply shows that the structural model proposed in this study can be generalized to all types of visitors i.e. irrespective of personal characteristics. In terms of purpose of travel, the results should be taken with caution considering that business and gaming visitors had to be grouped together due to the relatively small number of respondents belonging to the business group.

The significance of normative influence on a destination’s brand equity has a number of implications for marketers and governments. When promoting a country as a holiday destination it is important to target not only the traveler but the traveler’s referent others especially family and peers who tend to be sources of utilitarian and value expressive functions (Johar and Sirgy, 1991). The significance of normative influence implies that marketing campaigns should adopt an image strategy, one that involves building a “personality” for the product (i.e. destination or country) or creating an image of the product user (i.e. traveler or tourist) (Ogilvy, 1963). The lack of significance of informational influence by referent others acknowledges the increasing role played by other sources of information such as the internet and travel books. This implies that industry and governments should continue to strengthen their role of providing up-to-date and accurate information directly to prospective travelers through these sources.

Overall, this study has attempted to fill some of the gaps in the destination branding literature in two ways. First, it focuses on the under-researched area of interpersonal influence on destination brand perceptions and second, it provides new evidence that concepts and measurements which have been previously applied to tangible product brands are also applicable to tourism destinations. Through this study and its limitations, new avenues for future research have become evident. The influence of reference groups in travel decisions which has not received as much attention as in tangible goods, has potentials for further investigation particularly along the lines of specific market segments such as gaming (for Macao), the first time versus the repeat visitor segment, and high versus low perceived risk destinations. The significant role of normative influence in destination brand perceptions found in this study highlights the importance of tourism research on country image and destination personality. The role of non-social (versus interpersonal) sources of information such as the internet in developing a nation’s brand equity is another area that could yield interesting results. In addition, future studies on nation branding or destination brand equity could include an assessment of relevant outcomes either in terms of tangible consumer behavior or industry performance measures that could better inform marketing strategy and public policy.
REFERENCES


ELICITING BRAND IMAGE ASSOCIATIONS, NORMATIVE AND CONTROL BELIEFS TOWARD HERITAGE TOURIST DESTINATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Over the past 20 years, heritage tourism has been an important element of the tourism economy and seen as an effective way to achieve the educational, positive image and identity building function of tourism (Ashworth and Turnbridge, 1990; Li et al., 2008). The present paper aims to (1) identify key motivating factors of tourists toward visiting a heritage tourist destination, and (2) identify brand image associations toward heritage destinations using the elicited attitudes. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) was chosen as the key theoretical framework to investigate underlying motivational salient beliefs tourists hold towards heritage tourism in Australia. A total of 69 respondents participated in the qualitative research conducted using surveys, interviews and focus groups. Results indicate that (1) educational value was the main motivational salient belief among tourists when deciding to visit heritage site and; (2) brand image associations of heritage destinations consisted of functional, symbolic, experiential associations and overall brand attitudes.

Keywords: heritage tourism, brand image associations, destination marketing, elicitation study

INTRODUCTION

The growth of the tourism industry has seen a new tourism product called heritage tourism, which has been argued to be “one of the trump cards for the tourism industry of the future” (Frangialli, 2002; Graham, 2002, p. 1007). In 2007, a total of 21.3 million visitors participated in cultural and heritage activities in Australia with expenditures of $19994 million (Tourism Australia, 2008). Heritage tourism can be seen as part of the cultural tradition of society in the form of modern consciousness. According to Nuryanti, (1996, p. 250), “…the relationship between heritage and tourism parallels the debate that takes place within a society’s culture between tradition and modernity”. The concept of heritage often includes built (e.g. historic buildings), cultural (e.g. traditional cultural events) and natural arenas (e.g. national parks) (Carter and Horneman, 2001). This concept is derived from past images of history translated into reality that is constructed into costume dramas and re-enactments of past historic events (Hewison, 1989). In short, heritage tourism can be defined as a visitation to a historical area consisting activities that provides a historical experience with educational value based around consumer motivation. Although there have been many studies on motivating factors attracting tourists to destinations, two limitations exist: (1) most studies examining motivating factors on heritage tourism focused on underlying attitudes only, and (2) most studies did not identify and link these attitudes to brand image associations. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to: (1) use an established behavioural theory (Theory of planned behaviour) to elicit tourists’ motivations to travel to heritage destinations in Australia and, (2) identify brand image associations toward heritage tourism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

BRAND IMAGE THEORY AND DESTINATION BRANDING

The role of branding in the success of an organisation must not be treated lightly as it is the heart of marketing and business strategies (Doyle, 1998, p. 165). As described by Keller (2000, p. 157) “Ultimately, the power of a brand lies in the minds of consumers or customers.” Despite the growing importance of service industries worldwide, many branding studies have focused their literature on tangible products (Turley and Moore, 1995; de Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2001; Krishnan and Hartline, 2001). Within marketing, the meaning of the term brand is typically defined “as a name, term, sign, symbol, design or a combination of these, which is used to identify goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those competitors” (Kotler et al., 1999, p.571). This
brand identification helps to create awareness of products and services (Keller, 1993), which communicates a brand’s meaning (Kapferer, 1992) through a set of associations (Aaker, 1992). These associations then form the basis of what consumers perceive the brand image of a product or service to be (Keller, 1993; Louro and Cunha, 2001). According to Hankinson and Cowking (1993), brand image associations can be functional (tangible features) or symbolic (intangible features) attributes. In addition, Park et al. (1986) related brand image associations as experiential (e.g. what it feels like when using it) attributes. Keller (1993) also reported brand attitudes to be another category of brand image associations, which can be seen as a customer’s overall perceived evaluation of a brand (attitudes). Thus, brand associations play a key role in constructing the positioning image of a brand of service or product that can be used to differentiate against competitors. Based on the definition of attitudes by Eagly and Chaiken (1993, p.1), tourists’ attitudes toward heritage tourist destinations can be seen as favourable or unfavourable reasons tourists have toward a particular heritage destination. For example, a tourist who selects a heritage site because of its beautiful landscape, mainly base their decision on tangible aspects. This can be seen as a favourable reason and positive attitude that can contribute positive associations to a heritage destination’s brand image. Therefore, in this study, the term brand image will investigate attitudinal beliefs based on four types of brand image association as mentioned above (See figure 1).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THEORY OF REASONED ACTION / THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) support the underlying issues in the literature pertaining to tourists’ motivations toward visiting heritage destinations in Australia. The TRA looks at a tourist’s attitude towards visiting a heritage destination and their perception of others who are important as to whether they would support their decision of visiting a heritage destination (subjective norm). Most importantly, the TRA was designed to predict behavioural intentions best only when an individual is under volitional control (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). However, even the most mundane activity can be affected by uncontrollable factors such as lack of time to visit the heritage destination. Therefore, in 1985, the TRA was modified with the addition of a third predictive component of intentions called perceived behavioural control to account for this gap and better predict behavioural intentions for behaviours that are both under volitional and non-volitional control (Ajzen and Madden, 1986). Figure 1 shows the framework of the TRA / TPB along with added variables of brand image associations.

Figure 1
THEORY OF REASONED ACTION (TRA) AND THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR (TPB)
FRAMEWORK WITH BRAND IMAGE ASSOCIATIONS

![Diagram of TRA/TPB framework with brand image associations](source: (Ajzen, 1991, TRA and TPB); (Hankinson and Cowking, 1993; Keller, 1993, Brand image association variables))
According to the TRA / TPB, behavioural intention is determined by the respective independent variables (A, SN and PBC). Each of these three independent variables can be measured directly or indirectly (beliefs). Attitudes can be measured directly by looking at the degree to which an individual evaluates the performance of a particular behaviour positively or negatively (Ajzen, 1991). Attitudes can be measured indirectly by multiplying the behavioural beliefs with the evaluation outcome towards a particular behaviour. Subjective norms can be measured directly by examining an individual’s perceived social pressure by other reference groups who are important to him / her to perform or not to perform a particular behaviour. Indirectly, subjective norms can be calculated by multiplying the normative beliefs with the motivation to comply to those expectations of the reference group(s). Perceived behavioural control can be measured directly by looking at an individual’s perception of the degree of difficulty in performing a particular behaviour. Indirect measures of perceived behavioural control can be calculated by multiplying the control beliefs with the perceived power of each control belief that will hinder or facilitate the performance of the particular behavior.

The TRA / TPB have been applied to a variety of behavioural domains with some degree of success. These behaviours range from health (e.g. Courneya and Hellsten, 1998), exercise (e.g. Latimer and Kathleen, 2005), alcohol (e.g. Johnston and White, 2003), smoking (e.g. Bagozzi and Kimmel, 1995; Moan et al. 2005), food purchase decisions (e.g. Tarkiainen and Sundqvist, 2005), leisure choice (e.g. Ajzen and Driver, 1992), investment decisions (e.g. East, 1993) and consumer behaviour (e.g. Sheeran and Orbell, 1999). There are evidence to show that TRA / TPB has good correlations between intentions and behaviours (Ajzen, 1988; Armitage and Conner, 2001; Sheeran et al., 2001). Looking at the behavioural intention with behaviour correlations, in a meta analysis on 87 studies, Sheppard et al. (1988) found correlations of 0.53. Randall and Wolf (1994) conducted meta analysis on 98 studies and found correlations of 0.45. Other meta studies have also found similar findings, Godin and Kok, 1996 (0.46, 35 studies), Sheeran and Orbell, 1998 (0.44, 28 studies), Sutton, 1998 (0.49, 7 meta analyses) and Armitage and Conner, 2001 (0.47, 185 studies). The general findings are in support of the predictive power of the three independent variables. In a meta analysis conducted by Sheeran et al. (2001), both behavioural intentions and behaviour accounted for between 20% to 40% of variance explained. Godin and Kok (1996) conducted a meta analysis on 76 health related behaviours and found that behavioural intentions and perceived behavioural control accounted for 34% of variance in behaviours of 35 studies. Across 185 studies, Armitage and Conner (2001) reported that behavioural intentions and perceived behavioural control explained 27% of variance for behaviour and perceived behavioural control added 2% variance to behavior.

Therefore, this behavioural theory has a promising applicability in understanding underlying salient beliefs of tourists toward visiting a heritage destination. Consider the number of motivating factors that can be categorized into each of the three independent variables. Firstly, there are various motivating attitudes that can be associated with visiting heritage destinations such as attitudes toward the site personnel, information learned (Masberg and Silverman, 1996); type of scenery and geography of area (Khalek et al., 1997); interest level of recreational activities, promotional information (Chen, 1996). These reasons can be seen as positive / negative attitudes towards the behaviour of visiting a heritage destination. For example, a tourist will have stronger positive attitudes towards a particular heritage destination if the tourist sees site personnel as important and if the heritage destination has good personnel staff. With regards to subjective norms family and friends have seen to be a strong social group that influences the intentions to visit a heritage destination (Great Britain Public Attitude Survey, 1985; Chen, 1996).

This suggests that tourists are concerned about seeking approval from others in their decision, which can be seen as a form of a social pressure. The last variable of the TPB is the role of perceived behavioural control that constraint tourists from visiting a heritage destination. In particular, these control beliefs can be seen as perceived difficulties preventing tourists from visiting a heritage destination such as lack of time and financial constraints (Crompton, 1984); poor health, stage of family life cycle with young children, unfamiliarity and risk involved (Van Harssel, 1994).
DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative paradigm over a quantitative research design as there have been a major concern of the over reliance on statistics in the early stages of development of a topic area (Ballantyne et al., 2009). Moreover, in a meta analysis of 2868 journal articles published in 12 major tourism journals, only 19% of the studies preferred the qualitative approach over the quantitative approach (59%) (Ballantyne et al., 2009, p. 151). Therefore, this study relied on the collection of data in the form of a mixed methods consisting of literature review, written surveys, personal interviews and focus groups. Using mixed methods for qualitative research enables a more complete list of elicited variables and prevents the omission of important variables (Churchill, 1998). The objective was to gather information regarding the research problem of tourists’ motivation toward heritage tourism. This study used a single cross sectional design to understand tourists’ reasons for heritage tourism at one point in time (Malhotta et al., 1996), rather than a longitudinal design that measures these perceptions over time (Kinnear and Taylor, 1996). The elicited list of attitudes was then used to identify the type of brand image associations (functional, symbolic, experiential or overall brand attitudes) toward heritage destinations. The basis for type of brand image association was based on the various criteria as discussed in the literature review on brand image association. Only attitudinal items were identified with brand image associations. This is because attitudinal beliefs measure the overall perception of the destination, whereas normative beliefs measure the social influencing groups and control beliefs measure the perceived difficulties in visiting the destination. Nevertheless, both normative and control beliefs are important in this study.

The literature search covered the academic literature on heritage tourism. Cross referencing was used to ensure maximum search coverage. Elicited reasons of heritage tourism identified from this review were categorized into the three constructs of the TPB framework. A total of 52 variables were identified. Surveys and interviews were conducted in front of major travel retail agents. Respondents were asked on their way out of the travel agent if they would be willing to answer a few questions.

Independent variables of the TPB (attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control) were used to guide the questions to be asked in the elicitation stage using open-ended questions, as recommended by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980). The following four questions were used: (1) Which heritage destinations have you visited before or intend to visit? Why? (2) Are there any heritage destinations that you would not consider visiting? Why? (3) Who are the important people whose opinions you value in the context of heritage tourism? (4) What factors make it difficult or impossible for you to engage in heritage tourism? Questions 1 and 2 were designed to capture the attitudes of the tourists. Question 3 was designed to capture the subjective norms variable and Question 4 was designed to measure the perceived behavioural control variable. The written survey contained all four of the above questions. 88 respondents were approached and 50 agreed to participate (56% response rate). 42 tourists were approached to answer four questions under the long interview condition. 14 tourists participated (33%). These face to face interviews were informal, unstructured and taped. The tapes were analysed to identify recurring themes and provided preparation for the focus group session. Of 38 tourists approached to participate in a focus group only five volunteered (13%) (See Table 2 for selected results). The total sample size for the study (n = 69) meets the recommended sample size (n ≥ 25) by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) and Godin and Kok (1996).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SALIENT BELIEFS TOWARD HERITAGE TOURISM

Content analysis was used to analyse the variables identified from the elicitation study as recommended by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980). After gathering all the identified variables from the 69 respondents, key words, phrases and answer styles were identified and coded according to the three TPB components (attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control). Similar codes were then arranged in descending order based on frequency counts. This resulted in the reduction of the initially large number of 189 variables identified from the various data gathering methods to a final 28 variables (12 attitudes, 8 subjective norms and 8 perceived behavioural control) (See table 1).
9 positive attitudes were identified. Educational value was the most frequently stated reason (51 respondents), followed by positive feedback from previous tourists (39), famous reputation of site (35), well knowledgeable service staff (30), limited lifespan of heritage destination (25), beautiful scenery/environment (20), ecotourism reasons (17), not been there before (7), social class status reasons (3). The three main reasons for not considering to visit or participate in heritage tourism were: been there before (29 respondents), boring/not interested (25) and poor supporting facilities (23). With respect to the reference group that may be influential in influencing an individual’s intention to visit or participate in heritage tourism, a majority of respondents felt that online discussion boards/websites was the most important reference group (60 respondents), followed by friends/relatives (48), other tourists (39), tourism authorities (31), and accommodation employees (27). In relation to perceived behavioural control, respondents expressed the following difficulties considered when visiting/participating in heritage tourism: far distance/remoteness (46 respondents), followed by transport difficulties (38), lack of information (35), dangerous terrains (32), lack disability facilities (28), lack/poor accommodation facilities (19), financial costs (15), and weak health (12).

These results indicate that heritage tourists visit heritage destinations for a variety of reasons. Educational value was found to be the most frequently stated reason for visiting a heritage destination. This is similar and reported by many past studies (e.g. Prentice et al., 1998; Waitt, 2000; Garrod and Fyall, 2000; Herbert, 2001; Poria et al., 2003; Prentice and Anderson, 2007) to be a key motivating factor. Positive feedback from previous tourists and famous reputation of site were the next two most frequently stated heritage tourism reasons. This is evidence to show that the majority and strongest motivator to visit a heritage site, is to explore and gain new knowledge (Masberg and Silverman, 1996). Reasons why tourists avoid visiting heritage destinations were because they have been there before, poor supporting facilities and a lack of interest. The elicited negative reasons were different from past studies (e.g. Teo and Yeoh, 1997) that reported over commercialization of a heritage site in the name of profit can lead to negative perceptions of a heritage site (Urry, 1990; Thrift and Glennie, 1993, p. 43). This shows that parents have different attitudes toward visiting a heritage destination. This is in support of prior findings by Khalek et al. (1997); and Chen (1996) who reported that some tourists do hold bipolar attitudes and can have contradicting attitudes toward heritage tourism.

One of the key findings in this research was the importance of positive word of mouth, which seems as a common trait among all the elicited social groups. Online discussion boards/websites was found to be the most elicited reference group that tourists seek for approval in visiting heritage destinations. This finding supports the strong established theory on word of mouth on consumption literature (Herr et al., 1991; Fornell, 1992; Laere and Heene, 2003). The importance of word of mouth is prevalent especially in the consumption of a service and product (Brown and Reingen, 1987; Scoot, 2003), which in this paper refers to heritage tourism as an experience with a high level of perceived risk. This finding of online discussion board as an important reference group also sees a new elicited item not found in previous heritage tourism literature. One explanation is that discussion boards and other internet communication tools such as chat rooms and discussion boards are seen as an important source of information that influence the adoption of heritage tourism (Subramani and Rajagopalan, 2003). The second most stated normative factor is the friends/relative normative group. This elicited reason has also been reported in previous studies (e.g. Bharath et al., 2004 reported to friends and relatives to be a social motive for visiting heritage destinations). Another interesting finding is the identification of accommodation employees as an important reference group, which includes concierges, waiting staff and porters suggesting that normative influence can have a major impact on heritage tourism intentions.

Far distance/remoteness was seen as the most frequent stated perceived difficulty factor that reduces tourists’ intentions in visiting a heritage site. Two other difficulties elicited (lack of information and dangerous terrains) were consistent with past research (Crompton, 1984; Van Harssel, 1994). However, this research did not reveal one key perceived difficulty (lack of time) that was reported by Crompton (1984). This could see a reduction in one less perceived difficulty preventing tourists from future consumption of heritage tourism.
### Table 1
List of Elicited Salient Beliefs and Brand Image Associations (n=69)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elicited beliefs</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Brand image associations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive attitudes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational value</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Experiential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive feedback from previous tourists</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Symbolic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>famous reputation of site</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Brand attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well knowledgeable service staff</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Experiential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>limited lifespan of heritage destination</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Functional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beautiful scenery / environment</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Functional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ecotourism reasons</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Brand attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not been there before</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Symbolic / Experiential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social class status reasons</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Symbolic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative attitudes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>been there before</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Symbolic / Experiential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boring / not interested</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Brand attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poor supporting facilities</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Functional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subjective norms</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>online discussion boards / websites</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friends / relatives</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other tourists</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tourism authorities</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accommodation employees</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived difficulties</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>far distance / remoteness</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transport difficulties</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of information</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dangerous terrains</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack disability facilities</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack / poor accommodation facilities</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>financial costs</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weak health</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

No doubt there is no one simple definition and concept of heritage tourism (Balcar and Pearce, 1996; Li, 2003; Gordon, 2004), this paper suggests and acknowledges that heritage tourism consists of visitations or activities related to heritage sites that has educational value and is based around consumers’ motivations. The first aim of this paper provided a further investigation into the Darvill’s (1987) call for further research into the difficulty of conceptualizing tourists’ motivations and eliminating perceived barriers to increase heritage tourism intentions (Keller and Smeral, 1997).

Hall and McArthur (1998, p. 8) also added that in heritage literature, “limited attention has been given to the human dimension”. Therefore, by using the TPB as a framework to better understand human behaviour and motivations, all three components postulated in the TPB provided valuable insights in the elicitation of motivating salient beliefs toward heritage tourism. The application of the TPB framework consequently proved to be helpful for the elicitation study. Factors identified using a theoretical framework provided a more systematic collection of data sorted by various components of the theory to ensure coverage of all relevant constructs, where previous studies examined as one single motivational construct.

The present study identified 12 attitudes, 8 reference groups and 8 perceived difficulties. Brand image associations of heritage tourist destinations revealed a mixture of all four associations. In other words, marketers must acknowledge and tailor their heritage destination branding campaigns to include each of the different brand image associations and not focus on a single association. One of the key finding revealed the surprising social group of internet users on discussion boards as a main normative group. Results and conclusions reported in this study must be treated with caution. The present data was collected in a single Australian region. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to Australia as a whole and do not permit comparisons to be drawn between regional and metropolitan areas as well as between other countries. Another important consideration when using this data to develop a quantitative study is the decision on which beliefs to include in the final sets of modal salient beliefs. The findings of this present study highlight several areas for future research. First, it would be interesting to use the elicited reasons to conduct a quantitative follow-up study to empirically assess how predictive each of these factors is for actual heritage tourism visitation. Second, further investigation into the online word of mouth (OWOM) theory and empirical relationships between behavioural intentions would generate a deeper understanding on how users of discussion board can influence a tourist’s heritage destination outcome. Last, brand image associations of heritage destinations should be compared with other types of tourist destinations (e.g. rural, sports, religious).

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author expresses his thanks to the three anonymous reviewers for their time and effort in reviewing this paper.
AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE MOTIVATIONS, EXPECTATIONS AND IMPACT PERCEPTIONS OF MAINLAND CHINESE CITIZENS TO TAIWAN

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ABSTRACT

The new liberalization in restrictions on travel between Taiwan and Mainland China is expected to promote dual-destination travel and have a beneficial effect on Taiwan’s tourism. Being a huge potential tourist sector, Mainland citizens’ motivations, expectations and impact perceptions on traveling to Taiwan will play an important role in the process of tourism development in both Taiwan and Mainland China. This study chooses Mainland citizens as the participants with the objective to investigate their demands and perceptions, so as to provide scientific references to local tourism firms and governments with future marketing planning in Taiwan. A quantitative method is adopted in the investigation.

Keywords: Mainland Chinese citizens, travel to Taiwan, impact perceptions, expectations

INTRODUCTION

As the largest island in our country, Taiwan attracts a large number of tourists every year for its beautiful natural scenery, unique folk customs, various festival events and modern cityscape. However, an unstable developing relationship between Taiwan and Mainland China has remained due to the special historical and political background (Liu, 2006). Tourism flows across the Taiwan Strait have also been greatly affected. The party concerned in Mainland China and farsighted public figures in Taiwan have made unremitting efforts to the liberalization of cross-strait tourism in recent years. By the end of 2001, Taiwan authority has approved “Regulations Governing the Permission for Mainland Personnel to Come to Taiwan for Tourism Activities”. Accordingly, in May 2005, Mainland China announced the liberalization of the visits by Mainland tourists to Taiwan, but tourists have been subject to quota restrictions (Yang, 2008). In the meantime, since the threshold for Mainland residents to Taiwan is too high, the number of Taiwan tourists to Mainland China has greatly exceeded that of Mainland tourists to Taiwan. The imbalance of tourism flow not only seriously affected the further development of local tourism economy in Taiwan, but the cross-strait exchanges and cooperation in tourism has also been restricted (Guo et al., 2006).

In order to enhance the exchanges between people across the Taiwan Strait and promote the tourism development for both sides of the Strait, the Association for Relations across the Taiwan Strait and The Strait Exchange foundation reached and signed the “Agreement Across the Taiwan Strait on Visits to Taiwan by Mainland Residents” in June 13th, 2008, which marked Taiwan’s opening up to Mainland tourists. The first mission headed for Taiwan on July 4th, which finally realized the common aspiration of compatriots on both sides for Mainland residents to travel to Taiwan (Xinhua News...
Agency, 2008). It is estimated that there is a daily average of about 300 Mainland tourists since the early period of the six months between July and December 2008. Through the efforts and consultations on both sides, the number of Mainland visitors has exceeded 1,000 every day averagely from January to March 2009, and the end of March even set the record of more than 2000 every day averagely (Anonymous, 2009).

Obviously, after Taiwan’s complete open-up to Mainland tourists, the development of the cross-strait tourism industry has been significantly promoted, especially the development of the tourism market in Taiwan. Government sections concerned at all levels and tourism enterprises in Taiwan also took an active part in marketing in order to attract more Mainland tourists to travel to Taiwan. D’Amore (1988) believed that the interactive communication between tourists and local residents can deepen the understanding for each other, so tourism can promote regional peace. Therefore, the visits by Mainland tourists to Taiwan not only can drive Taiwan’s tourism development but will also positively ease the tensions across the Taiwan Strait.

The theoretical significance of the study lies in that, with the rising number of tourists to Taiwan, it is of great necessity to explore Mainland tourists’ motivations, expectations for visits to Taiwan and their perceptions on the impact of these visits. With the perceptions on the impact of visits to Taiwan and expectations for the tourism products as the starting point of the analysis, the study can be used to provide new perspectives on marketing and the market demand of visits by Mainland residents to Taiwan and help local governments and tourism enterprises in Taiwan to carry out directed marketing strategies in order to benefit the sustainable and healthy development of the tourism destination market in Taiwan, thus contributing to promoting peaceful reunification across the Taiwan Strait through tourism development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

At present, few studies abroad have been conducted on visits by Mainland compatriots to Taiwan. Most parts of which have been focused on the tourism development between two places with political tensions, including the studies on the interaction between politics and tourism in Taiwan and Mainland Chin. A small number of which conducted research on the traveling behavior of Taiwan tourists to Mainland China. Specifically, these studies can be categorized into the following aspects.

Firstly, the interaction between tourism and political factors in separated regions and countries. Altinay & Bowen (2006) held that political instability would hinder the tourism development between two separated places, but most scholars argued that tourism could promote the development of the peace process (Butler & Mao, 1996); Kim & Prideaux (2003) suggested through empirical studies that Mt.Gumgang Tourism Plan would ease the tension in Korean Peninsula and promote the peace process between North and South Korea. In addition, Kim et al. (2007) proved through the interview with South Korean visitors in the newly opened resort in North Korea that this experience would have a positive impact on South Korean visitors and thus contribute to the improvement of the political relations between the South Korea and North Korea; Similarly, the same conclusions have been reached as to the tourism development of North and South Cyprus: tourism could ease the political tensions between both sides and the political stability would have impacts on tourism planning and development (Aakis & Warner, 1994; Alipour & Kilic, 2005; Altinay, 2000).

Secondly, the studies on the tourism development between Mainland China and Taiwan. As to the cross-strait tourism development, Zhang (1993) conducted explorations on the huge contributions tourism had made to the cross-strait peaceful development; Yu (1997) studied the the cross-strait political impact on tourism and pointed out that even if the political relations between the two sides remain tense, tourism development can hardly be affected; However, Guo et al (2006) reviewed the tourism development process in Mainland China and Taiwan, suggested that the tourism flow across the Strait was uneven as a result of transportation, political, and cultural reasons, proposed corresponding solutions, and confirmed the positive role of tourism in the promotion of the peaceful reunification for both sides; As to the comparative study of the tourism development in Mainland China and Taiwan,
Chen (2007) compared the interaction of the business and financial operation in hotels and tourism enterprises in both Mainland China and Taiwan, and found that there was no difference between Mainland China and Taiwan in this aspect, and the business and financial operation of the enterprises promoted and complemented each other; Lu & Ling (2008) conducted research on cross-strait tourists’ attitudes toward air services from an cross-cultural perspective, and found that although Mainland China and Taiwan shared the same culture and language, there was a significant difference in Mainland and Taiwan tourists’ perceptions on flight services across strait. Regarding Taiwan tourists’ travel to Mainland China, Chang et al (2006) carried out discussions on salespersons’ conditioning effect on Taiwan tourists’ shopping motivations and the level of their satisfaction during their trips to Mainland China, and found two kinds of sales practices: service-oriented and product-oriented practices which have positive and negative conditioning effect respectively on tourists’ buying behavior.

Before Taiwan’s complete open-up to Mainland China, many domestic scholars have conducted a large number of empirical studies on the visits by Mainland tourists to Taiwan. In the terms of the existing domestic literature, the researches have selected the following 5 aspects to study.

Firstly, the study on the necessity of Taiwan’s open-up to Mainland visitors. Chen (2005) held that the open-up of visits to Taiwan in Mainland China can bring to Taiwan tourism market a considerable tourist source, which will promote the development of the tourism economy in Taiwan, so the Taiwan authorities should not refuse Mainland compatriots to carry out tourism activities in Taiwan; Chen (2006) discussed Taiwan’s unique attractiveness to Mainland residents. Mainland residents hope to travel to Taiwan, which will surely generate a win-win situation for the tourism development across the Strait in two directions.

Secondly, the dynamic study on the market of visits to Taiwan. With regard to market management, Wu (2009) probed into the issues concerning complaints, insurance and compensation that might emerge in the process of the market management on visits by Mainland residents to Taiwan, and put forward some suggestions to further regulate this newly emerging market; With regard to market demand, Yue and Chen (2008a; 2008b) made a preliminary exploration on the market demand of visits by Mainland residents to Taiwan, and further investigated Mainland residents’ willingness to travel to Taiwan; Ma et al (2008) conducted a special investigation on Beijing residents, and summarized their demand and willingness to travel to Taiwan.

Thirdly, the study on the impact of post-visits to Taiwan. Wang (2008) outlined and summarized the reason and its consequent impact of the breakthrough that visits by Mainland residents to Taiwan had achieved; Lan and Zheng (2008) carried out deep discussions on the impact that the open-up of Taiwan as a tourism destination had on the tourism development of Hai’Xi and pointed out how Fujian Province should utilize this opportunity to strengthen tourism cooperation with Taiwan.

Fourthly, the study on Taiwan’s attractiveness to Mainland resident. Liu (2006) analyzed the pull factors of the tourism resources in Taiwan and Mainland tourists' perception factors for trips to Taiwan, and summarized Mainland tourists' perceptions and demand for trips to Taiwan through market survey and thereby prospected Taiwan’s traveling attractiveness to Mainland residents. Liang (2007) explored the attractiveness of cultural difference between Taiwan and Mainland China to Mainland compatriots, and proposed that this was a factor that the supply side of tourism industry should attach importance to.

Fifthly, the study on the competition and cooperation of the cross-strait tourism. Xu and Yuan (2007) analyzed some practical problems that Fujian and Taiwan had met in their isolated tourism development and the unreasonable competition due to the similarity of resources, and they put forward strategies to optimize the cross-strait tourism development in terms of resources, products, human resources and management. Liu and Xu (2007) made an analysis of the advantages that the Fujian and Taiwan had in terms of tourism resources, tourist market and policies, and presented strategies and suggestions for the cross-strait cooperation in terms of tourism marketing, etc. Weng (2006) made exploration on the cross-strait tourism cooperation and development; Deng and Huang (2007) indicated...
that it was the current world trend of the development of the tourism industry to strengthen regional cooperation to build a regional tourism cooperation zone. Judging from the effects of regional cooperation, it would also have a positive and significant impact on Taiwan which is on the east coast of the Strait and speed up the implementation of the construction of the “Cross-strait Tourism Zone”. Zheng and Huang (2009) analyzed the characteristics of the Mainland tourist market in Taiwan through a historical review of the cross-strait tourism exchange and proposed several marketing strategies targeting the Mainland market for Taiwan tourism industry combined with the status quo of Taiwan tourism development so as to promote cross-strait exchanges and cooperation in tourism.

To sum up, compared with the relatively complete domestic study on Mainland residents’ market demand for and perceptions on visits to Taiwan, there is a lacking of study abroad in this respect. However, domestic researches generally adopted qualitative methods while foreign researches conduct an in-depth macro-analysis from the political angle of the tourism development in Mainland China and Taiwan. Moreover, foreign literature generally conducted researches and analysis with modeling methods, which took relevant factors into full account and did quantitative research from the angle of the cross-strait interaction of tourism and politics. However, no one has carried out research on the visits by Mainland tourists to Taiwan.

In view of the increasing concern about trips to Taiwan, it is of great significance for the study to examine Mainland compatriots’ expectations and impact perceptions of visits to Taiwan with potential Mainland tourists as the objectives and with the combination of tourism resources in Taiwan and product characteristics, which will contribute to the peaceful reunification across the Taiwan Strait through tourism development.

METHOD

First, questionnaire designing. The purpose of the study is to explore Mainland compatriots’ motivations to visit Taiwan, to gain Mainland compatriots’ impact perceptions (both on Taiwan and Mainland China) of visits to Taiwan, and study Mainland compatriots’ requirement for the tourism product of visits to Taiwan, in order to better improve the design of the tourism product of visits to Taiwan and attract more Mainland tourists. The ultimate goal is to promote the development of tourism in Taiwan and promote cross-strait exchanges. Based on this, the questions in the questionnaire of the study, except the demographic characteristics, adopted the five-point Likert scale, with 5 being the highest score, representing “strongly agree” with the description of the questions, 1 representing “strongly disagree” with the description of the question, and 3 representing “Neutral”. The higher the score is, the higher the extent of agreement with the description of the question is.

Second, data sources. This study used a questionnaire survey. The members of the research group adopted Street Intercept Approach to get respondents’ consent in completing the self-administrative questionnaires. The data was collected over a period of 3 months between December 2008 and February 2009, during which 210 questionnaires were distributed and 195 were valid for data analysis after inspection.

Third, the use of SPSS (Statistics Package for Social Science) for multiple data processing and analysis. SPSS is a world recognized comprehensive software package acknowledged for its powerful capacity of statistical analysis. The study used SPSS 16.0 edition to carry out the definition and analysis of variables. Methods such as quick cluster analysis and single-factor variance analysis were adopted.

RESULTS

Since Taiwan opened up to Mainland residents in 2008, it has attracted a large number of tourists. The study considered to carry out analysis from different angles regarding the motivation to
participate in the visits to Taiwan. The questionnaire listed 31 motivations for respondents to choose. First, KMO Test and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity were used to detect whether the data collected was suitable for factor analysis. According to the result, the KMO for testing the partial correlation between variables was 0.787, which was very close to 1, indicating that there was not much difference in the degree of the correlation between variables and the data was suitable for factor analysis; The result of the Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity showed that the various indicators were not independent. The fact that their values were related was another evidence that the data was suitable for factor analysis.

Taiwan has beautiful natural scenery, unique customs of the indigenous people, well developed economics, science and technology industries. These provide the tourists a different experience. Different tourists traveling to Taiwan have different motives. The study adopted principal component factor extraction of factor analysis and extracted 8 motivation factors whose characteristic roots were greater than 1 (Table 1). The 8 motivation factors were “experiencing development”, “exchanging and inspecting”, “showing off and displaying”, “interpersonal communicating”, “relaxing and taking shelter”, “exploring novelty and differentiation”, “visiting relatives and friends”, and “entertaining and shopping”, among which the characteristic root of the factor “experiencing development” is 6.79, followed by “exchanging and inspecting” (with characteristic root being 3.80). The characteristic roots of the other 6 principal motivation factors are all greater than 1, which shows that the 8 principal factors can fully elaborate Mainland tourists’ motivations of their visits to Taiwan. It can be seen from the accumulated variance explained that 8 principal motivation factors can explain 64.364% of the participation motivations. The reliability test has been conducted for the factors. Their Cronbach’s coefficient a were all greater than 0.6, on the basis of which it can be inferred that the data collected was sufficient and reliable for the analysis of the motivations of trips to Taiwan.

Among the various motives, the mean of “experiencing development” is the highest (3.98), followed by “relaxing and taking shelter” (3.73) and “entertaining and shopping” (3.59). “Exchanging and inspecting” has received relatively high degree of concern (with its mean being 3.48), but the mean of “showing off and displaying” is slightly less than 3. From the above analysis, it should be noted that the main purpose for Mainland tourists to participate in visits to Taiwan which is a newly opened tourist destination is to experience Taiwan’s different atmosphere from Mainland China while seeking relaxation and gaining development though traveling there.

CONCLUSION AND RESTRICTIONS

Mainland compatriots travel to Taiwan due to different motivations and these motivations can be summerized into eight categories: experiencing development, exchange and inspection, show-off and display, interpersonal communications, relaxation and taking shelter, exploration of novelty and differentiation, visiting relatives and friends, entertainment and shopping. This showed that trips to Taiwan could satisfy people’s various needs, which provides good opportunities for Mainland compatriots.

The study reached the conclusions above through market survey. The participation motivations, impact perceptions on trips to Taiwan and the expectations for the product have been investigated and analyzed to put forward constructive suggestions to the improvement of the tourism products of trips to Taiwan and further promote the tourism development across the Taiwan Strait, especially the development of the tourism industry in Taiwan. However, the study still has some limitations: firstly, the motivation dimensions to participate are too diverse. The perception range of impact in the study still needs to be perfected, and further analysis of the causes can be made from the psychological level. Secondly, the study just conducted related investigation on various aspects of impact that can be perceived on both sides of the Strait, but it didn’t deeply analyze the cause of the impact perceptions. Thirdly, the sample size of this study was limited. With the rising popularity of trips to Taiwan, comparative study can be conducted continually on Mainland compatriots’ impact perceptions before and after trips to Taiwan, and all aspects of the actual experiences are required to be assessed after the trips in order to further analyze the correctness of the study, and thus more in-depth discussions can be carried out on the applicability of the research methods of the study.
### Table 1
Principal factor analysis of motivations of visits to Taiwan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation factors</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Factor-loading capacity</th>
<th>Characteristic root</th>
<th>Variance Explained (%)</th>
<th>Accumulated Variance Explained (%)</th>
<th>Coefficient of Reliability (α)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 <strong>experiencing development</strong></td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>6.79</td>
<td>10.77</td>
<td>10.77</td>
<td>0.784</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To know more about Taiwan's local unique folk customs</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>0.765</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To appreciate the beautiful natural scenery of Taiwan</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>0.732</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To gain different travel experiences from other destinations</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>0.725</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To see Taiwan residents' standard of living and way of life</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0.697</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curious about Taiwan</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>0.516</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To equip oneself</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>0.379</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 <strong>Exchanging and inspecting</strong></td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>19.106</td>
<td>0.736</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To exchange in terms of education, culture, science and technology, and sports</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>0.708</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To carry out economic and trade activities</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>0.614</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To inspect well-developed industry</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>0.549</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To understand Taiwan's culture, science and technology, sports and other economic and trade situation</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>0.535</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To acquire Taiwan's historical and cultural knowledge</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>0.467</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To visit Taiwan's historical and cultural attractions</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>0.442</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 <strong>showing off and displaying</strong></td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>8.22</td>
<td>27.329</td>
<td>0.761</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To tell others my traveling experience</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>0.783</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>To show off and improve my social status</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>0.738</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>To take pictures and show others the pictures</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>0.714</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 <strong>interpersonal communicating</strong></td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>8.08</td>
<td>35.404</td>
<td>0.777</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To understand Taiwan’s social relationships</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.856</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>To understand the Mainland's cross-strait relations with Taiwan</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0.832</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To experience the hospitality of Taiwan compatriots</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>0.583</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 <strong>Relaxing and Taking shelter</strong></td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>7.71</td>
<td>43.118</td>
<td>0.704</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To escape from the red tape of daily life</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>0.830</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To escape from the boring work</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>0.819</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To travel to places that others have not been to</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.451</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 <strong>Exploring novelty and differentiation</strong></td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>50.613</td>
<td>0.665</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To explore</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>0.805</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To participate in stimulating recreational activities</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>0.762</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To show off to others</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>0.486</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 <strong>Visiting relatives and friends</strong></td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>7.34</td>
<td>57.954</td>
<td>0.705</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To strengthen the links with distant relatives and friends in Taiwan</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>0.786</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To find lost friends and relatives</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>0.761</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To develop close friendship</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>0.434</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To get to know different people</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>0.419</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8 <strong>entertaining and shopping</strong></td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>64.364</td>
<td>0.636</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To look for fun and entertain oneself</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>0.754</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To search for novelty</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>0.725</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To enjoy shopping</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>0.415</td>
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GREEN ESSENCE OR GREEN WASH? CONCEPTUALISATION AND ANATOMY OF GREEN DESTINATION BRANDS

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ABSTRACT

Purposeful positioning and promotion of destinations based on natural attractions and eco-credentials is not novel or uncommon. Growth in eco-tourism outpacing all other segments of the global travel and tourism industry is evidence of the appeal of environmental tourism over the past two decades. However, this concept only goes so far to explain how destinations embrace and emphasise the green essence of their brand identity. This paper extends the concept of green brands to destinations and explores the potential benefits, limits and problems of green destination branding. Features and characteristics of green destination brands are identified drawing on established concepts in corporate branding and destination image and branding. Application of the concept is demonstrated through an in-depth case study analysis of New Zealand’s destination brand in order to explain the possibilities and problems of green brands in this context. Barriers to the effective execution and implementation of a green destination brand are also explained and the implications for destination marketing organizations are outlined.

Keywords: destination branding, green marketing, conceptual development, New Zealand

INTRODUCTION

Eco-tourism is not a new phenomenon. Nature-based tourism has a long tradition (Ousby, 2002). Modern forms, such as eco-tourism, gained popularity in the 1980s but, can be traced back to the wildlife conservation reserves in Kenya opening to tourists in the 1960s (Honey, 2009). Academic study of eco-tourism has grown steadily over the past two decades (Jayawardena, Patterson, Choi, & Brain, 2008). Enthusiasm for the issue reflects the segment’s buoyancy over the past 20 years (Mastny, 2001; The International Ecotourism Society, 2006) and greater consensus on the meaning of key concepts (Horobin, 1996). A destination’s environment, often a core component of its image, is a key factor motivating tourists’ destination choice and loyalty (Hosany, Ekinci, & Uysal, 2006; Meng & Uysal, 2008).

With rising concern over the impacts of global warming, there is a danger that tourism operators and destination marketing organisations (DMOs) will exaggerate their eco-credentials. Even though steps to improve environmental management and accountability are positive, destination brands may suffer from inconsistency in approaches which create conflicting messages. As some players jump on the green bandwagon, their actions might do more harm than good to the green image of destination brands. Despite a surge in reported green practices and accreditation, little is known about how the concept applies to destination brands. An immediate issue arising from the notion of a green destination brand is whether it encourages or erodes the environmental, economic and social capital embodied in the brand.

The idea and importance of green destination brands holds greater salience for tourism dependent nations like Costa Rica and Kenya. In addition, destinations with focal natural attractions and strong environmental associations cannot afford to neglect or damage this dimension of their brand image. Conversely, over-emphasis on a country brand’s green factor due to the appeal of its physical environment might conflict with efforts to reposition the brand’s image. Cultivation and protection of a positive green destination image is inherently problematic, albeit alluring. Despite strong interest in green brands in general, potential application to destinations is poorly understood, lacking a formal definition. The purpose of this paper is to extend the concept of a green brand to destinations. To achieve this goal, insights from corporate and destination branding, and green marketing are first reviewed. To
understand the possible benefits and limits of the concept, New Zealand’s brand is analysed to provide an anatomy of a ‘green’ destination brand.

CONCEPTUALISING GREEN DESTINATION BRANDS

A nation’s natural assets, properly managed, provide a powerful source of emotional and symbolic value – both for internal and external audiences. Furthermore, countries that promote the philosophies, values and practices of environmental sustainability, rather than simply the natural beauty of their landscapes, might develop a positive, sustainable basis of reputational advantage. Even though these and other gains from nation branding to enhance a country’s competitive advantage are widely accepted, the conceptual and empirical basis of nation branding is in its infancy (de Chernatony, 2008). A fundamental divide exists over whether nations can and should be branded (e.g. Anholdt, 2006; Blichfeld, 2005). Furthermore, unlike corporate brand management, there are no set guidelines on how to defend and build nation brand equity (Florek & Insch, 2008).

Papadopolous and Helsop (2002) argue that a feature distinguishing nation brands from ‘traditional’ brands is that they “are not directly under marketer’s control”. Furthermore, unlike commercial products, a country is a public domain. “Place brands incorporate no clear ‘ownership’, and hence lack of ownership delimits possibilities for brand management” (Blichfeld, 2005: 399). Despite the difficulties, a number of countries implement destination branding strategies to boost economic growth and improve residents’ standard of living. Ultimately, the goal of nation and destination branding should be to create a unique, sustainable position for the destination in consumers’ minds. As de Chernatony and McDonald (1998: 20) argue, a brand’s success results from “being able to sustain added values in the face of competition”. It is the unique combination of values, related to a country’s assets, which offer differentiation for the country brand and relevance to target audiences (de Chernatony, 2008). However, it is often difficult to capture the diversity and complexity of a nation in a single positioning statement that will appeal to different stakeholder groups. Consequently, countries might fall into the trap of trying to be ‘everything to everyone’ and not communicating anything distinctive or unique.

Whether a green position offers destinations the opportunity to differentiate their brand has not received much attention in the literature. Organisations and individuals in the tourism industry might invest in building a green destination brand if they perceive it will enhance brand image, preference and loyalty. Like other associations, environmental or green associations must be authentic, convincing and offer a point of difference from rival destinations (Cai, 2001).

Brands that can be classified as green are those whose users’ primary associations are environmental conservation and sustainable practices. Of the few studies that have examined the nature of green brands, Hartmann et al. (2005: 10) characterize a green brand identity as having ‘a specific set of brand attributes and benefits related to the reduced environmental impact of the brand and its perception as being environmentally sound’. The vagueness of environmentally sound behaviours is reflected in the loose definition of a green brand. Consequently, organisations that highlight their environmental stewardship are often accused of greenwashing (akin to the notion of white washing), due to the difficulties in verifying this position. Consumer skepticism and criticism of greenwashing practices has compounded resistance to support green brands (Rex & Baumann, 2007).

Green brands are distinguished by their focus on green values. This accords with the strength of brands being derived from a clearly defined identity (Keller, 2003) and focus on one brand essence (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000) that appeals to users (First & Khetriwal, 2008). Further, effective green positioning involves brand communication and differentiation based on functional attributes and emotional benefits (Hartmann et al., 2005). Like green product brands, green destination brands must consider the limits of traditional eco-labelling systems that summarise technical information (Rex & Baumann, 2007). Eco-labels might add credibility to green brands, but are unlikely to actively communicate the array of functional and emotional benefits consumers, other than the ‘greenest’, seek.
Eco-destinations and green destination brands are not synonymous. A destination might be perceived as having a green brand even though it does not feature or promote eco-tourist attractions or resorts. Alternatively, eco-tourists might represent a large slice of a destination’s market, but these tourists do not perceive it as a green brand. On the other hand, eco-tourism and green destination brands might be mutually reinforcing. Thus, the multitude of tourist operators, resorts, activities, attractions, supporting services and infrastructure, residents and tourists at the destination each support or detract from the ambitions of a green destination brand. For example, in the Asia-Pacific, New Zealand is rated highly as a green nation, yet none of its cities is perceived as having a green brand. This contrasts with Sweden, which is seen as a green destination brand, and also is home to a green city, Malmo. On the other hand, Quicksilver is a recognized operator in Australia’s tourism industry, committed to conservation of the Great Barrier Reef, a World Heritage site (Honey, 2003). Yet, Australia does not rank highly based on its environmental record as a country, nor is it noted as a home to green cities.

To overcome the amorphousness of green brands that can lead to criticism, certification systems (among others) offer the structure to reinforce green brands. Examples in the tourism industry include Costa Rica’s Certificate for Sustainable Tourism (CST) and Australia’s Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program (NEAP) certification schemes, as well as the well established ISO 14001 EMS accreditation system (Honey, 2003). In addition, a number of indicators and indexes of countries’ and cities’ environmental performance exist to benchmark destinations’ eco-credentials. Widely published and referenced measures include, but are not limited to: the National Geographic Society’s ‘Greendex’, the Environmental Performance Index and the Environmental Sustainability Index.

Despite the spurt in interest in eco-tourism and sustainable tourism development, related research in green destination marketing and branding is limited. Walker and Hanson (1998) compare destinations to traditional products and services through a taxonomy of green marketing differences. They argue that even though destinations share a number of common motives for engaging in green marketing as for products and services - quality of life, socio-economic impacts, waste disposal and pollution management and customers’ attitudes and behaviours - there are several notable differences. Destinations are distinct from the other categories as the marketer does not directly consume the natural resource, but is best described as a stakeholder and steward rather than a user. In addition, destination marketers have limited or no control over visitors’ experiences and have little capacity to expand the destinations’ portfolio. In contrast to green product marketing, tourists do not take ownership of the destination, yet are often important environmental stakeholders charged with protecting the destinations’ assets. Unlike goods and services marketing, destination marketers face the added dilemma of pricing their offerings at a rate that will attract tourists, but not incur costs (or at least minimal) to the natural environment. Destination marketers also face the challenge of satisfying the needs and welfare of multiple stakeholders – visitors, residents, and the natural environment (Walker & Hanson, 1998).

The focus of green tourism marketing is on profiling green or nature-based tourists (See, for example, Meng & Uysal, 2008). This mirrors the general state of green marketing. As Rex and Baumann (2007: 569) observe, ‘most efforts have been related to the characteristics of individuals, in terms of green consumers, how many there are, how to identify them, and how they behave. According to First & Khetriwal (2008: 3), “the concept of ‘green branding’ is almost unexplored. Much more attention has been given to ‘green marketing’ and ‘green communication’”’. In parallel, knowledge of the concept of green destination brands is also limited.

**METHODOLOGY**

An in-depth case study of New Zealand’s destination brand was chosen to explore the application of the green brand concept to the destination context. New Zealand was selected as a critical case to examine due to the global recognition of its natural environment as a major attraction for tourists. Since building and maintaining a brand is a long-term commitment, an historical case study approach was selected as the most appropriate methodology. This contrasts with prior studies that have taken a snapshot approach. In this study, the evidence was collected to capture the development of the destination’s brand identity and perceptions over time, since ‘historical phenomena can be rich and
complex and that they can best be understood by investigating the time(s), place(s), and context(s) in which they arise and develop’ (Low & Fullerton, 1994: 174). The fundamental objective of historical research is to establish accurate accounts of social phenomenon through a careful consideration of all relevant available data. The potential for biases that may taint analysis and interpretation of historical data is always present. To minimise this potential, data from the different primary and secondary sources were triangulated to substantiate facts where possible. In addition, informal interviews were conducted with a range of participants representing various segments of the national tourism industry – government agencies and departments, regional tourism organisations, major airlines and operators. Data from the interviews served to verify and supplement the archival sources in order to achieve data triangulation and were not a primary data source. Key events in the construction of the brand are discussed and appropriate supporting evidence is given to illustrate and substantiate the interpretation of important facts.

FINDINGS - ANATOMY OF A GREEN DESTINATION BRAND

New Zealand is a youthful, ‘new world’ nation dependent on international tourism among its other resource-intensive industries (i.e. dairy, meat, horticulture). Earnings from tourism contribute approximately 10% of GNP (Anon, 2008). Yet, New Zealand represents a fraction of the international travel and tourism market and competes for 30% of the market against about 90 other countries (Morgan & Pritchard, 2002). Such dependency is unhealthy given the increasing susceptibility of tourism to economic and political risk, environmental crises and price competition. Much of the allure of visiting and exploring New Zealand is due to its remoteness, low population density and isolation. Ironically, these features are also among the greatest obstacles facing the country’s tourism industry.

Since colonial development, New Zealand’s pristine environment and unique landscape – a scenic wonderland - has featured prominently in its tourist promotions (Bell, 2008). Subsequent marketing campaigns have capitalized on the recognition gained through the movie ‘Lord of the Rings’ which effectively put New Zealand on the mass market tourism map. While the positioning of clean and green might be considered a relatively recent move, these values have been linked to national identity since the 1970s (Bell, 1996). New Zealand gained attention for its stance against nuclear energy and genetically modified organisms in the 1980s. The nuclear-free label is emphasized in one of the country’s leading beer brands – Steinlager Pure. New Zealand food manufacturers, particularly in the dairy and meat product categories, also link the quality of their produce to the country’s clean green image, but without an understanding of the potential risks of green positioning or the financial outcomes of their investments (Insch & Florek, 2009).

New Zealand’s positioning as a ‘green’ country has continued unabated. Launch of the much celebrated ‘100% pure’ campaign in 1999 cemented this position. The country’s (and one of the world’s) longest-running tourism campaign built on the values and images originally established, but with less clutter. The environment was elevated as the core component of the brand. In particular, the visual representation of the concept, the fernmark logo, features prominently and was recommended to take a more pervasive role in the destination’s brand communications (Tourism New Zealand, 2003). First registered as a trademark in 1991, the fernmark was conceived based on research of international visitors’ perception of New Zealand’s personality - unaffected, honest and open; young, active, fresh; not knowing the meaning of can’t do; resolute; quiet achievers; and seeking contemporary solutions (Masterton, 1992).

A redesigned black and white fern logo was introduced in November 1999 at a cost of $17 000. The complementary tourism slogan and logo ‘100% pure’ developed by M&C Saatchi was capable of being adapted to a range of contexts – 100% pure experience, 100% pure exhilaration, 100% pure brilliance. In addition to forming the basis of the Tourism Board’s promotional messages in international markets, the campaign also established standards for tourism services (Florek & Insch, 2008). A new logo for their tourist operators’ quality assurance scheme (QA), Qualmark®, was launched in July 2002, using the same stylised silver fern used in international tourism marketing. The silver fernmark links QA with the Visitor Information Network, creating a recognisable and unified brand for all visitors.
Six years later, the Qualmark® scheme was expanded to audit operators’ environmental sustainability under the “Go for Gold” initiative. The additional criteria requires Qualmark-licensed operators to meet minimum standards for environmental performance, covering areas including: energy efficiency, water conservation, greater use of recycling, waste reduction, improved fuel use and higher levels of involvement in local conservation activities. Accredited operators with advanced environmental systems can achieve higher enviro-gold, enviro-silver and enviro-bronze rankings under the scheme. According to Tourism New Zealand (2008: 6), this initiative was introduced ‘as a result of the industry’s commitment to sustainability through the New Zealand Tourism Strategy’. Launched in May 2008, it is difficult to evaluate its effectiveness or contribution to the authority’s goal of environmental enhancement and protection. The aim of environmental leadership is documented in New Zealand’s latest Tourism Strategy. As part of this strategy, it aims to be a carbon neutral destination by 2015 (Tourism New Zealand, 2007). Meanwhile, the nation aspires to achieve this status in 2020, with zero net carbon emissions across all sectors of the economy (Anon, 2007). The lag between promoting the destination’s position and introducing the necessary QA standards, echoes in the words of New Zealand Tourism Minister, Mr Damien O’Connor, “The 100 percent Pure New Zealand brand has positioned New Zealand on the world stage in terms of its environmental standards. It has become a promise and an aspirational goal” (quoted in Milne, 2008: 7).

New Zealand’s brand position is intended to attract tourists seeking nature-based experiences and eco-tourism activities. This segment, named the ‘Interactive Traveller®’, travel often, are active participants in a range of activities, especially in the natural environment, are environmentally and culturally aware and want to share authentic and new experiences with others (Tourism New Zealand, 2008). To raise awareness of the country as a destination among this segment, several consecutive advertising campaigns have depicted the country’s stunning and varied landscapes. A Maori culture and heritage dimension has been added to the singular environmental focus of the brand, in order to differentiate its identity from rival destinations such as Canada, Australia, Sweden and Switzerland.

To reach the interactive traveller, the DMO and independent tourist operators use a variety of media, with online communication prominent in the mix. A study by Bell (2008) indicates that almost 25% of all internet sites advertising eco-tourism explicitly mention New Zealand. The country also has the largest number of Green Globe 21 accredited businesses in the world (Natural Capital, 2004) and the town of Kaikora achieved this status (Tourism New Zealand, 2007). Yet, the industry has been slow to encourage environmental accreditation as part of Qualmark®.

Success of Tourism New Zealand’s campaigns, based on a strong environmental positioning, might be claimed in valuations of New Zealand’s destination brand. In 2005, Interbrand valued New Zealand’s tourism brand as worth US$13.6bn (Interbrand, 2005). In addition, BrandFinance estimated the value of brand New Zealand as US$102bn (Anholt-GMI, 2005). In the same year, 100% pure was named the tenth best tourism brand in the world in the Anholt-GMI nations brand index (Anholt-GMI, 2005). Visitor numbers have risen by 50% cent to 2.4 million annually and tourism export earnings have doubled to $5.9 billion per annum (Tourism New Zealand, 2008). An earlier study attempted to place a value on the image of New Zealand’s clean green image. The Ministry for the Environment (2001) estimated that the country would lose about NZ$938 million in revenue from its five inbound tourist markets (Australia, Korea, the US and UK, and Japan) if tourists’ perceptions of the environment were degraded. International visitors originating from these markets were shown images representing a clean green New Zealand, and images portraying New Zealand with a degraded environment. They were then asked how this would affect their length of stay. Results varied between countries. On average Australian tourists would cut short their length of stay by 48%, compared to 79% for Japanese tourists.

Difficulties in accurately measuring the monetary value embodied in a positive environmental image abound. However, there are threats to the sanctity of New Zealand’s environment and tourists’ perceptions that it delivers on this brand promise. Some of the most urgent environmental challenges facing the nation include poor and deteriorating air quality (particularly in the two major gateways to New Zealand - Auckland and Christchurch), erosion and the visual impact of some land-use practices on landscapes, degraded freshwater quality (especially from intensive agriculture) and marine environments in estuaries and harbours located near main population centres (Ministry for the Environment, 2001).
New Zealand, like other isolated and distant destinations, is also threatened by the mounting concern among environmentally conscious consumers over the impact of carbon emissions linked to tourism. Similar to the ‘green miles’ dilemma for food imports, opinion leaders in key markets (especially the UK and Germany) are questioning the environmental and ethical basis of long-haul travel (Tourism New Zealand, 2007). Even though the impacts of this movement have not been be quantified, the industry has recognised the need to focus on niche markets, more able to offset their related carbon emissions. Further, there is growing awareness of the need to account for their carbon emissions and demonstrate environmental responsibility through carbon offsetting programs. For example, Christchurch International Airport, is the second airport in the world to achieve carbon neutral status through a national accreditation scheme, carboNZero (Anon, 2008).

A positive indicator of New Zealand’s environmental performance that adds credibility is ranking 7th in the 2008 Environmental Performance Index. However, despite these broad metrics of a strong green destination brand, there is contradictory evidence to undermine and erode its image. Bell’s (2008) examination of New Zealand backpacker hostel operators revealed a significant gap between New Zealand’s ‘green brand’ promises and the systems and services that form part of the delivery process. There is also growing unease about the country’s environmental concern and authenticity. In 2006 New Zealand was reported as one of the 10 worst countries in the world for consumer demand for natural resources by the World Wide Fund for Nature. Further, limited evidence of domestic consumers’ perceptions of these associations indicates skepticism. A survey of New Zealanders found that 42% thought that the clean green concept was a myth, despite the wide recognition the concept has within New Zealand (Gendall et al., 2001).

Growth in climate change related tourism, including Antarctic icebergs as a new tourist attraction, is creating an unfortunate irony and associated demand for transport reinforcing the conditions that may have contributed to the attraction. New Zealand, like other countries, also faces criticism over its inability to meet Kyoto Protocol targets for reducing carbon emissions. By 2003, its emissions had increased by 22% (Pollock, 2008). Two years later, greenhouse gas emissions increased by 24.7% compared to 1990 levels (Ministry for the Environment, 2008). The 100% pure campaign has also been parodied and is accessible to a wide audience via the proliferation of digital media and social networking platforms.

Collectively, these signals threaten to undermine New Zealand’s clean green position. In addition, as the general manager of tourism services at AA, Peter Blackwell notes, “The competition for global dollars and leisure experiences is extreme and if you look at the core values of what New Zealand is, which is clean and green ... Peru, Chile, Costa Rica, Vietnam - they all can fit into that category of new competitive environments around the world” (quoted in Hembry, 2006).

CONCLUSION

Creative leveraging of awe-inspiring landscapes depicted in film, a persuasive and universal communications medium, have crystallized New Zealand’s ambitions to build a green destination brand. However, such ardent positioning presents multiple dilemmas for DMOs. Particular challenges in creating a unique and sustainable green destination brand relate to the major differences between destination brands and traditional product and service brands. Of these, perhaps the most complex is enabling all stakeholders to act as stewards of the assets of the brand – the natural environment which they choose to experience. Each stakeholder group – visitors, operators, residents, promoters – differ in terms of their motives for supporting a green destination brand and acting out their environmental commitment. Divergence of interests makes a green destination brand almost impossible to protect from harm. Like all destination brands, ownership is distributed, meaning that the integrity of the brand is difficult, if not impossible, to control. In spite of this major barrier, the allure of green destination brands remains and many destinations, like New Zealand, purposefully craft their brand identity on this basis. Although, from the case analysis, it appears that the greatest obstacle to overcome greenwashing is consistently delivering this promise to an environmentally savvy and discerning market. The consequences of contaminating a green brand image are exacerbated by word-of-mouth and social media...
platforms to learn and complain about, recommend or discourage others to visit, based on personal experience.

It has been argued that top-down and bottom-up approaches to building green destination brands must work synergistically (Bell, 2008). Choosing the right incentives (sanctions versus reward) to encourage consistent environmental messages and practices (image versus reality) might represent the greatest barrier to green destination brands. For example, it is unknown whether tourism operators would be more likely to respond to penalties for inappropriate behaviour or act proactively through pride for their natural surroundings. Evidence suggests that sectors of the industry with the most to lose and prove (i.e. transport) have taken steps to maximise their environmental credibility through carbon reduction and offsetting measures. Whether they were forced to ‘go green’ in order to pre-empt a consumer backlash is unclear. Other operators enthusiastically embrace the green umbrella brand as mutually reinforcing the positioning of their brands. At the same time, real threats to New Zealand’s brand could potentially taint their own image.

The New Zealand experience suggests that sequencing is vital in this process of setting expectations and ensuring systems are in place to meet them. The wisdom of promotional campaigns with an emphasis on the natural environment preceding a universal system of substantiating and protecting its environmental positioning is questionable. An even greater dilemma is ensuring that residents protect the integrity of the brand, especially populations which do not strive to minimize or mitigate their negative environmental impacts. Travellers observe unfavourable behaviours and also take note of where and how a destination’s environmental standards and regulations are less stringent than their home.

This first step to understand the nature of green destination brands raises as many, if not more, questions than it aimed to answer. Further, in-depth analysis of individual tourism operators’ approaches and perceptions is suggested to better understand the barriers and enablers to build strong, credible green destination brands. On the other hand, research could uncover travellers’ perceptions and attitudes of destinations that strive to build an identity based primarily on their positive environmental values and behaviours. From this perspective it might be possible to assess whether destinations can achieve a differentiated, sustainable brand positioning strategy based on their ‘greenness’ and whether travellers view destinations’ greenness with credence. This is imperative, given similar ambitions of nations to reduce their carbon emissions and achieve carbon neutral status (among other admirable environmental goals). Like the thin literature on green marketing and branding, more work is needed to identify the most effective and credible ways of communicating green destination brand essence to receptive audiences. Additional case studies, at multiple levels – nations, regions, cities, resorts - would serve as an appropriate tool for comparison, to gain a deeper understanding of the concept, anatomy and implications of building green destination brands.

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CO-CREATION AS A STRATEGIC ELEMENT OF TOURISM DESTINATION BRANDING

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ABSTRACT

In this article, an attempt is made to build a bridge between new insights in marketing research with regard to the construct of co-creation and the potential that this construct may offer for branding a tourism destination in order to enhance the competitiveness of such a destination. Prahalad proposed an experience-centered, co-creation perspective where the brand becomes the experience. It is precisely in tourism that experiences play an essential role; active involvement of the tourist will lead to a deeper experience, and as such, in the context of the Service-Dominant (S-D) logic, to a higher value. The point of departure will therefore be the foundational proposition of the (S-D) logic theory that the consumer is always the co-creator of value. This involves “customer’s active involvement and interaction with their supplier in every aspect, from product design to product consumption” (Payne et al, 2008). The aim of this article is to present a model in tourism relationship experience in order to enhance the possibilities of co-creation and to postulate ways in which co-creation can be strategically leveraged as a key element of tourism destination branding.

Keywords: tourism destination competitiveness, tourism experiences, co-creation, destination branding

INTRODUCTION

In this article, an attempt is made to build a bridge between new insights in marketing research with regard to the construct of co-creation and the potential that this construct may offer for branding a tourism destination in order to enhance its competitiveness.

Co-creation has recently received considerable attention in the marketing literature, in which the locus of value creation and value extraction is seen as the result of the interaction process between companies and consumers (Prashalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2007, 2008; Payne, Storback and Frow, 2008). In this article the author identifies the foundational proposition of the service-dominant (S-D) logic that the consumer is always the co-creator of value. This involves “customer’s active involvement and interaction with their supplier in every aspect, from product design to product consumption” (Payne et al., 2008 p. 1). Up until then, the traditional concept was that value creation took place within a company and the product was the end of the consumer experience. In the service-dominant (S-D) logic, as opposed to the good-dominant (G-D) logic, co-creation experiences are regarded as the basis for value creation. It is precisely in tourism that experiences play an essential role; active involvement of the tourist will lead to a deeper experience, and as such, in the context of the S-D logic, to a higher value. From an optimal destination brand experiences perspective, dialogue between tourists and private and public experience stagers is essential. Prahalad proposed an experience-centered, co-creation perspective where the brand becomes the experience (Prahalad, 2004. p.24). There is little attention in the brand management domain for brand relationships, customer experience and co-creation (Paine et al., 2008).

Given the fragmented nature of the tourism industry, local destination organizations (DMOs) have been chosen in this study to represent destinations in general, much the same as Wang and others did (Wang, 2008:151), with a focus on collaborative destination marketing as the representative of supplier processes in tourism.

From a theoretical point of view, the purpose of this article is to develop a conceptual framework that supports understanding of the construct of co-creation of a brand in tourism business-to-consumer markets. Subsequently, based on a practical point of view, a set of instruments will have to be developed to help DMOs manage the co-creation process, in order to improve their competitiveness. Trying to address these challenges at a pragmatic level would be useful for academics, practitioners and policy makers.
TOURISM EXPERIENCES AND CO-CREATION

Today’s consumers have quite a different attitude towards consumption than previous generations. In addition, tourists and consumers in general are not only better educated and wealthier, but also have access to more information than ever before. Tourists are looking for unique activities, tailored experiences, special interest focus, experiences in a lifestyle destination setting, living culture, creative spaces and creative spectacles (Gross & Brown, 2006). The need for authentic experiences, not contaminated by being fake or impure, is also growing increasingly (Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Yeoman et al., 2007). Tourism destinations in particular can offer visitors experiences that they do not normally find in their everyday lives. Oh et al. (2007:119) posit that “The benefit chain of causality view of tourism motivations tends to position tourist experience as a construct that transforms destination settings and activities into ultimate benefits and value that tourists obtain by visiting the destination.”

In research on tourism behaviour, experiences do play a significant role (Oh et al., 2007; Morgan & Watson, 2007; Gross & Brown, 2006). “Tourism has been at the forefront of staging experiences” and “Tourism’s central productive activity is the creation of the touristic experience” (Sternberg, 1997 in Oh et al., 2007:119). According to the authors mentioned, tourists are in fact and by definition looking for experiences.

Pine and Gilmore (1999, 2002a, 2002b, in Oh et al., 2007) distinguish four types of experiences: the aesthetic experience, the entertainment experience, the escapist experience and the educational experience. Experiences determine the value of destinations and DMOs are increasingly using this in positioning their destinations in the market. “The demand is growing for travel that engages the senses, stimulates the mind, includes unique activities, and connects in personal ways with travellers on an emotional, psychological, spiritual or intellectual level” (Arsenault, N., & Gale, T., 2004 in Canadian Tourism Commission Research Report 7:21).

So far, little attention has been devoted to the possibilities and forms of co-creation in tourism research and particularly the possible influence of these possibilities and forms on the tourist experience. Canadian research (Arsenault & Gale, 2004), for instance, shows that contacts with the local community, such as cooking, visiting farms, and being welcomed into the homes of locals, are particularly appreciated. This also holds true for all sorts of experimental, practical and interactive activities. Tourists do not just want to be spectators. They want to participate, roll up their sleeves. Not only view the gardens, but also do some gardening. They want to take a peek behind the scenes, not only go to a concert, but also meet the musicians afterwards. Learning experiences, such as photography workshops, going to a wine university, learning to understand the ecosystem of an area of natural beauty, are also growing in popularity. Furthermore, the sharing of experiences, the social dynamics connected with travel, getting to know new people, reinforcing old friendships and making new ones, and spending time with relatives, are also considered important (Arsenault, N., & Gale, T., 2004).

Interaction between and with consumers and providers is the foundation for co-creation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Co-creation involves active customer involvement in the production of a good or service, enhancing the final value of this good or service because the customer can tailor it as he or she desires (Lusch et al., 2007). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) speak of “co-creation experience”, with value creation as the result. For businesses, the days of autonomously designing products or developing production processes, tapping new distribution channels or engaging in other marketing activities without involving consumers, seem to have disappeared (Kristensson et al., 2008; Cova & Salle, 2008; Ramaswamy, 2008; Dahlsten, 2004; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). The publications mentioned demonstrate that co-creation not only leads to an increase in value creation, but may also contribute significantly to product innovation. Tourism research has yet to fully explore all the possibilities offered by co-creation for innovative developments in tourism destinations and the attendant increase in competitive strength.
DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION'S RESPONSE TO THE EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

To bridge the gap between the new tourist and the more traditional marketing-oriented DMO, the new marketing thoughts should provide a different conceptualization of the whole tourism consumption experience (Li & Petrick, 2008). According to Li and Petrick (2008), co-creation between tourists and providers should be the answer. Co-creation involves tourists’ active involvement and interaction with their supplier in every aspect, from product design to product consumption (Payne et al., 2008).

DMOs all over the world are confronted with major changes in the tourism industry and a rapidly changing tourism consumer, against the background of far-reaching social, political and economic developments (Gretzel et al., 2008). In addition to natural disasters and terrorist attacks, the tourism industry is also faced with sweeping climate changes and the consequences of this for tourism and tourism regions in particular (Ehmer & Heymann, 2008). Many DMOs face significant dilemmas: stakeholders with different interests, major changes in external environmental factors, tight financial budgets and last but not least DMOs face a red ocean of bloody competition” (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005).

Accordung to Buhalis (2002), “tourism destinations are one of the most difficult entities to market and to manage, due to the size and complexity of the stakeholders involved in the planning and development process, the nature of economic, environmental and socio-cultural diversities and the nature of the political system and public policies adapted”. DMOs are often still a traditional marketing organization. “Marketing was in most instances regarded as primarily attending trade shows, advertising in selected media, and developing key marketing tools (mainly videos, brochures and maps)” (Heath, 2003:12).

DMOs are generally public organizations, responsible for the image of the destination, charged with the coordination of public and private interests, the provision of tourism information, and trying to play a leading role in (new) tourism developments. In this process, they are challenged by insufficient financial resources, the breakneck advance of Internet technology, major conflicts of interest between the various stakeholders, and an ever fiercer competition with other destinations (Gretzel et al., 2008). In pursuing their policy, DMOs engage in destination marketing.

Destination marketing has evolved into a specialization of the general marketing theory, in which a tourism destination is considered a product with a specific set of attributes (Lichrou et al., 2008:29). The increasingly professional and commercial outlook has made destination marketing develop into a professional industry, organized and specialized to a high degree, in which marketing mix, branding and market segmentation are important areas of attention (Gotham, 2002). Gretzel et al. (2006) formulate a number of challenges for DMOs in order to “adopt ‘co-opetition’ strategies that allow for various degrees of collaboration and competition in different areas and at different levels” (Gretzel et al, 2006:116). For instance, DMOs will have to keep themselves updated on technological changes and incorporate these, where possible, into their operations. To be able to do so, DMOs will have to evolve from marketing-oriented organizations into management-oriented organizations. With reference to communication, DMOs should realize that in branding a destination, image creation plays a crucial role in improving interaction with tourism consumers. As a result tourist expectations can be better managed.

BRANDING A TOURISM DESTINATION AND CO-CREATION

Recent tourism market research increasingly focuses on the experience of tourists and the cultural context of a destination. Lichrou et al. (2008) assert that a destination must not only be regarded as a physical space. Places have intangible, cultural, historical and dynamic aspects too. They are experienced by tourists in a dynamic context of social interaction with a common cultural meaning and with a collective memory (Stokowski, 2002 in Lichrou et al., 2008). According to Murphy et al., the traditional destination branding approach emphasizes mostly on physical attributes and activity opportunities. Destinations are accordingly considered locations (Murphy et al., 2007). \
However, when defining a destination brand, literature shows an increasing attention for the impact of the visitor’s experience. (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1998; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Ryan, 2002). Blaine et al. defines destination branding as “the marketing activities that support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates a destination that convey the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination and that serve to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience, all with the intent purpose of creating an image that influences consumer decisions to visit the destination in question, as opposed to an other one” (Blain et al., 2005 p. 331-332). Others (Ekinici, 2003; Murphy et al., 2007) argue that a destination needs to establish a brand personality which links up to the tourist’s self-image through his or her needs and motives.

But those definitions still do not allow for co-creation based on experiences, whereas Prahalad claims that ‘the brand becomes the experience’ (Prahalad, 2004).

Lichrou et al. (2008) believe that visiting a tourism destination is about a process of experience, the dreams and fantasies of consumers, the meeting of people, interaction between hosts and visitors and other tourists. It concerns a dynamic context in which destinations are simultaneously produced and consumed. Tourists have an image of a tourism destination even though they have never been there. That is why Lichrou et al. (2008) have the opinion that destinations should be seen, metaphorically, as narratives rather than products. This view leaves room for the concept of interaction, co-creation, and for the notion of the tourist as participant instead of spectator.

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR CO-CREATION

Ramaswamy (2008:9) indicates the capability of an organization “by continuously interacting with its customers through engagement platforms, especially those centred on customer experiences” as strategic capital for innovation. Several attempts have been made in the marketing literature to develop a conceptual framework for co-creation by mapping of customer, supplier and encounter processes (Payne, Storback & Frow, 2008). The encounters involve the interactions and transactions between customers and enterprises and the possibility to identify co-creation and innovation opportunities.

In the new views of the so called Service-Dominant logic in marketing the customer is always a co-creator of value and this is a key foundational proposition of this logic (Lusch & Vargo, 2008:7). S-D logic suggests that the value starts with the supplier understanding customer value creating process and learning how to support customers’ co-creation activities. Until today, little or no attention has been paid to this proposition or S-D logic in the tourism literature (Li & Petric, 2008).

Following the S-D logic as described in (Payne et al., 2008:86) we may assume that tourists are also willing to engage in dialogue and interaction with the travel industry during product design, production, delivery and consumption. Figure 1 illustrates the processes of co-creation in tourism relationship experience. The arrows in the middle represent different encounters between the tourist and the tourism industry. In the supplier process the more industry learns about the tourist, the more opportunities become available for the tourism supplier to further improve the design of the relationship experience and enhance co-creation with the tourism consumer. Also the tourist is engaged in a learning process and this is based on his experience of the tourism supply and is a culmination of thinking (cognition), feeling (emotion) and doing (behaviour). To develop a brand relationship, DMOS should design and support co-creative processes as emotion-supporting encounters, cognition-supporting encounters and action-supporting encounters (Payne et al., 2008).

The tourism industry has to realize that one should not only focus on providing more extensive information on all kinds of product features, but also concentrate on how to facilitate the co-creation of tourist experiences. This means seeking the dialogue with tourism customers and related partners instead of communicating in a traditional, marketing oriented manner. For instance, the NBTC (the Dutch national DMO) has embarked on a new course in promoting The Netherlands as a destination. Together with several partners, the NBTC organised Holland House Event in April 2009 in London. This event, made up of three different levels, is aimed at raising the profile of the Netherlands as an attractive place to visit, by creating an experience that is ultimately supposed to lead to an increase in British visitor numbers to the Netherlands.
Dutch DJs and bands, as well as Dutch ex pats, Londoners and Brits, created a typical ‘Queen’s Day’ feeling in central London, a party of orange coloured fun. The second level relates to ‘promotional co-creation’ with social media such as Hyves, Facebook, Myspace and clubbing-related networks. The third level involves co-creation with local networks such as the Dutch Embassy, the Dutch Club and employee associations of Dutch businesses in Greater London. The event, both the day and the evening programme, attracted some 75,000 visitors.

Payne et al. (2008:85,86,87) distinguish 3 types of co-creation opportunities as strategic options for creating value. First for DMOs this contains the opportunities provided by technological breakthroughs as Web 2.0 (interactive tourism web sites, travel weblogs) and Web 3.0 also called the semantic web (third generation mobile services). Second, there are opportunities provided by changes in enterprise logics. It is no longer conception, selling and servicing but listening, customizing and co-creating. Third, opportunities provided by changes in tourism behaviour, preferences, experiences and lifestyles. Co-creation is outside-in thinking and means to understand the value creating process of the tourist and providing support to that process.

One of the challenges of a DMO is using, to speak with Ramaswamy (2008:9) “global network resources and thematic communities to continuously identify and act upon new innovation and value creation opportunities “for strengthen the competitiveness of the tourism destination.”

**Figure 1**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODEL FOR CO-CREATION IN TOURISM RELATIONSHIP EXPERIENCE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demand processes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning process in tourism consumption</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional interaction sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-creation &amp; tourism relationship Experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interaction between tourists</td>
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<td>Tourism websites</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotion</td>
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<td>Cognition</td>
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<td>Behavior</td>
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<td>Travel weblogs</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Encounter processes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-creation opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning for co-creation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implementations &amp; marketing metrics</td>
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<td>Interaction with tourism customers and employees</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Supplier processes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-creation &amp; tourism relationship design</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interaction with local suppliers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning process in tourism supply</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interaction with other tourism destinations</td>
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</table>

**CHALLENGES FOR DMOS AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

The main findings of this study are that tourism organizations and businesses will have to learn, one way or another, to communicate with tourism consumers in an entirely different and dynamic fashion. Tourism industry is facing major challenges and experiencing swift changes. The competitive ability of tourism businesses, organizations and destinations is radically influenced by the Internet (Buhalis & Law, 2008). According to Buhalis and Law (2008:617), the Internet is altering barriers to market entry, changing the cost structure of businesses – especially through decreased variable costs, revolutionizing distribution channels, facilitating price transparency, enhancing production efficiency, and reinforcing negotiating positions. They argue that all tourism players need to rethink their business models and take drastic actions in re-developing their value chains. Tourism business should also realize that no firm is big enough in scope and size to satisfy the experience of one consumer at a time. (Prahalad & Krishnan, 2008). Also Wang argues that no single tourism enterprise or agency can control and deliver a rich combination of tourism product and service portfolio at a destination (Wang, 2007:192).
Competitors are becoming partners and co-opetition and co-destiny are becoming increasingly important (Prahalad & Krishnan, 2008; Li & Petric, 2008). This means that DMOs will have to cooperate interactively with other partners in the destination through a process of exchanging ideas and expertise and linking together financial and human resources (Wang, 2008). Govers and Go (2009) argue that brand positioning “should be built on a value match between place identity and the type of audience the place is attempting to attract” (Govers & Go, 2009 p. 255).

Tourism suppliers will have to develop a strategy that is aimed at using technological advances, at creating a far-reaching form of interaction with consumers, but they will also have to consider new forms of cooperation with other players in the market. In the short term, this will lead to business models being altered, but in the long term to a new enterprise logic (Zuboff & Maxmin, 2002).

Especially in tourism, relatively little is known about how tourists can engage in the co-creation of value and the opportunities this offers to innovation strategies. Tourism research should investigate how DMOs are willing to develop an interactive relationship with tourism consumers in order to use co-creation as a tool to enhance destination competitiveness. But that also holds true for interactive collaborative relationships with and between public and private stakeholders in the area. Prahalad and Krishnan’s (2008:11) proposition that not a single tourism organization or business is big enough in scope and size to satisfy the experiences of one consumer at a time, also applies to DMOs.

Future research should concentrate on developing a conceptual model for co-creation by integrating all the collaborative and interactive relationships, centred around the unique, personalized experience of one tourism consumer. Existing and new (to be created) cognition-supporting, emotion-supporting and action-supporting encounters make up the platform via which co-creation possibilities can be developed. This implies that DMOs should emphasize on building destination brands around tourism consumers rather than around attractions, monuments or other facilities. This may ultimately lead to an increase in value creation as well as an increase in a DMOs competitive strength.

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HOW CAN A DESTINATION ATTRACT AND RETAIN LARGE SCALE EXHIBITIONS?

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ABSTRACT

This explorative study employs a qualitative method to analyze destination and venue features that attract and retain large scale exhibitions from the perspectives of exhibition organizers, exhibitors and visitors in the context of China’s exhibition industry development. Findings indicate focus and gaps of perceptions among different perspectives. The research has implications for destination management parties when making key decisions in order to optimise financial and human resources on those factors that can best improve attractiveness.

Keywords: exhibition, destination, China, interviews

INTRODUCTION

The exhibition industry is a booming industry worldwide. According to the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI), the largest international exhibition industry association that is represented in 206 cities in 84 countries, there were 1,062 venues with a minimum of 5,000 sqm of indoor exhibition space worldwide in 2006, with a total indoor exhibition space of 27.6 million sqm. The USA, Germany, China, Italy and France are the five top countries in terms of capacity, accounting for 58% of the world total (UFI, 2007).

China has experienced rapid development in the exhibition sector during the last two decades. China’s indoor exhibition space amounted to 2,516,581 sqm in 2007, the third highest in the world after the U.S. and Germany (UFI, 2007). There are over 240 large exhibition centers in China, 16 of which have more than 50,000 sqm indoor exhibition space 2004 (Shen, 2005, cited in Kay 2007). And there are still more projects in the pipeline. Many provincial and municipal governments regard the exhibition industry as a target pillar industry. Centers having over 5,000 sqm indoor exhibition spaces are present in all major cities in China. Rapid development of the exhibition sector has exerted considerable positive impact on destination development via development of the industry and the multiplier effect.

However, concerns about overdevelopment and overcapacity are not uncommon. The average utilization rate of exhibition centers is only about 15% (Kay, 2007). Although many exhibitions have a large number of visitors, the quality of visitors is frequently questioned. Too many venues, venue management quality, trade fair management quality, copycat shows, replication shows in second and third tier cities are some of the major issues affecting China’s exhibition industry development. Attracting quality and large-scale events is thus a challenge for many venues and destinations in China. Competition among destinations for exhibitions is getting more intensive. Hence a research question is proposed: How can a destination attract and retain large-scale exhibitions?

Commentators have postulated that destinations exert significant impact on the success of an exhibition event (Rubalcaba-Bermejo & Cuadrado-Roura, 1995; Fuchslocher, 2005), but no empirical studies scrutinize the effect of destination factors on exhibition development, especially from different
stakeholders’ perspective. In tourism destination studies, as well as convention destination studies, destination factors that influence the decision of tourists, meeting planners, and meeting participants have been well researched (Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2008; Chacko & Fenich, 2000; Crouch & Louviere, 2004; Oppermann, 1996). Bearing the similarities and differences among tourism destination, convention destination, and exhibition destination, the purpose of this paper is to use qualitative interview methods to confirm the validity of applying tourist destination site-selection and convention site-selection factors into measuring destination attractiveness in the exhibition setting. It also aims to discover main concerns of exhibitors, visitors and organizers regarding exhibition destination, so that significance of destination factors on exhibition industry development can be corroborated. This paper is actually a preliminary section of a series of studies which aim to examine factors that contribute to exhibition brand preference from different perspectives: organizer, destination, venue and exhibition participants.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A destination is identified as an ‘experience supplier’ by Ryan (1991, 1997), and regarded as a brand name of a place that binds the different products and services provided by a destination together. Destinations can be divided into leisure travel and business travel destinations. Business travel can be further broken down into promotable and non-promotable business trips. Promotable trips comprise of three kinds: trips to trade fairs and exhibitions, trips to conferences and congresses, and incentive trips (Hedorfer & Todter, 2005, p. 119).

The success of leisure travel destinations depends on the attractiveness of destination attributes to leisure travelers (Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2008). Destination attractiveness, choice and competitiveness have been mainstream topics of leisure tourism studies (Gomezelj & Mihalic, 2008; Pike, 2002).

Regarding business travel destinations, a number of authors have discussed convention destinations, including destination image, choice and selection (Chacko & Fenich, 2000; Crouch & Louviere, 2004; Oppermann, 1996). These studies have identified convention site (destination) selection variables and their relative importance. Crouch & Ritchie (1998) identified key site-selection factors for meeting planners as accessibility, local support, extra-conference opportunities, accommodation facilities, meeting facilities, information, site environment and other criteria. Crouch & Louviere (2004) used cost of venue, food quality, plenary room, on-site/off-site accommodation, and participant proximity in their empirical studies. Lee & Back (2008) confirmed that convention site-selection has a significant, positive impact on convention brand satisfaction and attitudinal brand loyalty.

Several commentators have discussed how exhibitions contribute to destination development (Clement, 2005) and how destination factors influence the cultivation of exhibitions (Chan, 2005; 2008; Rubalcaba-Bermejo & Cuadrado-Roura, 1995). Rubalcaba-Bermejo and Cuadrado-Roura (1995, p.387) found that “A whole set of widely varying reasons explains why some regions and cities are more attractive fair and exhibition hosts than others: tradition and history; local income and population; infrastructure and communications availability; location; tourism, environmental and weather condition; public investment and support policies; the city’s international standing; exhibition centre size; and the composition of regional industry.”

Traditionally, the place factor in hosting exhibitions is phrased as “location” of the exhibition and opinions on if “location” and its attributes influence exhibition participation and development are not in consent (e.g. Alles, 1989; Fuchslocher, 2005).

Some authors believe that the success of an exhibition is in no way affected by its location (Alles, 1989). Hiller (1995) argued that large conventions are attractions in themselves, with location and setting of secondary importance, due to delegates’ “commitment to the purpose of the convention” regardless of location (Hiller, 1995, p.375). He considered issues such as accessibility more important than the attractiveness of the surrounding site (Hiller, 1995). Alles (1989) argued that the location of an
exhibition is not so critical to visitors, but it is a significant factor of importance to exhibitors, as distance, climate, ethnic, linguistic, economic and historical links extend influence on exhibitions.

Other authors believe that location has a major effect on attendance, and regardless of the type of exhibitions, attendance is the key to success (Fenich, 2008, p.136). Tanner and colleagues (Tanner et al. 2001) and Berne and Garcia-Uceda (2007) concluded that location and time are influencing variables for visitors. Exhibition planners and organizers should select locations that are easier for audiences to accept and provide every ease for attendance. Fuchslocher (2005) indicated that ‘location’ has considerably influenced the success of exhibitions. He found that “the location factor earns few plus points, but if there were any problems resulting from it, exhibitors would react both immediately and negatively” (Fuchslocher, 2005, p. 295). Hedorfer and Todter (2005, p.119) are among the few who initiated the usage of the term ‘destination’ to refer to exhibition host cities or towns. They stated that “in 2003, Germany was the leading destination in the world for trade fairs and the third most popular destination in Europe for congresses and conferences” (Hedorfer & Todter, 2005, p.119). Ulrich (2005) also recommended that organizers analyze the attractiveness and flair of the exhibition center and urban environment delivered when analyzing competition among trade exhibitions. Bauer (2005) and Rubalcaba-Bermejo and Cuadrado-Roura (1995) stressed that exhibition success is closely related to the host city economic and social environment and city capacity.

However, no study has empirically examined to what extent destinations exert influences on decision-making of critical stakeholders of fairs and exhibitions, namely the organizers, visitors and exhibitors, relating to the staging of, participation and repeat participation in exhibitions.

An exhibition brand is consisted of three elements: the event itself, operator who organizes fairs and events at various locations, and the exhibition center (Sasserath, Wenhart and Daly, 2005). However, no extant academic study has taken a holistic approach to examine exhibition brand from all four critical aspects, and how each of the aspects influences customer event satisfaction and future behavioral intentions. This research aims to fill in this gap by drawing theoretical support from tourism and convention literature to identify destination factors that contribute to exhibition brand development.

In this study, the term “exhibition” refers to all kinds of trade shows, trade fairs, exhibitions and expositions, regardless of the subtle differences interpreted by different sources. Exhibitions in this study exclude various forms of festivals, conventions and all-year round show markets.

**METHODOLOGY**

This explorative study employed a qualitative method to analyze destination factors that attract and retain large scale exhibitions from the perspectives of exhibition organizers, exhibitors and visitors in the context of China’s exhibition industry development. Qualitative studies are especially appropriate in understanding the cognition, affect, intentions and the alike from the participants’ perspectives (Maxwell, 2005, p22). They explore how participants make sense of events and how these affect their behaviour. In addition, a qualitative method has an inherent openness and flexibility that allows a researcher to modify the design and focus during the research to understand new discoveries and relationships (Maxwell, 2005). This study aimed to draw on qualitative data to 1) explore the cognition of organizers, exhibitors and visitors, and formulate a list of factors that influence their exhibition destination preference and choice, for which no established instruments exist; 2) provide an empirical grounding for the emergence of relations between variables which cannot readily be hypothesized based on extant exhibition and tourism literature.

In-depth interviews were conducted. Interviewees are 1) executives from five exhibition companies with a variety of ownerships; and 2) exhibitors and visitors, who attend exhibitions staged in China. Face to face interview methods were chosen. Organizers were either interviewed in their offices or at an arranged place; exhibitors and visitors were interviewed onsite while they were conducting exhibiting and visiting activities.

An interview guide was developed, with questions covering following aspects of a destination: geographical location, accessibility, city prestige, accommodation, physical environment, economic
Environment, population and people, tourism conditions, and exhibition venue and facilities. This interview guide was used flexibly during the interviews.

Interviews with exhibitors and visitors were conducted in four major exhibitions in China. These trade fairs are: 1) The 105th China Import and Export Commodity Fair (Canton Fair) organized by China Foreign Trade Guangzhou Exhibition Corporation staged from 15th April to 7th May; 2) China Ceramics organized by China Council for the Promotion of International Trade Building Materials Sub-Council, China Ceramics Industrial Association, and Unifair, a private exhibition company based in Guangzhou, staged from 2-3 June, 2009; 3) Guangzhou Lighting Fair, organized by Guangya Messe Frankfurt, a joint venture exhibition company, on 9-11 June; and 4) Wind Power Asia, jointly organized by Koelnmesse, Unique International Exhibition Limited, and China Machinery Enterprise Management Association (CMMA) on 8-10th July, Beijing.

The purpose of conducting interviews in these different trade fairs in different locations is to achieve triangulation in sampling. These exhibitions have varying ownership, and hence diversified business model and target participants. Some trade fairs were organized by quasi-governmental divisions; some by Sino-foreign joint venture companies which was a merge between a private Chinese company and a famous international exhibition company; some by joint cooperation between quasi-governmental divisions, industrial associations and foreign companies. This diversity of ownership and operation paradigm may have varying impacts on fair quality and management perceived by exhibitors and visitors. Also the four trade fairs have different orientations in terms of focus. Some shows were mainly import-oriented and some were export-oriented, bringing in visitors from different parts of the world. The interviewer also tried to conduct interviews in different locations (Guangzhou and Beijing) so that different exhibition centers and locations are reflected in the perceptions of the interviewees.

As per interview with exhibitors, a single exhibiting firm was treated as a unit of analysis. For most of the times, a senior manager (or business owner) from one exhibiting stand was the target interviewee; for rare occasions, several employees helped answer with the questions. Regarding visitors, individual visitors as well as those who visited trade fair in couples or groups were approached. But visitors who hang out together were treated as one interviewee, not as multi-entities.

Altogether 42 semi-structured/in-depth interviews were conducted in four major exhibitions staged in Guangzhou and Beijing, and five interviews were conducted with organizers. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcripts were conducted corresponding with the completion of interviews. Data is then analyzed using the content analysis method.

FINDINGS

Interviewee Profile

Interviews with exhibitors and visitors were conducted onsite at exhibitions. Most of the interviewees hold high positions in their specific organizations. Many interviewees are business owners and managing partners, although some are from small and medium sized companies. Other interviewees are senior and middle management staffs who either lead sales and marketing department or the production department. These middle and senior management personnel are very familiar with their products and sales. Almost all the exhibiting companies have exhibited more than twice in the interviewed trade fairs. It is the same with most of the visitors. In terms of country of origin, interviewees are from a wide diversity of regions, including Brazil, Canada, USA, Turkey, Russia, Italy, UK, Germany, Denmark, Austria, Morocco, India, Hong Kong, and Pakistan. Chinese domestic exhibitors and visitors also cover a wide area of China, including Shandong, Beijing, Guangdong, Northeast China, Anhui, and Shanghai. Average interview time was around 15 minutes. There were many more male interviewees than female interviewees because most of the booth staffs with higher managerial positions are males. Table 1 is a brief summary of the interviewed exhibitors and visitors profiles.

Apart from interviewing exhibitors and visitors, the interviewer conducted interviews with five organizers. These five organizers are managing director or senior director of their specific
organizations. They have many years of working experience in the exhibition industry. Two interviews were conducted in English; three in Chinese. Average interview time was about 60 minutes each.

Interviewees were asked to discuss the importance and preference of the following aspects of a destination – geographical location, accessibility, city prestige, accommodation, physical environment, economic environment, population and people, tourism conditions, and exhibition venue and facilities.

### Table 1
Profiles of the Interviewed Exhibitors and Visitors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Interviewees</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>42</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>international visitors:</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>international exhibitors</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>31-50</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;51</td>
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</table>

**Venue Facilities**

Although being two entities, for only a limited number of exhibition companies own large-scale, purpose-built venues and most exhibition organizers rent space from exhibition centers, organizer on-site services, venue on-site services, and logistic services are always being seen as one by exhibitors and visitors. Venue facilities and service quality will affect participants’ satisfaction of the event experience and their satisfaction of the organizer performance.

Following venue facilities frequently stated by the interviewees: phone lines, free water, free paper in restrooms, security, wireless internet connection, sufficient money changing machines, food courts that provide variety of food, clean booths, spacious hall and hallway, less stairs, air-conditioning, clean restrooms. Most of these features are in consent with previous literature, e.g. Breiter & Milman (2006) has discussed about attendees’ needs and service priorities in large convention centers and their category of facility features, in order of importance, are: signage, restrooms, phone signal, seating, foodservice, parking, taxi service to and from the convention center, business services, internet access and others. In this study, interviewees frequently stressed features such as spacious hallway, less stairs, air-conditioning etc. In terms of services, security, cleanliness, provision of basics (such as free water and restroom paper) was expected from exhibitors, but to a less extent from visitors.

Apart from interior facilities and services, accessibility to the exhibition center from airport or hotel is very important for both exhibitors and visitors. Both exhibitors and visitors highly appraise provision of shuttle buses by either hotels or exhibition organizers to drive them to and from the venue. On events that do not provide shuttle buses, participants, especially international ones, use more frequently taxi services, rather than other public transportsations, even if metro is available near the exhibition center.

Exhibitors appraise parking and loading availability and convenience; whereas this is not of much concern for visitors. Layout of the exhibition center and floor plan designed by the organizers aroused more concerns of the exhibitors, as their booth location is a major concern. Visitors are not much obsessed by the layout or floor plan as long as it is convenient for them to browse the site.
Although many interviewees marvel the grandness of some venues, for many purpose-built exhibition centers are designed to be city icons and aesthetic value parallels the functional value, they value more on the interior design that provides convenience of using the venue, and on service quality provided by the venue.

**Destination Infrastructure**

Following venue facilities frequently stated by the interviewees: local transportation such as taxi and metro system; safety and security; quality, variety, and rates of hotels; quality and variety of food; direct flights to the destination or ease of arriving at the destination.

A destination must have sufficient capacity to accommodate either tourists or event participants. In this regard, requirements are similar to leisure tourists, convention participants, and exhibition participants. Interviewees in this study frequently corroborate city capacity to provide quality hotels, a variety of choices in hotels of different levels, and reasonable hotel rates during the event period.

Exhibitors and visitors have a high demand for quality and variety of food, as many international exhibitors and visitors crave for cuisine from their place of origin. One interviewee stated, “By the time the fair finishes, we are tired and we just want some good food and relax”. If a destination has many restaurants that provide quality, ethnic food, the destination is more likely preferred by international participants.

Destinations that have ease access from places of origin of the participants are highly appraised by participants.

In terms of intra-city transportation, taxi turns out to be the most frequently used way of moving for participants, even for domestic participants. Although both interview cities, Beijing and Guangzhou, have metro systems which stretch to most part of the cities, participants, especially the international ones, claim that it is difficult for them to use the metro system by themselves due to language problem or simply fear of lost in subways. There are a number of problems with taxi services in both interviewed cities, for international participants tend to worry about language barriers, professional ethics of the taxi drivers.

Apart from accessibility, intra-city transportation and accommodation, exhibitors and visitors, especially the international ones, would appreciate that host cities provide sufficient touristic information at exhibition centers, venues, or purposely-built tourist information centers. Many interviewees claim that they do not have easy access to city information with regards to city map, local transportation, tourist attractions, leisure facilities, restaurants, etc. They would highly appreciate if the information is easily attainable and free.

**Destination Leisure Attributes**

Destination leisure attributes are of a less degree of importance to exhibition participants, for exhibitions are trade events and people go there with utmost business purposes.

Tourist sites are infrequently visited by interviewees; many are not aware of any tourist attractions if these are not of international fame. However, night activities are features frequently stated by visitors. Many visitors say that they would only stay in the exhibition center for a few others and would like to find a place to go at night. Although exhibitors express similar appreciation for night activities, it is to a less degree of important to them, maybe because they work long hours at exhibition centers and need good rest at night or continue with business activities.

Like tourists and convention attendees, exhibition participants appreciate nice weather and climate in the host destination. They also value friendliness of the local people. They hope that they feel culturally accepted. They would not want to conduct business with a destination (or nearby region) if they feel that the people there are not friendly. English-speaking citizens and international ambiance
in the host city will give credit to the host destination, and win preference from participants. One interviewee claimed “Hong Kong is more kind of Western country, you feel you were in, say, London, Amsterdam, you feel near home, not exactly at home”.

Destination Economic Environment and Cluster Effects

The interviewees have varying perceptions towards the importance of the business and economic environments of the destination. Some exhibitors regard it as unimportant as they do not expect local people as buyers, but people from the wider region, or from all over the world; others feel that destination business and economic environment is correlated to the capacities of the destination to attract a large amount of exhibitors and visitors, as well as the quality of facilities and services that the destination can provide. Economic position of the destination is more important if the destination hosts import-oriented exhibitions than export-oriented fairs.

As an indicator for destination business and economic environment, the effect of the presence of industrial clusters (Porter, 1990) on exhibition development is an interesting and under-researched topic. Exhibition distribution in China partially correlates with the distribution of these industrial clusters. Take the Pearl River Delta (PRD) as an example, which is the clustering of a number of cities residing in the triangle of Guangzhou (capital city of Guangdong Province), Hong Kong and Macao. In 2000, there were 122 so-called “specialized towns” (towns or groups of towns characterized by a dominant industry of a ‘considerable’ size) (Bellandi & Tommaso, 2005, p.713). Within these towns, at least 30% of manufacturing outputs are produced by one particular industry with an annual industrial output of more than US$ 290 million. Most of these towns are located in Dongguan, Foshan, Zhongshan, Huizhou, and Jiangmen, cities of a smaller scale within PRD. The development of these clusters does not seem to follow a precise sectoral distribution, but is more a mixture of tradition and recent opportunities. Guangzhou and Shenzhen, two leading cities with highest level of industrial and urban development in PRD do not host any of these recognized specialized towns (Bellandi & Tommaso, 2006). Based on these industrial clusters (or specialized towns), a number of large scale of exhibitions were developed in these cities, and many of them share similar exhibition concepts. In the Yantze River Delta region, numerous exhibitions also develop based on local industries, such as a garment fair in Ningbo City; Yiwu Fair from Yiwu market for small commodities; and a Textile Machinery Fair in Shaoxing City. Ningbo, Yiwu and other third tier cities in YRD have taken the first-comer advantages in the exhibition market, which hinders development of exhibitions in Hangzhou, the provincial capital city and a famous tourist city in China.

Exhibitors and visitors were asked about their preference of the exhibition being developed in a destination with the industrial cluster, or near the industrial cluster, to the exhibition being hosted in a more prestigious destination with better city capacity for infrastructure.

Exhibitors clearly prefer destinations that are highly developed in the specific industry sector for the exhibition, for it is convenient for them if the exhibition is close to the factory location to save exhibition costs, to provide ease for exhibitors and visitors go to the factories for on-site investigation. However, they also consider this as secondary if compared to destination infrastructure in accommodation and transportation. It is important that the destination has the capacity to accommodate all the participants and provide satisfying services.

Perception of Organizers

Organizers regard destination features as more important than exhibition center features and facilities. They examine a number of features in their decision to develop exhibitions in a particular destination. First, they examine market demand, the development of industry for the exhibition concept, of a particular region, and select a destination with a leading position in the region. They usually have a model to calculate market demand. Then, they will consider city capacity and prestige so that it provides ease of promotion to exhibitors and buyers. They appreciate host city mobilize resources to support an exhibition, e.g. taxi service required, shuttle buses, additional ticket-selling staff at metro stations during the peak hour of transportation to and from the exhibition center. Quality and availability of venue is an important consideration at this step. When considering destination and exhibition center features, organizers care about the performance of the centre for the convenience and
performance for its users. They emphasize on the functionality of the center, such as the size of halls, allocation of halls, entrances, parking lots, transport system leading to the center, quality of management staff, etc. Second, they pay attention to existing exhibitions in a destination for market penetration, so that they can develop via merger and acquisition. Third, they value policies, regulations, rules developed by local governments to regulate the exhibition industry. They appreciate the ease of obtaining exhibition license, clear rating of scale of exhibitions, protection of exhibition brands, coordination, and of course, incentives. However, organizers expect consistent assistance and facilitation from government, in terms of exhibition and destination promotion, but over-supply of incentives will not cover business risk and is not sustainable for exhibition industry development in a particular destination.

Organizers become more cautious in penetrating to other destinations with economic recession, rivalry in the exhibition market, and established channel of sourcing and buying by many foreign buyers. Thus, market demand and other destination features become even more important for organizers to consider.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

If compared to exhibition theme, concept and program, destination and venue characteristics are definitely secondary in building up an exhibition brand, and for the most part considered as unimportant by many exhibition participants with a strong business appeal. If the exhibition that they feel committed to were to be transplanted to other places, they seem to have little hesitation to move with it, even if the new host site is an unknown place. This seems to be contradictory to their preference of comfortable facilities and ease of access that a host destination can provide.

Organizers have noticed the influence of destination factors on promotion and development of exhibition brand. Thus, they favor bigger cities, especially gateway cities, which benefit from the industrial clusters in the peripheral areas. That’s why Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou are more appealing than smaller cities.

This study identified different aspects from tourism and convention site selection, as well as different perceptions and preference among exhibitors, visitors and organizers. It can be summarized that destination is more important than venue in attracting and retaining exhibitions, although destination features are definitely secondary compared to the exhibiting and visiting activities. Perceptions towards the importance of the business and economic environment of the host city vary. Industrial cluster is secondary if compared to accessibility and city management, but different stakeholders have different weighting toward cluster effects. City characteristics are secondary, but participants have varying preference over facilities and host city environment.

Destinations need to mobilize all their resources to facilitate exhibition development, e.g. promoting the city, providing free city information in airports, train stations, hotels, exhibition centers, and metro stations. Destination management parties shall analyze the opportunities for their venues diligently, based on market analysis of the regional industries, location of the region, the visitor and exhibitor potential, local market players, and regional competing venues. They should also analyze the specific functionality of the venue and provide ease for all participants.

China is presently considered the largest emerging exhibition market internationally. Although the interviews were conducted at two first tier cities, the interview contents were not confined to the two cities only. Destination and venue features identified as conducive to exhibition industry development in this study should be able to be generalized to other destinations in China as well as in other emerging markets.

Regarding future studies, more interviews shall be conducted with organizers, for they are the key stakeholder who makes the site-selection decision. Future studies shall also examine how organizers detect market demand, and how clusters impact on exhibition development and to develop effective, valid instruments to measure cluster effect.
REFERENCES


STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING: THEORIES AND REALITIES

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ABSTRACT

Inter-organizational collaboration and partnerships for tourism development are undeniably important. No one individual or organization can fully control and dictate all the stages and decision-making processes involved in developing tourism or deliver tourism product effectively. In fact, studies have shown that involving multiple stakeholders in planning and managing tourism destinations bring many benefits in terms of economic development, conservation, social justice and community involvement. This paper proposes that successful tourism collaboration and partnerships between public and private tourism sectors depends on early and total involvement of the stakeholders. Secondary data are used to show situations where stakeholder participation was given full priority from the beginning of projects, which led to success. The primary data on the other hand, shows a case where stakeholder participation wasn’t prioritized from the beginning of a project, which led to not so positive or supportive attitude towards the project. The paper then proposes several implications of the findings.

Keywords: Stakeholder participation, destination planning, destination marketing

INTRODUCTION

The nature of the tourism industry is seen as one that is fragmented as the delivery of the tourism product often involves the intervention of many different stakeholders who may be in the public, private or voluntary sectors as well as community groups. It is suggested that one of the ways to overcome the potential problems caused by fragmentation include collaborative management and partnerships. Jamal & Getz (1995:188) define stakeholder collaboration as “a process of joint decision making among autonomous, key stakeholders of an inter-organizational, community tourism domain to resolve planning problems of the domain and/or manage issues related to the planning and development of the domain”.

According to Bramwell & Lane (2000b: 2) a variety of terms are used to describe different collaborative arrangements in tourism, including coalitions, forums, alliances, task forces and public-private partnerships. While the term collaboration is commonly used in the academic tourism literature, in government and practitioner circles the term partnerships is especially popular. As the partnership label is so widely used it is also used in this research to denote collaborative arrangement.

The involvement of diverse stakeholders in tourism planning and management can bring together a wide range of interests in order to develop and implement tourism policies. Collaborative arrangements involving face-to-face interactions between stakeholders could potentially lead to dialogue, negotiation and the building of mutually acceptable proposals about how tourism should be developed (Bramwell & Lane, 2000b: 1). This collaboration could also bring together the knowledge, expertise, capital and other resources needed to successfully develop tourist destination areas.
In the case of heritage tourism destinations, the relationship between heritage and tourism is frequently characterized by contradictions and conflicts whereby conservationists perceive heritage tourism as compromising conservation goals for profit (Nuryanti, 1996:255). If a common ground between different stakeholders can be found, then heritage tourism can be developed in such a way that preserves the heritage resources of the local community. Critical to the implementation of the collaborative planning approach is the identification and legitimization of all potential stakeholders. This can be a complicated task, especially for destinations that are experiencing emerging tourism development where interests are not collectively organized (Reed, 1997: 566).

This paper will first identify relevant stakeholders that are affected by a tourism project and who might participate in a collaborative tourism planning arrangement. Then it will discuss potential benefits of collaborative arrangements between different stakeholders. Case studies will be used to demonstrate how stakeholder collaboration can successfully help improve the performance of tourist destinations. Next are highlights of some of the realities and challenges of collaborative arrangement, discussed through a case study on Malaysia. Finally, this paper gives recommendations on ways to inculcate a better collaborative approach in tourism management.

LITERATURE REVIEW – THEORIES OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

Stakeholder assessments

A stakeholder is defined as ‘any person, group or organization that is affected by the causes or consequences of an issue’ (Bryson & Crosby, 1992: 65 as cited in Araujo & Bramwell, 1999: 356). In this context, a stakeholder in the tourism industry is deemed to be anyone who is impacted on by tourism development in both a positive or a negative way (Aas, Ladkin & Fletcher, 2002: 4). Several potential approaches could be taken to identify and assess the stakeholders who are affected by a tourism project and who might participate in collaborative tourism planning arrangements. Araujo and Bramwell (1999: 358) has identified five of these approaches.

The first approach is to examine whether the stakeholders who become involved in collaborative planning arrangements for a project adequately represent the affected stakeholders. If they are not representative, then some needs might not be articulated and related planning alternatives could be ignored, and the stakeholders who are excluded might reject the resulting planning proposals.

A second approach involves passing information from assessments of relevant stakeholders to the stakeholders involved in collaborative planning arrangements in order to improve their understanding of the interests and viewpoints of other stakeholders. Information from these assessments might also assist the stakeholders to identify strategies to secure specific management or political outcomes.

A third approach is to identify stakeholders who are considered to have legitimate and important views but need to have their capacities raised to enable them to put their views forward and to negotiate in collaborative decision-making arrangements. For instance, they may lack technical knowledge and skills about tourism planning and these may be developed through education and training.

The fourth approach is to ask stakeholders affected by the tourism issue to identify other stakeholders who could be of interest to the researcher. Stakeholders’ opinions can be collected through focus group discussions, interviews or questionnaires. The snowball method is a useful means of identifying relevant stakeholders based on the views of other stakeholders.

The fifth approach to assess relevant stakeholders is to place them on a diagram or map according to their key relationships to the issue. A network of arrows can be used to show existing or likely relationships between the stakeholders. The purpose of this analysis is to evaluate the relational networks between stakeholders, notably to determine interdependency between stakeholders, how their positions in the network influence their opportunities, constraints and behaviours, and how their behaviours affect the network.
Potential Benefits from Collaboration and Partnerships

The main area in which most collaborative arrangements are made is that of marketing and promotion. The results of an earlier World Tourism Organization study showed that governments are looking more and more to the private sector to take on an increasing share of the marketing and promotions functions. Although marketing and promotions is the most common area for tourism partnerships, it is by no means the only area of interest. Partnerships and collaboration between all stakeholders can also contribute towards infrastructure and product development, education and training as well as financing and investment.

Bramwell & Lane (2000b: 7) have listed several other potential benefits of tourism collaboration and partnerships which include:

- Decision-making power and control may diffuse to the multiple stakeholders that are affected by the issues, which is favourable for democracy
- More constructive and less adversarial attitudes might result in consequence of working together
- A creative synergy may result from working together, perhaps leading to greater innovation and effectiveness
- Non-tourism activities may be encouraged, leading to a broadening of the economic, employment and societal base of a community or region
- The parties who are directly affected by the issues may bring their knowledge, attitudes and other capacities to the policy-making process
- The involvement of a range of stakeholders, all of whom are affected by the multiple issues of tourism development and may be well placed to introduce change and improvement
- The involvement of several stakeholders may increase the social acceptance of policies, so that implementation and enforcement may be easier to effect
- Partnerships can promote learning about the work, skills and potential of the other partners, and also develop the group interaction and negotiating skills that help to make the partnerships successful
- Parties involved in policy-making make have greater commitment to putting the resulting policies into practice
- There may be improved coordination of the policies and related actions of the multiple stakeholders
- There may be pooling of the resources of the stakeholders, which might lead to their more effective use
- There may be greater recognition of the importance of non-economic issues and interests if they are included in the collaborative framework, and this may strengthen the range of tourism products available

Overall, these benefits might result in fewer adverse tourism impacts, increased operational efficiency and enhanced equity.

METHODOLOGY

Utilizing both secondary sources and focus group data, this paper provides evidence that although stakeholder collaboration is a positive, beneficial approach that has proven to work in some places, there is also proof that if stakeholder collaboration is sought too late in the time frame of a project, their input may also be unsupportive of the project. In this paper, the focus group was conducted on representatives of hotel associations, transport associations, arts and crafts associations, tour guide associations, and travel agents associations in Malaysia to get their view on the effectiveness of a government funded tourism campaign the previous year. The meeting was conducted at a specified place in Kuala Lumpur and moderated by the researchers. It needs to be highlighted here that for the purpose of this paper, it is not the ‘collaboration’ that the researchers focused on. Rather, it is the nature of comments made about the campaign, which reflects an overall not so positive view of the campaign.
because coincidentally, (according to the participants), the campaign failed to actively seek stakeholders’ participation during its earlier phase of planning. This is taken as an indicator that successful tourism collaboration and partnerships between public and private tourism sectors depends on early and total involvement of the stakeholders in a given project.

**FINDINGS**

*Secondary data - case studies of successful tourism collaboration and partnerships*

In the year 2000, the World Tourism Organization Business Council (WTOBC) has undertaken an in-depth study to determine how public-private sector co-operation enhances tourism industry competitiveness. The results of the study have been published in a report entitled ‘Public-Private Sector Cooperation: Enhancing Tourism Competitiveness’. This paper has identified three case studies based on this report that demonstrate successful collaboration and partnerships between tourism stakeholders.

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<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>CASE</th>
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<td><strong>1</strong> PAKISTAN</td>
<td>Baltit Fort Museum and Culture Centre is located at the top of a natural amphitheatre. One of Baltit’s earliest phases was carbon dated and found to be more than 700 years old. If the fragile structure had been left to collapse, Hunza Valley would have lost its most famous landmark and an important part of its cultural identity. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture engaged a team in 1995 to develop proposals to save the Baltit Fort from further decay and provide for full-scale conservation of the complex. A condition laid down by the Aga Khan Trust was that it was necessary to work closely with the people of Karimabad if the consultant’s recommendations were to be accepted. They had to be made aware of their inheritance and at the same time, made to realise that the conservation scheme would not only give them a sense of pride in their culture, but also provide an economic means to a better future. Partnerships formed contributed towards community development, culture and heritage protection, environmental protection and product innovation.</td>
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The partners involved were:

- **Public sector**
  - Baltit Heritage Trust, Government of Pakistan and Northern Areas, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
  - NGOs-Government-Inter-governmental Organisations
  - UNDP, French Embassy, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Norwegian Bilateral Aid Agency (NORAD), Sumitoma Foundation

- **Private Sector**
  - Aga Khan Trust for Culture, Royal Geographic Society, Getty Grant Programme

Resources:

- The Aga Khan Trust for Culture established the Baltit Heritage Trust so that the ownership of the Fort could be switched to public hands
- The Government of Pakistan and the Northern Areas helped with planning
- The Royal Geographic Society gave general support for the project
- Funding for early survey work and project formulation was provided by UNDP in 1984
- The Getty Grant Programme provided additional generous funding for conservation through the Baltit Heritage Trust
- NORAD, the French Embassy, the Sumitoma Foundation and the
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation provided funding at different stages

Results:

- The number of shops selling handicrafts, trekking equipment and food has increased from 19 to 27 due to the number of visitors
- In 1999 the restored Baltit Fort generated direct revenues of around USD40,000 (from sales of tickets to visitors) and indirect revenues of around USD160,000 which benefits central Hunza
- The stone quarries generate employment for 20 individuals and earn income for the Town Management Society
- The number of small family owned hotels has risen to 74 in Hunza
- Following the success of this project, other areas in Pakistan have shown interest in restoring cultural heritage

2 INDONESIA

Wakatobi Marine National Park is the second-largest marine protected area in Indonesia. It is an international centre for marine ecotourism activities. However, the marine biodiversity of the Wakatobi Islands is threatened by destructive fishing practices. The objective of the project is to improve the experience of tourists travelling through the marine park by boat, so that they stay longer and generate increased income for the park.

The partners involved in the project include:

- Public sector
  - National Park Wakatobi, Tourism authorities of Southeast Sulawesi Province, Port authorities of Bau-Bau and Wanci, Bau-Bau Airport, Lorentz Tourism Bureau, Customs and Immigration Authorities
- Private sector
  - Pelni Lines, Hotel associations and individual hotels, local tour operators, local boat associations

Resources:

- No financial resources were directly involved in the project
- Each participating organization contributed significant time and human resources, notably for meetings

Results:

- The number of boat passengers has risen by 208% since 1996
- Of the total number of passengers starting or ending a holiday, 50% now spend a minimum of ten nights in local accommodation in the park

3 TURKEY

The Belek Tourism Centre Project as a model for the tourism sector in public-private sector cooperation. The Belek Tourism Centre is located in the East of Antalya and 30 kilometres away from the airport. Its coast is 23 kilometres long and is surrounded by umbrella pine trees. There are five-star hotels and first-class holiday villages and six golf courses. A tourism complex is also built.

The partners involved in the project include:

- Public sector
  - Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Forestry, Ministry of Environment, State Planning Organization, Local government and Municipalities, Universities, General Directorate of Farming, General Directorates of Highways
- Public-private sector
Ministry of Tourism, Tourism co-operative for infrastructure and waste water treatment, Kepez co-operative for electrification, NGOs (The Turkish Society for the Protection of Nature)

- Private sector
  - Belek Tourism Investors Association (BETUYAB) – 32 investment companies
  - Travel and tourism suppliers

Resources:
- The cost of investments have been shared between the government organizations involved (Ministry of Tourism, General Directorate of Farming, General Directorate of Highways) and the Belek Tourism Investors Association (BETUYAB).
- Every company investing in the Belek Tourism Centre is obliged to become a member of BETUYAB.
- High-cost projects are financed one-third each by ministries, the public establishments and the BETUYAB investors.
- Support has also been given by the consulting services of various universities, including Hacettepe and the Mediterranean universities.

Results:
- In 1991 Belek had 5,850 hotel beds and approximately 35,000 tourists.
- In 1999 the totals increased to 28,000 beds and over 280,000 tourists.
  - After the establishment of the Belek Tourism Centre, new business opportunities have emerged in the area.

**Empirical data – a case from Malaysia**

As mentioned earlier, this case study does not focus on the ‘collaboration’ aspect of stakeholders, but on the nature of comments made by stakeholders on a given project, when their collaboration was not sought early and fully in a project planning.

To give a background, Malaysia is well known among Asian countries for its active engagement in tourism. Pro-tourism policies have spurred both the development and marketing of tourism in the country. Starting with Visit Malaysia 1990, the country has come up with numerous visit year campaigns that aim at improving international tourist arrival statistics as well as tourism receipts. A recent one saw a massive allocation of funding to attract international tourists to Malaysia. Approximately RM335 million was said to have been spent on various promotional activities aimed to increase visitor volume, visitor spending and economic impacts by developing awareness and hence preference for Malaysia as a holiday destination. These included organizing or co-organizing 50 events in conjunction with the visit year campaign, embarking on international road shows and sales missions to several ASEAN countries, Malaysia’s largest tourist market, as well as high potential markets like India, China, Russia and the Middle East.

Due to the massive funding involved in the planning of the campaign, one would expect that stakeholders are roped in to contribute to ensure success. As unanimously agreed by participants at the beginning of the focus group session, no systematic steps have been taken to involve tourism stakeholders in the country. This led to less than positive perspective on the campaign and campaign outcome as can be seen in the findings below (for the sake of brevity, some findings are reported as conclusions as opposed to verbal citations of individual thoughts):

**It is a strong prominent campaign in Malaysia but lack of depth in the interrelation arena. During the (campaign) hotel occupancy particularly in KL does not have more than 70%. Average of 35% - 45%, we don’t want the arrival figures up but the tour and hospitality sector doesn’t have the gist.**
Another great bonus to tourism industry (but) It was a failure. It needs more than just initiative or promotion

A cleaner Malaysia for that particular year (but) money wasting adverts… Tourists sites have been recently refurbished and cleaned up…one would hope… More foreigners coming in Malaysia

(The campaign) is to bring in as many international tourists as possible to Malaysia. We may have succeeded in bringing in quantity/numbers, but in terms of quality, it is not too sure. (The campaign) should re-focus to quality, high-end tourists/big spenders (instead it) pushed too many things leading to a lack of concentration/focus on what we want to sell. (Moreover) the Tagline ‘Malaysia Truly Asia’…is it appropriate?

The rest of the world will know Malaysia. More money allows in to the country, money will make their income. The world will know about the multi culture of Malaysia. The rest of the world will be amazed with the peace and harmony among the multi racial leaving together (but) The notice or the promotion was a very shut notice to the world.

The campaign was mentioned in mid 2006. (The) Government promotes tourism intensively. (The campaign) means: more tourists, more income for the country, more biz for entrepreneurs in hotels, shopping. (It means) improvement on facilities (faster and intensive). (It means) higher demand in manpower: travel agents need more staff as groups coming in, hotels need staff as occupancy rate is higher, tourists sales demand increased, etc. World wide publicity (on Malaysia), ministry was doing on road show to promote the campaign in year 2006.

The (campaign) logo and Rasa Sayang campaign – the video clip & cards. Year-long program for tourists - a program that can help Malaysia to gain much income. (It was) a campaign to make/read Malaysia to be ‘famous’ ‘popular’ among other countries. Because of the campaign, there are more tourists, obviously. (This created) more business opportunities for other industry e.g. food, retailing, hospitality, banking, telecommunication

(The campaign is) to promote all destination to our visitor which is the best place to visit? to provide good facilities and services (and) to create more activities from month to month.

(The campaign is) to introduce Malaysia tourism to the world (but) How to promote SME products? How to increase the quality and quantity of existing products? How to motivate entrepreneurship and motivate product promotion?

A good idea to promote Malaysia to domestic and international tourists (but) the campaign till date have failed to give direct support to travel agents. For example, even agents listed in the tourism directory have experienced very low booking. (IN addition), print and electronic media were not very helpful to agents during the campaign. The government needs to reevaluate and take a new approach to improve the tourism industry in the future
Did the campaign managed to reach its targets? didn’t the campaign concentrate on big cities only? did the campaign managed to bring out SMEs to the global market? Why was (the campaign) extended to 2008?

(Representative 10)

From the above, it can be seen that stakeholders view ranged from positive expectations and hope about the prospects that could come from such campaign to disappointments from not seeing the results expected. An overall supportive or positive view on the campaign cannot be observed here.

The focus groups also assessed several major aspects of the campaign such as 1) the effectiveness of the campaign to create awareness; 2) the timing of the campaign; 3) the support that key players get to promote their products and services during the campaign; 4) the service – delivery situations in Malaysia; 5) problems encountered by key players despite the campaign; 6) suggestion for future improvement of future campaign. The following tables illustrate the key themes that emerged from the discussion.

Analysis for campaign generation of awareness shows agreement among stakeholders that the campaign was:

- Successful in creating awareness among the locals
- The government has done a great deal of promotion abroad but success in creating awareness among international tourists is limited to knowledge on major destinations only.
- A significant number of tourists come from regional countries. Not much from long haul markets such as London and Paris.

However, the group also concurred that:

- Awareness does not necessarily translate to desire to travel – for example, the government introduced “Saturday as an off day” to promote domestic tourism. Whether this led to more domestic tourism remains a question
  - Domestic tourists are already familiar with many of the destinations promoted. The lack of novelty affects feel good factor of travel
  - Well to do citizens tend to go outbound
- The national tourism promotion agency has done a great deal of promotion abroad. Even so, the visibility of tourists is not as good as many places in Thailand and Vietnam and Singapore despite the campaign
- Tourism marketing in Malaysia focuses too much on the “3.5 destinations” i.e. Kuala Lumpur, Sabah, Sarawak and Langkawi. No new products except the Eye on Malaysia, even that is inconsistent in opening hours, and failed to excite people.
- Promotional activities fail to consider smaller destinations particularly ecotourism related in states such as Kelantan
- Promotional activities are not tied to information about tourism related small and medium enterprises in Malaysia
- Other countries market more aggressively than Malaysia

Analysis on campaign’s time scale:

They perceived that the campaign idea was mooted quite late in 2006 and too close to the date of commencement when there should be at least a one year lead time for planning. This should have been preparations with respect to production of collaterals and calendar of events which ought to be made available ahead of the official launch. They contended that:

- When a plan is decided at the last minute, the preparation for promotion may have been rushed
- Only certain sector benefited fully while others did not. For example, industri hiliran benefited from producing promotional materials, but agents did not have adequate time to gather information to come up with good packages

Analysis on campaign’s support to key industry players indicated a mixed opinion about support to key players because:
• Not so much to individual travel agents or individual tourism product providers
• focus is too much on big cities and the key players there. Those in smaller destinations and ecotourism destinations were largely ignored
• support for Air Asia was good. All Air Asia promotions are backed strongly by the campaign organizer. A more well-distributed support is required. Since it is a ‘visit Malaysia’ promotion, all key players must be given equal opportunity and support to get involved
• all key players must be involved from the very beginning of any visit year promotion plan

Analysis of campaign’s management of service delivery issues in Malaysia tourism:
• Service-delivery gaps are a major problem that could have contributed to the lack of ‘visibility’ of tourists in Malaysia
• Malaysia’s branding is hampered by service delivery gaps. Regardless how much is spent on promotion and marketing, branding requires both service delivery effectiveness and marketing
• We are not delivering what we promised due to problem with 1. Infrastructural linkages, 2. Ethic of tourism players especially frontliners, and 3. the lack of service culture among our frontliners
• airports need to improve on their services
• City Taxi overcharge the tourists
• Government / Public Sector - lack of effective communication, networking and coordination
• lack of tendency to sustain the system in terms of policies, infrastructures and other tourism related services
• Transportation system – interconnection problem, bureaucracy problem
• limited air seat capacity to Langkawi (for Japanese tourists)
• Kota Kinabalu is rising in popularity, but has limited room capacity
• lack of new product decreased the popularity of traditional destinations such as Penang
• Bad impressions on the destinations and authority
• Now we tend to have big launches, but little follow up or effort to sustain this effort with supporting initiatives
• every promotional plan must involve various agencies (involve tourist and tourist guide as promotional agents)
• Lack of knowledge about facilities, attractions and other tourism products among people in the industry – due to poor communication amongst agencies
• Lack of coordination and effective networking led to competition among local players
• We have known problems that are ignored and unsolved eg. ulat
• Lack of effective communication among public and private sector. Information does not trickle down properly
• Lack of linkages especially in transport. This and other infrastructural problems have been deliberated again and again but still not solved. Need to emulate Bangkok and Singapore in their marketing plan and promotional strategies
• Packaging – tour guides are not given enough incentives to come up with complete packages for specific events (apart from GP). Government promotions therefore are not followed up because there is no one to tie up the loose end
• MAS’s cut of commission for booking agents is making it worse
• The 50 events, managed to attract mostly domestic tourists. This raises question as to the delivery of messages about events overseas. Also, the location choice of events are questionable. For example, most events concentrated in Kuala Lumpur
• The campaign’s marketing effectiveness may have been hampered by past failure to deliver what tourist sought. We would still get the same number of tourists as we did even without the campaign
• Trade shows and overseas visits have not really been effective in promoting Malaysia
• Need professional training for the frontliners. The product end of Malaysia tourism must be satisfactory
• Need to learn from Thailand and Singapore in terms of their promotion
• Involve various parties of groups in terms of promotion. Ministry – need to meet all industry players on an issue, together and not separately
• Change the mindset of authority concern (custom, immigration) when dealing with tourists especially regional and Asian tourists
• more professionalism and working ethics are required. We lack service culture and tourism friendly attitudes among the major front liners. Attitude of the frontline officers (immigrations, customs, police), taxi drivers, front desk staff must show adoption of service culture

CONCLUSION

The above findings clearly indicate that a project is more prone to receive criticisms than support if the stakeholders were not involved from the beginning. For example, stakeholders were not convinced of the effectiveness of the campaign. Instead they reported lack of tourists visibility and complained that trade shows and overseas visits were not effective in promoting Malaysia abroad. They also complained on the lack of government focus on fundamental issues such attitudes of frontliners, lack of good travel and transportation network and lack of collaboration among service providers to ensure tourists have a good experience. Had they been involved early and fully, as in the case studies from Pakistan, Indonesia and Turkey, the campaign may have received fewer criticisms from the stakeholders.

To sum up, while stakeholder collaboration and partnerships may offer important opportunities that lead to improved planning and development of tourism attractions, in reality, their input are not always adequately considered in government planning. Consequently, less than positive support is generated which may directly or indirectly contribute to the overall success of the plan in question. This stresses more on the importance of stakeholder participation from the beginning of any tourism project or event. Admittedly, several problems might still arise from the formation of tourism partnerships. However, well designed and executed partnerships that offer all stakeholders equal opportunities to take part in the decision-making process can help build policies and accomplish goals in tourism planning. Leadership is also required from all actors involved in the collaborative venture. Based on previous research and the case studies being presented, it is evident that early and full collaborative networks between the public sector, and all the relevant stakeholders could help a country become a well planned, well managed and successful tourism destination.

REFERENCES

EXPLORING THE VISITOR-BASED BRAND EQUITY OF THE WET TROPICS OF QUEENSLAND WORLD HERITAGE AREA

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ABSTRACT

Protected area brand names provide park management agencies with the means to indicate site quality level to potential visitors. The World Heritage brand is the premium protected area brand and when used as a marketing tool should have considerable commercial value; yet, when used as a management tool some of this impact can be lost. This paper examines a number of issues regarding the World Heritage brand using a case study approach. The Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area, located in far northeastern Australia, is the focus of the study. The paper investigates visitor awareness of both the World Heritage and Wet Tropics of Queensland brands based on 279 self-completing visitor questionnaires collected over a four month period in 2008. Findings indicate only 13.3% of visitors demonstrated ‘top of mind’ awareness that the Wet Tropics of Queensland was a World Heritage Area without a strong memory cue and only 0.7% of recognized the World Heritage emblem. None of the visitors correctly named the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area, and only 1.4% included ‘Wet Tropics’ in their written response. Data clearly indicates general awareness of World Heritage but site awareness is low. The paper concludes many protected areas such as the Wet Tropics of Queensland may also face significant brand awareness challenges.

Keywords: customer-based brand equity, protected area brands, brand labels, national parks

INTRODUCTION

In 1972 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) passed the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO, 2008) which led to the creation of a new premium protected area brand. World Heritage listing is the highest accolade any protected area can receive. For this reason the World Heritage brand has considerable appeal to tourists (Hall & Pigg, 2003). According to Fyall and Rakic (2006) the World Heritage brand provides an effective ‘differential advantage’ when competing with other attractions for visitors. Yet the World Heritage brand is used inconsistently internationally, nationally, regionally and even between parks under the same management regimes, making it difficult for tourists to become aware of the brand when visiting a designated World Heritage Area (Fyall & Rakic, 2006).

Even more difficult from a branding perspective is the growing number of protected area brands that have been created in recent decades. The proliferation of brands and a tendency for some protected areas to promote multiple brands has led to confusion in the market place and in the visitor’s mind. In most cases where a consumer purchases a product they will encounter a variety of brands at different stages in the purchasing process. Take a pair of shoes for example. The brand decisions include selecting the brand category of shoe to purchase (sandals, heels, etc), selecting the brand name of the retail outlet where the shoe purchase will be made (and in some cases selecting the shopping district brand where the shoe store is located) and deciding which brand name shoe to purchase. While there may be vigorous competition between brands at each stage of the process it is unlikely that the consumer will be confronted with the type of branding confusion that occurs in some protected areas where a specific property is multi-branded perhaps as a National Park, Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage Area (WHA).
Surprisingly, while there has been considerable research into the marketing and management of products and services, there is little empirical research conducted which specifically examines the effectiveness of protected area brand names and a virtual absence of studies in Australia. This paper reports on findings from research on visitor awareness and knowledge of a natural WHA using the Wet Tropics of Queensland WHA as a case study.

VISITOR-BASED BRAND EQUITY

Together, a protected area brand category such as World Heritage, and the brand name of a specific property, such as the Wet Tropics of Queensland, create a total mental package which embodies the strength of the brand and the associations linked with the brand in an individual consumer’s memory (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). Numerous authors have noted brands take on special connotations to their users (Ries & Trout, 1989; Aaker, 1991; Kotler, 2003; Keller, 2003, McEwen, 2005). For the visitor, the brand name represents a promise of value (Kotler & Gertner, 2002) for time spent on site. In the case of protected areas, visitors determine which protected area brands satisfy their particular wants and needs and which ones do not based on their previous experiences with the brand (Keller, 2003). Therefore, visitor awareness and knowledge of a protected area brand is an important element in attracting tourists and their dollars to the desired location. Kotler and Gertner (2002) argue that strong brands have high ‘visitor-based brand equity’ which is often able to be translated into an increase in visitor numbers, preference over other sites, financial gains and loyalty to the brand (Keller, 2003).

Once a property is included on the World Heritage List, it is afforded additional protection, and in most cases has additional value as a tourism asset (Slayter, 1983; Hall & MacArthur, 1996; Shackley, 1998; Cleere, 2006; Eagles & McCool, 2000; Hall & Piggin, 2001; Buckley, 2002; Bandarin, 2004; Harrison, 2004; van der Aa, Groote & Huiden, 2004). Inscription of a site onto the World Heritage List, with all of the associated publicity, frequently increases the number of people who know about the site, the number who want to visit it (Slayter, 1983; Shackley, 1998; Cleere, 2006) and the amount each person is willing to pay to visit (Buckley, 2002). Thus, the protected area brand name has the power to potentially persuade large numbers of visitors to visit the property based on the special connotations of the brand in the visitor’s mind.

BRAND IDENTITY

The brand name and logo are the two most visual elements of a brand’s identity. A brand name is that part of the brand which can be spoken aloud (Kotler, 1991). Examples include Yosemite National Park and World Heritage. Ideally, a brand name should reinforce the product concept (Kotler, 1991), suggest something about the product’s benefits, imply product qualities, be pronounceable, easy to recognize and remember, be distinctive and not carry a negative connotation in other languages (Kotler, 1999). The brand name and logo should also be timeless and exclusive to the organization (Misiura, 2006).

A logo is a ‘brand mark’, the part of a brand which can be easily recognized through a symbol, graphic design, or distinctive lettering (Kotler, 1991). Examples of brand marks include the Qantas kangaroo and the golden arches of McDonald’s. Effective logos are instantly recognizable, evoke an emotional response and speak to the person instantly (Kotler, 1991).

In the case of protected areas, developing a brand identity is a way for protected area management agencies to create an easily recognizable identity for any park category or specific site. However building a brand identity requires a great deal of long term investment, especially in advertising, promotion and packaging, yet few park managers have professional education in tourism or marketing (Eagles & McCool, 2000). While World Heritage is an internationally recognized brand name, many visitors to a WHA are unaware of the World Heritage brand when visiting an inscribed site because of brand failure. Consistency in brand development and use is required to create and maintain a strong brand, while inconsistency weakens it (Behrans, 2008). There are numerous examples of companies that have re-branded but then failed to remove the old brand on signage,
promotional material, letterhead and car panels. The failure to remove the visual evidence of old brands and the use of multiple brands creates a confusing brand message (Behrens, 2008).

THE WORLD HERITAGE BRAND

Whenever a protected area management agency develops a new name, logo or symbol for a protected area they have created a brand (Keller, 2003) as was the case when UNESCO created the World Heritage brand in 1972. The World Heritage emblem (Figure 2), adopted in 1978, symbolizes the interdependence of cultural and natural properties.

Figure 1
THE WORLD HERITAGE EMBLEM.

Source: UNESCO, 2008

World Heritage is not only a top brand (Buckley, 2002) based on the outstanding heritage values of World Heritage sites and their potential appeal as tourist attractions (Hall & Piggin, 2003), but remains the highest accolade any protected area can receive. The brand values of World Heritage originate from its brand equity – its high media profile in many countries, its value within well known international circles and from the rigorous World Heritage selection process (Hall & Piggin, 2003) thereby creating the ultimate in exclusivity amongst protected area brands.

WORLD HERITAGE AND THE VISITOR

Hall and Piggin, (2003, p. 208) observe that “...while the value of World Heritage relies on universal significance, it must be noted that recognition of such values is not always universal at the level of the tourism consumer.” Keller’s (1993) brand knowledge model is a road map towards understanding how a visitor remembers a brand and how brand associations develop over time. The first step in Keller’s (1993) model is brand awareness. Brand awareness is the probability a specific brand name will be remembered and the ease with which it is remembered. Brand awareness consists of two parts: brand recognition and brand recall (Keller, 1993). Using Keller’s (1993) theory in the protected areas context, brand recognition requires the visitor to correctly identify the brand as having been previously seen or described. Brand recall is the visitor’s ability to remember the brand when given the protected area category such as WHA or National Park, the needs fulfilled by the category, or some other type of memory cue (Keller, 1993).

According to Keller (1993), brand awareness is important to the visitor’s decision making process for three reasons. First, it is important that visitors think of the World Heritage brand when they think of the product category of protected areas or parks. Increasing World Heritage brand awareness increases the chance the brand will be part of the visitor’s consideration set for visitation. For example, a visitor looking for parks to visit in Australia might seek out information on WHAs as a
first preference for itinerary planning. Second, brand awareness can affect decisions about brands within the consideration set, even if there are essentially no brand associations. For example, a visitor may wish to visit several national parks, but once aware that some parks are WHAs, will choose to visit those parks instead of those without the designation. Thirdly, brand awareness affects visitor decision making by influencing the formation and strength of brand associations in the brand image. For example, when a visitor knowingly visits a WHA for the first time and has a highly satisfying experience, the associations related to the experience are established in a memory ‘World Heritage brand’ node; and, the strength of the associations in that brand node affects how easily different kinds of information become attached to the World Heritage brand in a person’s memory in the future (Keller, 1993). The more a park visitor ‘experiences’ the brand by seeing it, hearing it, or thinking about it, the more likely the visitor strengthens their memory and associations with the brand. Thus, anything that causes a visitor to experience a brand name or logo through any type of advertising or promotion can increase a visitor’s awareness and familiarity with the World Heritage brand (Keller, 2003).

Numerous authors have made general claims that the World Heritage brand is a main draw cards for visitors deciding to experience a particular site (Slatyer, 1983; Shackley, 1998; Hall & Piggion, 2001; Buckley, 2002; Bandarin, 2004; Harrison, 2004; van der Aa, Groote & Huiden, 2004). However, this popular view has recently been challenged. Smith’s (2002) study of visitors to Maritime Greenwich, England, found that most visitors were unaware of its World Heritage status. In a small study conducted by Marchotte and Bourdeau (2006) of 40 visitors to Quebec City, only 55% were aware that Quebec City was a World Heritage site and only 15% stated they were influenced by the designation when choosing their travel destination. Marchotte and Bourdeau (2006) concluded the World Heritage designation had only a weak influence on Quebec City as a destination choice. Reinius and Fredman (2007) in a larger study of 750 visitors to Laponia WHA in Sweden found that approximately 58% of visitors were aware of its World Heritage status prior to the visit but only 5% stated they were influenced by the designation when making their travel plans. However, for tourists to whom the World Heritage brand is important, the label added an iconic value to existing national parks and it had “positive connotations that affect the tourist’s perception of the experience” (Reinius & Fredman, 2007, p. 851). Reinius and Fredman (2007) concluded that the differences among various protected area labels depends to a large degree on the level of marketing, information and media coverage. Marchotte and Bourdeau (2006), as well as Reinius and Fredman’s (2007) conclusions are substantiated by a survey conducted by Hall and Piggion (2001) of 44 World Heritage managers in 22 OECD countries which found only a tenuous link between World Heritage listing and increased visitation over and above existing tourism trends. Hall and Piggion (2003) observed that while visitor numbers to WHAs were substantial and increasing there was no conclusive evidence that such growth had been directly due to being listed World Heritage. In fact, many sites were clearly iconic visitor attractions prior to being inscribed as WHAs (Shackley, 1998; Hall & Piggion, 2003).

Buckley (2002) conducted exploratory World Heritage brand marketing research and concluded that visitor numbers at Australian WHAs appeared an order of magnitude higher in the post-listing period. Secondly, Buckley (2002) determined data for most Australian WHAs was inadequate to determine whether there was a significant World Heritage icon value.

AIM OF THE STUDY

The need for this study evolved from observations by the authors that there appeared to be some confusion in the use of brands and logos in some Queensland protected areas. The specific aim of this study was to examine World Heritage branding issues using the Wet Tropics of Queensland WHA (WTQWHA) as a case study. The research was designed to determine if visitors exiting the WTQWHA: 1) were aware they were visiting a WHA; 2) could recognize and correctly recall what the World Heritage Emblem stood for; and, 3) could recall the full name of the WHA they were visiting. At the time the research was undertaken the brands likely to be encountered by visitors within the WTQWHA were National Park, World Heritage Area, several versions of the rainforest’s specific brand based on its name and the brand adopted by the WTMA. In addition, a new Australian protected area brand, National Landscapes, has been recently introduced to the public.
METHODOLOGY

The Wet Tropics case study was selected because the WHA is marketed by the destination marketing organization Tropical Tourism North Queensland as an iconic tourism attraction. The WHA is also an example of a protected area with a number of brands potentially confusing to the visitor. The study employed a convenience sampling method using a self-answering questionnaire, following a similar visitor survey methodology conducted by Bentrupperbäumer and Reser (2002) in their study on visitation to the Wet Tropics. Trained surveyors handed surveys on clip boards to visitors and stood nearby to monitor visitor progress and clarify any questions. A total of 279 valid surveys were collected from visitors finishing the main walking track and returning to their cars. Questions were developed after a review of similar surveys previously conducted in WHAs (See Bentrupperbäumer & Reser, 2002; Moscardo & Ormsby, 2004; Reinius & Fredman, 2007).

The first page of the questionnaire did not include the phrase ‘World Heritage’ to ensure answers came from the visitor’s memory and not from being queued by the survey. The first page did contain the World Heritage emblem and a general question determining if the visitor could recall what special label or special status the Wet Tropics possessed. On the subsequent pages, several cued questions on recalling or recognizing the phrase World Heritage, WTMA and the Wet Tropics of Queensland were designed with Keller’s (1993) model in mind. Questions were twice piloted and refined before finalizing the survey. Data were analyzed using the SPSS version 15.0 statistical package. As with any study limitations can be expected. While the study period included periods of high and low visitation within the Wet Tropics of Queensland, it is possible the data may have failed to accurately reflect visitor demographics on an annualized basis. Secondly, the survey was four pages in length and some visitors may have experienced survey fatigue. Thirdly, poor weather conditions affected the total number of surveys collected. Lastly, only English speaking visitors were targeted.

STUDY SITE

After tremendous public controversy about logging and development pressures that threatened to destroy much of the regional rainforest ecosystem, the Wet Tropics of Queensland was designated a WHA in 1988 in recognition of its outstanding natural universal values:

- as an outstanding example representing the major stages in the earth’s evolutionary history;
- as an outstanding example representing significant ongoing ecological and biological processes; and
- as an example of superlative natural phenomena containing important and significant habitats for in situ conservation of biological diversity.

The WHA stretches between Cooktown and Townsville on the north-east coast of Queensland and covers an area of about 8,940 km² (Australian Department of the Environment & Heritage, 2006). The region is a hotspot for biodiversity protecting hundreds of rare and primitive species including cycads, the southern cassowary, possums, gliders and tree kangaroos. With waterfalls, gorges, crater lakes and scenic vistas, the area attracts about 2 million visits annually (WTMA, 2009). Due to the large number of access points there are no reliable visitation figures for the entire WHA. The area has well maintained infrastructure in areas frequented by tourists, included well developed walking tracks and interpretation. A reasonable range of accommodation choices is available throughout the study region.

The Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) was created in 1990 to manage the WTQWHA (Watkinson, 2002). The WTMA developed cassowary (A large endemic flightless bird) and cycad leaf logo to identify both the WTQWHA and the WTMA. In 2002, WTMA decided to rebrand the WTQWHA. The WTMA retained the cassowary and cycad leaf logo for corporate purposes and adopted a new generalized frog on a leaf logo in green and orange (See Figure 3 & 4) (Watkinson, 2002) for the Wet Tropics forest. This new logo was affixed to nearly a hundred informational and directional road signs throughout the Wet Tropics region using a light reflective format and without the associated verbiage (See Figure 4). Both the corporate cassowary and the new
frog on a leaf logos were used on all printed materials and on the WTMA web site. However, very limited publicity accompanied the change.

Figure 2
THE CASSOWARY AND CYCAD LOGO

Source: WTMA, 2007

Figure 3
THE 2002-2004 WET TROPICS OF QUEENSLAND WORLD HERITAGE AREA LOGO

Source: WTMA, 2007

The result of this well intentioned but ill-conceived marketing action plan, were that the strategic elements of the WTQWHA brand were drastically changed. Watkinson (2002, 2004) described the problems of developing a marketing action plan by the WTMA that discarded the Wet Tropics of Queensland brand name along with the World Heritage emblem and rebranded the Wet Tropics as ‘Australia’s Tropical Rainforest – A World Heritage Area’ along with a new frog on the leaf logo. Internal corporate ownership of the new brand was limited (Watkinson, 2002, 2004) and in 2005 the cassowary logo was reinstated and the frog logo dropped. Unfortunately, the legacy of the frog logo branding exercise lingers. Many relevant WTMA publications, downloadable internet maps and many of the informational brown roadside signs still clearly carry the frog on the leaf logo. In a recent development, new brown roadside signage with the official World Heritage logo is slowly replacing old road signs that retain the superseded frog on the leaf logo.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first part of the study was designed to determine if visitors could recall that the protected area they were visiting was a WHA. In other words, had the visitor been exposed to the World Heritage brand sufficiently prior to or during their visit to develop a strong memory node associating the World Heritage brand with the park? “Does this area you are now visiting have any special status or label you are aware of?” The question gave the visitor the opportunity to tick a ‘yes’, ‘no’ or ‘I am not sure’ box. The follow-up question, “If ‘yes’, what is the special significance or special label for this site?” provided the respondent with the opportunity to write the correct response.
As Table 1 indicates nearly 19% of visitors were unaware of any special status of the protected area they were in, while 33% were unsure of what special status or label the area may have had. Of the 47% of participants who knew the park had a special status, and only 13.3% correctly identified the place they were visiting as a WHA. This finding demonstrates that in this case the National Park brand has a much stronger association in the minds of most visitors than the World Heritage brand. One explanation for this is that visitors have greater exposure to the National Park brand in general and associated the Wet Tropics with the National Parks brand. Relatively little exposure to the Wet Tropics as a WHA has led to only weak associations connecting the WTQWHA with the World Heritage brand.

The second question involved visitor recognition and recall of a series of logos. The question asked respondent to circle the letter above the logo they recognized. The logos included the McDonald’s golden arches, the World Heritage emblem, the WTMA cassowary and the frog on the leaf logo. The follow-up question asked the respondent to write what they thought the logo represented under the logo (see Table 2).

Table 2
VISITOR AWARENESS OF THE WET TROPICS –RELATED LOGOS IN %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Logo</th>
<th>Recognized</th>
<th>Correctly recalled what the logo represented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>McDonald’s logo</td>
<td>94.6</td>
<td>86.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Heritage emblem</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTMA cassowary logo</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTMA frog on leaf logo</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

McDonald’s received the highest recognition (94.6%) and recall (86.4%) of what the golden arches represented. This result is no surprise as McDonald’s has a multimillion dollar marketing budget and strategically manages all aspects of its brand. According to Healy (2008, p. 38), “The strongest brands occupy a clearly defined and well-focused position in customer’s minds. They dominate their categories”. McDonald’s has managed its over time to be a dominant force in the fast food brand category. The recognition and recall for all other logos was unexpectedly low. Of the 5.4% of visitors who recognized the World Heritage emblem, only (0.7%) correctly recalled the emblem stood for World Heritage. Initially, it was feared that placing the World Heritage emblem on the first survey page could be a significant cue for answering the first question; however, it quickly became clear that these fears were unfounded as there was such a high degree awareness about what the emblem stood for. This finding indicates that while McDonald’s enjoys exceptional brand recognition in the consumers mind, World Heritage has only a weak link in visitor memory. This lack of awareness may be a reflection of the lack of World Heritage brand emphasis in signage throughout the WTQWHA, in other Queensland WHAs and the general promotion of the brand.

The Wet Tropics of Queensland cassowary logo was recognized by 15.4% of visitors but correctly identified by only (1.1%) while the frog on the leaf logo was recognized by (38.7%) of visitors, but only correctly identified by (2.5%) of them. The relatively high level of recognition by visitors of the frog on a leaf and the cassowary logos makes sense as even though the frog on the leaf logo is no longer actively promoted. As of the beginning of 2009 the frog on a leaf logo remains prominently displayed on well over 50 to 100 park related brown signs along major roadways and near park entrances. The cassowary logo is displayed quite modestly on printed materials, the newest
interpretive signage within the protected area, and is not displayed on any road signs at this time. As the brown signs with the old logo fade or are damaged, they will continue to be replaced by new signage devoid of the old logo. However, during the interim years, the frog logo is confusing the brand message of the Wet Tropics of Queensland. It also follows that while the frog on the leaf logo remains on display and there is no longer any visitor education concerning what the logo means; thus, when visitors see the frog on leaf logo, they have no associations with the graphic design and instead make guess such as ‘frog sanctuary or a protected place for frogs’. Again, this clearly shows the public is confused about the Wet Tropics of Queensland brand and the meaning of the brand. This confusion is directly linked to ineffective brand management of both the WHA and WTQWHA brand.

In a set of cued questions, where respondents were given a list of protected area names and asked to identify the ones appropriate to the site they were visiting now, 60.6% of visitors correctly indicated they were in a WHA while 55.9% were aware this was a WHA before their visit (see Table 3). No doubt there was some degree of social desirability bias involved in this question, nevertheless, this data indicates that with a strong cue, a large number of visitors were able to recall they were in a WHA and were aware the place they were visiting was a WHA before their visit. This data still supports the assertion that World Heritage has only a weak association in the mind of the visitor with the Wet Tropics.

When cued by a question asking for the full name of this WHA, visitor answers ranged from ‘Daintree National Park’ to ‘Mossman Gorge’ to other responses. Only four visitors of the 279 respondents wrote Wet Tropics and no visitor wrote the complete name of the WHA as the Wet Tropics of Queensland.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visitor response</th>
<th>No. of responses</th>
<th>% of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know/ not sure</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mossman Gorge</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mossman as part of answer</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daintree National Park</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daintree as part of answer</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet Tropics of Queensland</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet Tropics as part of answer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSION

The need for the research reported in this paper arose from observations that there appeared to be some confusion in the use of brands and logos in some Queensland protected areas. The specific aim of this study was to examine the issue of World Heritage branding using the Wet Tropics of Queensland (WTQWHA) as a case study. This was achieved by testing if visitors to the Wet Tropics of Queensland were aware of the World Heritage brand prior to or as a result of their visit to the WTWHA. The study also aimed to determine if visitors were aware of the Wet Tropics World Heritage status, and they knew the brand name of the protected area they were visiting. Results reported in Tables 1 and 2 clearly indicate that recognition of the World Heritage logo is weak but knowledge of the brand in general is much stronger. These results confirm previous findings on the weakness of aspects of the WHA brand reported by Marchotte and Bourdeau (2006) and Smith (2006). The results of the research indicate that brand confusion can occur at a number of levels. In the case in the WTQWHA brand confusion has occurred because of:

- Multi-branding of protected area categories i.e. a World Heritage Area and as a National Park;
- Multi-branding of the specific site i.e. Mossman Gorge, Daintree National Park and the Wet Tropics of Queensland WHA;
• Concurrent display of a dated logo (frog on a leaf) with revived logo (cassowary), and
• Confusion between corporate logos (WTMA) and the logo of the area being administered.

In reality it may not always be possible to avoid elements of multi-branding where the WHA brand is superimposed on an existing brand such as a National Park and where the specific property also has a well known name that is itself a brand. In circumstances of this nature multi-branding needs to be considered. This may entail a decision to promote the property by its individual name (in the case discussed here the Wet Tropics of Queensland) and its World Heritage status. In the case of the Wet Tropics this may require a decision to promote the name of the property and its World Heritage status using a range of promotional strategies including more prominently displayed entrance signage, large, well-placed integrated interpretive signage and wayside exhibits within the park. A local media campaign would hasten the education of area residents concerning the World Heritage logo and values. The net effect should lead to increase visitor awareness of the Wet Tropic’s World Heritage status and the name of the World Heritage Area being visited. Consistency is the key to success when marketing brands.

On a larger scale the strength of the World Heritage brand is strong but recognition of the WHA logo remains weak. Only a concerted effort by all listed properties to educate visitors about the logo and to tie the logo to the WHA brand name will strengthen this aspect of the brand.

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This research aims to compare the image perceived by the ski destination visitors with the image projected by the ski resort DMOs. The destination choice is assumed to reflect visitors’ images of the destination. Importance of the attributes affecting ski destination choice have been investigated in five ski resorts in Finland. Survey data was collected in five ski resorts in Lapland Finland. 1,529 effective responses were obtained. An exploratory factor analysis using the principal component method with varimax rotation was used to determine the factors of the phenomenon. Thereafter, ANOVA and Post Hoc pairwise multiple comparison tests were used to explore how the identified attributes of ski destination choice differ among tourists in five ski destinations. Four factors, namely downhill skiing services, cross-country skiing services, restaurants and social life, and spa services have found to differentiate the destinations. Then, a quantitative content analysis of the visual and textual content of the printed marketing material of the destinations has been conducted. The data was categorized following the factors resulting from the survey. Two of the destinations are attracted more by young people who are downhill skiers and social life seekers, two others are more for adults and elderly cross country skiers. One of the destinations seems to have a more flexible profile. The message sent by the service providers fits well to the interviewed clientele. The results show that the projected images seem to be congruent with the determinants of ski destination choice of the visitors in respective resorts.

Keywords: ski destination, destination choice, destination image, perceived image, projected image

INTRODUCTION

Understanding why people travel and what factors influence their behavioural intention of choosing a travel destination is beneficial to tourism planning and marketing. One popular typology for understanding travel decision is the “push and pull” model (Crompton, 1979). According to Leiper (1990) tourists are pushed by their own motivations towards the places where they expect their needs will be satisfied. Pull factors are those that attract people to a specific destination once the decision to travel has been made. They are destination specific attributes, such as natural attractions, food, people, recreation facilities, or activities, which determine whether the traveler will go to destination A or B, when both destinations fulfill the expectations derived from the push factors.

Pearce (2005) proposes that understanding motives and the visitors’ preference for activities represents a promising direction in linking visitors’ needs and the attributes of destinations. In this paper the focus is in attributes (pull factors) of the ski destination, since it is assumed that when the decision to travel to a ski destination has been made based on the travel motivation (push factor), the destination choice is dependent on the meaningful attributes of the accessible destinations. Destination image is “the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impression that a person has of a destination “ (Crompton 1979, 18). Tourism researchers are in consensus about the importance of the image for a destination’s viability and success (Tasci & Gartner 2007) and there is also lot of evidence of the importance of the image in the consumer’s destination choice process (Tapachai & Waryszack 2000). A choice of especially a holiday destination is nowadays even a lifestyle symbol for many customers (e.g. Morgan et al., 2005).

Destinations are amalgams of tourism products, offering an integrated experience to consumers. Each destination can only match certain types of demand and hence tourism marketers have
to pay attention to profile destinations for the right target markets (Buhalis 2000, 97, 100). The destination-originated activities and promotional materials aim to deliver projected (e.g. Selby and Morgan, 1996), desired image of the destination. According to Hanlan and Kelly (2005), marketers who wish to develop a strong destination brand should firstly identify the image attributes generated through destination experience within a specific market segment. They may then identify a small number of positive and meaningful image attributes on which to position the destination. (Hanlan and Kelly 2005, 175)

According to Alexandris et al. (2006) a holiday at a ski resort arouses expectations of three kinds of outcomes, in Pearce’s language “experiential states”. Physical outcomes are related to an individual’s beliefs that skiing will improve physical health. Social outcomes are related to beliefs that skiing will help socialization (e.g. spend time with friends or family). Psychological outcomes are related to beliefs that skiing can contribute to psychological well being (e.g. relaxation, reduce stress etc.). Travel motivations and the perceived ability of a destination to satisfy these expected outcomes are the key variables in destination marketing (Matzler and Siller, 2003).

There were around 100 ski resorts in Finland in 2007, the smallest of them having only one lift and two slopes, while the largest resort, Levi, having 45 slopes and 26 lifts. Approximately 15 percent (630,000) of Finns are active downhill skiers and every third Finn can be called as an active cross country skier (The Finnish Ski Area Association, 2007). The most important ski resorts are situated in the Finnish Lapland, in a distance of 800-1100 kilometers from the main domestic market, i.e. the capital area. Following Pearce (2005) we assume that a decision to travel to a ski resort in winter time is a result of internal input of the traveler (personal characteristics and motives) and external input of the destination (destination characteristics). Based on the input the traveler desires a set of activities which are a way to realize desired experiences. Activities available in the destination affect the destination choice.

The first objective of this paper is to profile the studied five ski destinations in Finnish Lapland by examining, how the factors affecting ski destination choice differ among visitors in these resorts. It can be assumed that the visitors who have chosen a certain ski resort expect the attributes of the destination to fulfill their desires. These expectations might reflect their images of the destination. The results will then be compared to the marketing message of the ski resorts in order to find out, if the customer expectations correspond to the projected images of the destinations. Grosspietsch (2006) wonders the lack of research aiming to compare the image perceived by visitors with the image projected by the service providers. This study is an attempt to contribute the destination image discussion by providing a trial to find a connection between the perceived and projected image of a destination.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ski destination choice

Earlier studies on ski destinations concentrate on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Alexandris et al., 2006, Hudson and Shephard, 1998, Matzler et al., 2008, Opperman, 1999) and ski tourism motivations (Matzler and Siller, 2003, Richards, 1996). Studies on ski destination choice are few. Klenovsky et al. (1993) utilized the means-end approach when examining downhill skiers’ perceptions of relevant factors affecting their ski destination choice. The results show that belonging, fun & excitement, achievement and safety are the key values or desired end-states determining ski destination choice. They further used cluster analysis to identify the most dominant groupings of concepts in the hierarchical value matrix derived from the means-end study. They found six different aspects skiers use when selecting among competing ski resorts:

- Variety and challenge of the hills and trails deriving from desire for fun & excitement and perceived achievement
- Snow conditions which was associated to safety concerns
- Social atmosphere, including friendly people and entertainment, deriving from desire for sense of belonging
• Time savings deriving from close-to-home location and enabling more time for skiing
• Money savings deriving from packaged services, lodging and resort services
• Local culture and familiarity reflecting the novelty associated with being at a particular resort environment

In their study Hudson and Shephard (1998) found that the most important attributes for customers in the Alpine ski resorts are related to tourist information services, accommodation, ski shops, ski slopes, ski slope services and tour operator services. Moreover, Godfrey (1999) showed that snow quality and diversity of the skiing terrain are two of the most important features of a destination for British skiers in Canada. In the Richard’s (1996) study ski destination choice was clearly affected by the price of the product. When analysing the general factors influencing destination choice, snow condition was the key factor in destination choice. The second most important attribute was listed as terrain diversity and “piste” quality as significant to their decision. Other features such as access to ski slopes, the proximity of accommodation, off-hill facilities such as shops or resort village, and the general atmosphere of the resort made also a difference when choosing a ski destination. Non-skier features, and après-ski activities such as ‘shopping’, ‘fine dining’, and ‘pubs and clubs’ and the opportunity to participate in other recreational activities can also be relevant to destination choice. In their recent extensive quantitative study on customer satisfaction with Alpine ski areas Matzler et al. (2008) found that restaurant and bar services are actually the most important determinants of overall customer satisfaction followed by quality and safety of slopes.

Ski destination image building

The concept of destination image can be examined either from the customer’s or from producer’s side. From the customer’s point of view it is question of perceived destination images that according to the literature have an effect on destination choice. Gartner (1989) suggests that a traveller is likely to choose the destination with the most favourable image. Image is believed to be the key underlying factor influencing traveller’s choice of destination (Gartner 2000). The image connotes the visitor’s expectations on the destination. A Positive image may promise the visitor a rewarding experience. Travellers create images by processing information about destinations from various sources over time. This information is organized into a mental construct that is meaningful to the person. (Leisen 2001, 49-50)

Gunn (1972) proposed that tourists’ destination image is distinguished by two different dimensions: organic image, which is a potential tourist’s impression of a destination without having visited a place, and induced image, which is formed by promotional materials or actual visitation to the area. Fakeye and Crompton (1991) modified Gunn’s theory and added to the list a complex image, which is a more realistic, objective and differentiated image. Their model described tourists developing organic images of a set of alternative destinations from various non-tourism information sources. With the desire to travel, they may get involved in an active information search and resort to specific information sources. As a result, they develop induced images of alternative choices which may be the same as, or substantially different from, their organic images. So, the induced image is derived from a conscious effort of tourism promotion directed by tourism organizations. (Leisen 2001, 50). Nevertheless, it must be noted that the image of a destination may be formed even in absence of any commercial information, and in most of the cases it is almost impossible to separate the impact of each possible case leading to an image (Tasci & Gartner 2007, 414).

Marketing communication is one variable influencing a consumer’s destination beliefs (Vogt & Andereck 2003). Image building refers to the activities of destination marketing organizations to enhance positive images of the destination (e.g. Cai 2002). Projected image is the producer’s viewpoint to the image concept (Saraniemi 2009). According to Tasci and Gartner (2007) both holistic destination image and specific destination attributes have been found to influence consumer behaviour variables related to future, during and after destination visitation (Tasci & Gartner 2007, 413). According to Vogt and Fesenmaier (1998), tourists acquire knowledge from their own experiences, those of others, and visual, verbal, and sensory stimuli, all of which educate them about destination image, enabling them to compare similarities and differences.
Destination marketing organizations use promotional materials for establishing, reinforcing, or changing the image of a destination. Promotion creates awareness, generates interest and stimulates desire to travel to the destination. Destinations use numerous promotional tools with verbal and visual messages. The visual aspects of promotional materials receive more attention since they represent the actuality of the destination and illustrate destination dimensions. The content and amount of the visuals are of primary importance. The inclusion or exclusion of certain dimensions determines what kind of image the destination is attempting to create in the minds of potential customers. (Tasci & Gartner 2007, 415) Positioning a destination’s image in the minds of different target groups is a core activity of a DMO (Duy, Skidmore & Koller 2002). According to Mackay and Fesenmaier (2000) it is important to test whether the images presented in promotional materials correspond to those held by visitors.

A brochure is a form of printed promotional material designed to communicate with existing or potential tourists. Brochures are a conventional communication tool frequently used in both public and private tourism activities. Brochures still play a fundamental role in the formation of an induced image, although new sources of information have changed the marketing communication in tourism sector due to the impact of new technologies. (Molina & Esteban 2006) Although, today, websites provide a prominent information channel for destination advertising, brochures still are a key representation of the destination (MacKay & Smith 2006, 8).

DATA AND METHODS

All the main ski resorts in Finnish Lapland are located outside towns and built for ski resort purposes only. The accessibility to all resorts is about the same from the main domestic market area. The prices in ski resorts in Finland are quite firm and equal and the services in the biggest resorts are somewhat comparable. According to a study conducted by The Finnish Ski Area Association (2008) Levi, Ylläs and Ruka are the most recommended ski resorts in Finland among Finnish skiers. Levi, Ylläs, Ruka and Saariselkä are the four most popular ski resorts in Finnish Lapland (The Finnish Ski Area Association, 2007). Pallas was chosen as a case study because of it is location near by Ylläs and Levi.

In order to find the differentiating factors and the attributes affecting the destination choice, preliminary open interviews were conducted to complement the literature review. A convenience sample of ten representatives and sales persons in destination marketing organisations of the respective ski resorts was selected. The interviewees were asked to define the ski destination pull factors affecting the ski destination choice according to their experience. The interviews confirmed the assumption that price, accessibility, shopping or snow conditions might not be factors affecting the destination choice between the Finnish Lapland ski resorts. Attributes mentioned in the interviews were related to hills and trails, restaurant and after-ski services, and other non-skier facilities.

To examine attributes of ski destination choice, a traditional paper-and-pencil survey was conducted in five different ski resorts in Lapland Finland during the years 2006 and 2007. Questions were designed to explore what attributes of the ski destination were most important to ski tourists. The attributes in the questionnaire were based on the foregoing literature review and 10 open interviews. Altogether 1,827 responses were collected of which 1,529 were effective (without missing values) in this study. The interviews were conducted during high seasons by tourism management students from the regional college. The interviews were implemented along the ski slopes, ski trails, in local restaurants, and partly at hotels and other accommodation units.

Table 1 describes the profile of the respondents in each of the ski resort. The data shows that while Levi and Ruka attract the youngest age groups, Saariselkä and Pallas attract older customers and Ylläs fall somewhere in between. Moreover, it seems that families are important customer groups for all the ski destinations in the study. However, it appears that Ylläs, Saariselkä and Pallas attract couples the most, while those travelling with their friends are the biggest customer group in Ruka.
Table 1
Respondent profile differences between the ski resorts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile characteristic</th>
<th>Ylläs N</th>
<th>Ylläs Percent</th>
<th>Levi N</th>
<th>Levi Percent</th>
<th>Ruka N</th>
<th>Ruka Percent</th>
<th>Saariselkä N</th>
<th>Saariselkä Percent</th>
<th>Pallas N</th>
<th>Pallas Percent</th>
<th>Pearson Chi-Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age &lt; 31 years</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>11.6 %</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>22.1 %</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>34.1 %</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6.8 %</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.2 %</td>
<td>p&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 31-40 years</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>17.8 %</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>24.9 %</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>21.7 %</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>9.0 %</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.2 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 41-50 years</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>26.1 %</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>30.1 %</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>33.2 %</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>23.3 %</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22.9 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 51-60 years</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>29.5 %</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>18.7 %</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8.8 %</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>35.7 %</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>43.8 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Over 60 years</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>15.0 %</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.2 %</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.2 %</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>25.1 %</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20.8 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travelling (with)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7.1 %</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7.2 %</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.1 %</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6.5 %</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0 %</td>
<td>p&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband/wife</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>40.1 %</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>29.3 %</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11.8 %</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>38.2 %</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>61.2 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>29.1 %</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>27.2 %</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>32.3 %</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>21.3 %</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18.4 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>21.1 %</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>26.6 %</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>39.7 %</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>29.9 %</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.3 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workmates</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.6 %</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9.7 %</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13.1 %</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.1 %</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ski destination choice was measured with 14 items. In order to avoid indecisive answers we used a 4-point Likert scale ranging from not at all important to very important. First, an exploratory factor analysis using the principal component method with varimax rotation was used to determine the factors of the phenomenon. Thereafter, ANOVA and Post Hoc pairwise multiple comparison tests were used to explore how the identified attributes of ski destination choice differ among tourists in five ski destinations.

According to Choi, Lehto and Morrison (2007), a content analysis of written information, e.g. brochures, could provide a great deal of information about the images projected by a tourist destination (Choi et al. 2007, 120). Printed material was chosen as the focus of this study, because it represents a more stable representation of the projected image of the destination than the web-site, which evolves during the seasons. The so called general image brochures from the four DMOs (Levi, Ruka, Saariselkä and Ylläs) were analyzed by using quantitative content analysis of pictures and texts. The focus was on headlines, overall narrative points and the content of the pictures. The themes were first created inductively and then categorized by using the same categories as in the questionnaire, when possible. The purpose of the content analysis was to try to identify, to what kind of tourist segments the DMO aims to target its message and what is the key message projected in the brochure.

Because there is no DMO in Pallas, the marketing material of the company operating on the top of the hill was analysed, as well as general information about the region published in web. Since this material is not directly comparable with other resorts, the results of the analysis of Pallas material are presented separately.

RESULTS

We identified four factors namely Downhill skiing services, Cross-country skiing services, Restaurants and social life and Spa services determining ski destination choice (Table 1). The factors identified were chosen in terms of eigenvalues larger than 1.0. Factor loadings less than 0.5 were removed. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy (KMO=0.805) and the Bartlett’s test of sphericity (p<0.001) confirmed that the factor analysis was appropriate. The identified factors represent 73.5 percent of the variance of the variables. The internal consistency of the factors, measured with Cronbach’s alphas, showed good reliability with the scores ranging from 0.775 to 0.932.
The results of the ANOVA test show that the tourists’ perceived importance of Cross-country skiing services differs most between the ski destinations explored (F=87.245), followed by the importance of Downhill skiing services (F=51.968) and Restaurants and social life (F=51.007). The importance of Spa services differentiates the ski destinations the least (F=24.755), though the difference is statistically highly significant (p<0.001) (Table 2).

The results show that Downhill skiing services are considered most important in Ruka and Levi while the least important in Saariselkä and Pallas. In case of Cross-country skiing services the case is the exact opposite. Restaurant and social services are considered most important in Ruka and Levi and least important in Pallas, while other ski destinations fall somewhere in between. Spa services are considered most important among tourists in Saariselkä, while the least important among the visitors in Pallas. It appears that winter tourists choose Ylläs, Saariselkä and Pallas because of the Cross-country skiing services, while Ruka and Levi seem to be ski destinations for those who value Restaurants and social life activities.

The Post Hoc pairwise multiple comparison tests show that while majority of the ski destinations differ statistically significantly in terms of the four measured pull factors, some destinations do not show statistical difference. It seems that in case of downhill-skiing services Levi vs. Ruka and Saariselkä vs. Pallas do not differ from each other. Again, Saariselkä vs. Pallas do not differ in terms of the importance of cross-country skiing services either, and this is also the case between Ylläs vs. Pallas. Moreover, the importance of restaurants and social life activities as a destination choice factor does not differ between Ylläs vs. Saariselkä and Levi vs. Ruka. Finally, spa services are perceived equally important among tourists in Ylläs vs. Ruka and Levi vs. Saariselkä (Table 3).

### Table 2
Results of the explorative factor analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure items</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Factor 3</th>
<th>Factor 4</th>
<th>Cronbach’s α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Downhill skiing services</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1 Variety of ski slopes</td>
<td>0.909</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2 The number of ski slopes</td>
<td>0.919</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3 Ski slopes’ great difference in altitude</td>
<td>0.895</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D4 Variety of the snowboard services</td>
<td>0.559</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D5 Wind-sheltered ski slopes</td>
<td>0.696</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cross-country skiing services</strong></td>
<td>0.932</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1 The number of ski track kilometres</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.921</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2 Variety of ski tracks</td>
<td>0.944</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3 Ski tracks’ quality</td>
<td>0.907</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restaurants and social life</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R1 A great variety of restaurants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.730</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2 You can meet interesting people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.821</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R3 Active nightlife</td>
<td>0.851</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R4 Plenty of other activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.550</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spa services</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1 Entertaining spa services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.875</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2 Health resort services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.898</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eigenvalues</td>
<td>4.411</td>
<td>2.553</td>
<td>2.072</td>
<td>1.255</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of variance explained (Cumulative)</td>
<td>24.297</td>
<td>43.491</td>
<td>60.217</td>
<td>73.511</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3
ANOVA results of the ski destination choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Ylläs N=499</th>
<th>Levi N=291</th>
<th>Ruka N=229</th>
<th>Saariselkä N=461</th>
<th>Palla N=49</th>
<th>Total N=1529</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Downhill skiing services</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>51.968</td>
<td>p&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-country skiing services</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>87.245</td>
<td>p&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants and social life</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>51.007</td>
<td>p&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spa services</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>24.755</td>
<td>p&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1 = Not at all important, 4 = Very important

Table 4
Post Hoc pairwise multiple comparisons test of the ski destination choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Downhill skiing services</td>
<td>p&lt;0.001</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-country skiing services</td>
<td>p&lt;0.001</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants and social life</td>
<td>p=0.001</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Ns.</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spa services</td>
<td>p&lt;0.001</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) Tamhane's T2 test (Equal Variances Not Assumed)
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
Content analysis

The pictures in the brochures were first inductively categorised in themes: downhill skiing, snowboarding, crosscountry skiing, the variety of restaurants and bars, meeting interesting people, active nightlife, other activities, entertaining spa services, health and fitness spa services, snowmobiling, dog/reindeer safaris, extraordinary experiences, snowshoeing and activities during other seasons. Also the age and family status of the people in the pictures was analysed and categorised in following groups: young people (15-25), adults, elderly people (over 60 years), families, and children. For example, it has been counted, in how many pictures there is a family together, or young people having fun, and e.g. in how many pictures there is a cross country skier in focus. Table 5 shows that Levi and Ruka seem to favour young people and children in their promotional material pictures. It is notable that in Levi brochure there was no elderly people at all in the pictures. In Ylläs material focus is on adults and families, but in Saariselkä pictures the emphasis is in adults.

In table 6 results of the content analysis according to the themes in the pictures is presented. The analysis was conducted following the themes in the questionnaire. Ruka seems to focus in downhill skiing and snowboarding as well as restaurants and night life in its promotional pictures. Both Levi and Ylläs also use lots of downhill skiing material, but Saariselkä emphasizes more other activities. The headlines in the brochures were categorized following the themes from the questionnaire. The results are shown in table 7.

Table 5
Content analysis of pictures in the DMO brochures: age and family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levi</th>
<th>Ylläs</th>
<th>Saariselkä</th>
<th>Ruka</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young people</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6
Content analysis of pictures in DMO brochures: activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levi</th>
<th>Ylläs</th>
<th>Saariselkä</th>
<th>Ruka</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross country skiing services</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downhill skiing services</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants and social life</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spa services</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other services</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7
Content analysis of headlines in DMO brochures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levi</th>
<th>Ylläs</th>
<th>Saariselkä</th>
<th>Ruka</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross country skiing services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downhill skiing services</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants and social life</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spa services</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other services</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the headlines, other than skiing experiences are emphasized. Other activities comprise e.g. husky safaris, reindeer sledge safaris, snow shooring and different kinds of extraordinary experiences like accommodation in ice hotel. In the brochures the variety of activities available in the ski resorts is much in the headlines. Again, Ruka differs here from the others, by focusing a lot in downhill skiing and snowboarding as well as restaurant and social life.

Pallas differs from the other investigated ski resorts in many aspects: it is a wilderness resort with only nine slopes and two lifts, located in Pallas-Ylläs national park. For the Finns, Pallas is more famous of the several days’ hiking and cross country skiing trails than downhill skiing. The ski lift operator, the owner of the only hotel on the top of the fell, emphasizes the downhill skiing services of the resort on its’ webpage and printed material. The picture, nevertheless, is different from pictures of other resorts, showing an adult telemark skier dressed in a traditional outfit. The national park web information does not even mention the ski lifts but focuses on long ski trails. People in all the pictures are adults.

As a result of the quantitative content analysis, a rough profile of the projected image of each destination based on the general marketing material can be presented. Levi seems to promote itself as a resort for young people and families. In the pictures from Levi jazzy and extraordinary experiences and activities are emphasized. Other activities than skiing are even more common in Levi material, but still downhill skiing is the major activity. Restaurants, bars and night life are represented in a wide variety in the promotional material.

According to the marketing material Ylläs seems to be a resort for especially adults, who are interested of fell experiences all year round. Ylläs pictures emphasize more relaxed activities, enjoying the food and family togetherness. Other than winter activities are more present in the headlines but in pictures cross country skiing is more paraded.

Ruka promotes itself as a resort of youngsters, children and families. Major theme in pictures is snowboarding and downhill skiing, reflecting a speedy, modern and experience rich atmosphere. Ruka aims to be the forerunner resort in Finland in terms of ski activities.

Saariselkä seems to profile itself as a relaxation resort for adults and families. Saariselkä tries to convince the potential customer of its variety of services and activities especially for adults and elderly people. Stress or hard adventures are not present in Saariselkä promotion. Saariselkä promotes much more its cultural attractions compared to the other resorts in this study. The visitor profile of the Finnish customers seems to coincide with the projected image.

CONCLUSIONS

The survey data shows that visitors coming to Saariselkä and Pallas more likely prefer cross country skiing than downhill skiing. They also are most often adults and even elderly people, travelling with their spouses. The rough content analysis of the general marketing material supports this view and shows that the marketers seem to target their message especially to adult cross-country skiers. Nevertheless, Saariselkä seems to try to attract more families as well in their marketing, but the profile of the visitors shows that more than half of the respondents belong to age groups that probably have no small kids travelling with them anymore.
Levi and Ruka seem to attract especially downhill skiing and social life seekers. Following the results of the content analysis and the visitor survey, Ruka seems to be the place for youngsters to have fun. Families are also an important target group for both Levi and Ruka. Ylläs seems to attract all age groups, but in terms of activities and travel company is more like Saariselkä than Levi or Ruka.

In the brochures a strong role was given to other than skiing activities. One explanation may be that skiing is considered to be the major motivation to come to the area anyway and other services have been presented in order to differentiate the offering, or to sell more services to the visitors. Nevertheless, respondents of this study have not considered other services a decisive determinant of their destination choice. Having said that it must be noted that the investigated brochures are more about the destination offering in general than just about one season offering. The survey data was collected in order to find the attributes affecting the ski destination choice in winter, and summer activities were not included in the questionnaire. The analysis of the marketing material shows nevertheless that the DMOs try to promote their all year round services also for their winter season customers.

Comparison of the results of the survey data and the content analysis shows that the projected images of the investigated five ski resorts seem to be more or less congruent with the determinants of ski destination choice of the visitors in respective resorts. If the destination choice can be seen as a reflection of a destination perceived image, it could be argued that the projected and perceived images of these five ski resorts are parallel. If the DMOs have achieved their objectives in their positioning strategies, or just adopted their strategies to correspond the demand remains an open question.

It must be noted that in this study the survey data was not examining the induced image of the destination held by the visitors but the importance of the various destination attributes on their destination choice. The assumption was made that when choosing the destination in question the traveller has based the decision on his/her positive images of the resort (see e.g. Gartner 1989, 2000). So, the results of the data do not necessarily reflect the images held by the visitors but more about their expectations of a ski resort in general. It is possible that the perceived image of the chosen destination was different from the general expectations of the traveller, and the decision to choose the resort in question was affected by other reasons, like if there were no other options available. The data did neither measure the satisfaction of the customer with the destination. So, a further analysis of the data is still needed to improve the quality of these results. Nevertheless, it can be stated that comparison of the perceived images of the visitors and the projected images of the DMOs might help the destinations on the other hand to measure if their marketing and positioning strategies have been influential, and on the other hand, if the profile and position of the

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Gunn, C. /1972) Vacationscape, Bureau of Business Research, University of Texas, Austin TX.


THE FAILURE OF USING FESTIVALS FOR DESTINATION BRANDING: INCONSISTENCY BETWEEN THE DESTINATIONS AND THE FESTIVAL

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Australia

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Australia

ABSTRACT

This paper evaluates the failure of using a festival for destination branding when inconsistencies occur between the destination and the festival, using the Maleny Folk Festival (currently the Woodford Folk Festival) as a case study. It was found that the lack of community support caused by the damage by the festival visitors and an unmatched cultural and strategic fit between the destination and the festival was the main reason for the Maleny Folk Festival failing to contribute to building a destination image and brand.

Keywords: destination image, branding, festival, community support, cultural and strategic fit

INTRODUCTION

Extensive research has been carried out focusing on the impacts and outcomes of festivals, and, more recently, attention has moved to the impacts of the festivals on the destination branding. Festivals appear to play an important role in improving the image of a destination and the building of a destination brand (Chalip, 2004; Jago, Chalip, Brown, Mules, & Ali, 2003; O’Brien, 2007). However, there are risks and threats when using festivals for destination branding (Allen, O’Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2005; Arcodia & Lee, 2008). Festivals can bring introduce risks, such as crowds and traffic, health hazards, alcohol and drugs, accidents and negative publicity. In addition, the image emerging from a festival can be unsuitable for the culture of the destination and the local community. Clashes between festival organisers and destination marketers and the local community because of the risks and inconsistencies between the destinations’ and the community’s desired brand and the image of the festival can result in the local community opposing the festival. This lack of community support can be the main reason for failing the destination branding through a festival. While there are a number of scholars researching the role of a festival for destination branding, the role mainly covers the successful cases of using a festival for building or enhancing a destination brand. There is a paucity of studies focusing on the failure when using a festival for destination branding.

The purpose of this paper is thus to evaluate the failure of using a festival for destination branding when inconsistencies occur between the destination’s desired brand and the image of the festival. To achieve this, the paper will first examine the relevant literature on destination brand identity and provide an overview of the destination image and branding. Second, the paper will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using a festival for building a destination brand and the two important reasons for failure when using a festival for destination branding, that is, community support, and the cultural and strategic fit between a festival and the destination. Finally, it will present the example of a failure in enhancing the destination brand, because of the lack of local community support and the unmatched culture and characteristics of a festival and the destination. The case of the Maleny Folk Festival (MFF — now, the Woodford Folk Festival) in Queensland, Australia, is used to demonstrate one failure of using a festival for destination branding.

DESTINATION BRAND IDENTITY

The destination image is frequently described as the “impressions of a place” or the “perceptions of an area” (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003, p. 41). Some researchers put in efforts to distinguish between the formation of a destination image and the branding of it. Crockett and Wood (1999) and
Cai (2002) argue that the destination image formation is not a branding, albeit the image formation constitutes the core of the branding. Image building is one step closer, but there still remains a critical missing link, the brand identity, “a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain” (Aaker, 1996, p. 68). Keller (1998) emphasizes the importance of selecting brand elements to represent the identity and argues that its cohesiveness “depends on the extent to which the brand elements are consistent” (p. 166). Consistent brand elements reinforce each other and serve to unify the entire process of image formation and building that, in turn, contribute to the strength and uniqueness of the brand identity.

It is widely argued that a festival contributes to building a destination image linked to the festival; thus, it helps to build a destination brand (Arcodia & Lee, 2008; Getz, 2005; Jago et al., 2003; Lee & Lee, 2009). That is, the image emerging from a festival can be one of brand elements building the destination brand identity. It is Keller’s (1998) view that consistent brand elements contribute to the strength of brand identity; therefore, the consistency between the cultural image of the destination or the destination’s desired brand and the image emerging from a festival would be more effective for building a destination brand.

FESTIVALS AS A MEANS OF DESTINATION BRANDING

Destination marketing and tourism have pointed to the increasing use of events as a means of marketing places and building destination’s brand (Waitt, 1999, 2003). The reason that festivals contribute to building a destination’s brand is because, first, festivals provide authenticity and uniqueness (Derrett, 2000, 2004; Everett & Aitchison, 2007). Festivals present an opportunity to share what is distinctive about communities with visitors (Derrett, 2000). The uniqueness and distinctiveness of a destination explored through festivals help to differentiate fairly the destinations with a less cost, thus it creates or improves the destination brand. In other words, events provide a means of adding flexibility to fixed structures, supplying the source of a spectacle that adds to the image value of a landmark.

Second, because festivals become hallmark events and attract a large number of visitors to a community (Janiskee, 1996), the festival generates attention to the destination through advertising, publicity and word-of-mouth, before, during and after the event has taken place (Getz & Fairley, 2004; Jago et al., 2003). It is universally agreed that media coverage is essential for building a destination branding. Festivals generate significant media interest and the publicity that festivals obtain, and their presence in, advertising messages should help to raise the profile of the destination; thereby, adding salience to its brand. That is, festival publicity supports the destination’s association with the festival. Festivals also encourage people to visit a place more than once and, by hosting different events (Getz, 2005, 2007), cities and regions may profile themselves to a number of different potential markets. For these reasons, festivals are used as an effective means of destination branding.

There are also risks and threats, however, when using a festival in destination branding. When the image of the festival is transferred to the destination image, any negative image of the festival is also transferred to the destination image and destination branding. Festivals contain many risks, such as crowds and traffic, health hazards, alcohol and drugs, accidents and so on (Allen et al., 2005). Not only these risks, but also a poorly managed programme of festivals can leave visitors unsatisfied. Negative publicity arising from dissatisfaction can impact on the destination image and further branding. Marzano and Scott (2006) also support the idea that negative publicity from the event impacts on the destination image and the branding, as seen through examining the Schoolies in the Gold Coast as a case study.

Furthermore, the coverage of the destination through publicity or advertising is not developed from targeted messages controlled by the destination marketers or event organisers (Chalip, 2005). In the case of festival advertising, marketers promote the attributes and benefits that they expect will bring people to the festival, even if those attributes and benefits are not compatible with the destination’s desired brand. In the case of publicity, the images and messages the audiences obtain are a haphazard collage selected and edited by broadcasters and journalists. This, also, can be a risk with destination branding through festivals.
To make festivals more effective tools for destination branding, the conditions that are essential for festivals to contribute to a destination’s brand have been identified in previous festival and event studies (Jago et al., 2003; Lee & Lee, 2009). Jago et al. (2003) identified that six conditions influence the destination image through workshop discussions with destination and event marketers, namely, the need for local community support, the need for a good strategic and cultural fit with the destination, the need for an event to be differentiated from others, the longevity or tradition of the event at the destination, cooperative planning among key players and media support for the event. Moreover, Lee and Lee (2009) explored the five conditions that need to be met for an event to make a contribution to the destination’s brand, through a festival visitor survey based on Jago et al.’s (2003) findings. These five conditions are, local community support, cultural and strategic fit with the destination, longevity, cooperative planning and media coverage. In this study, only the two most important factors, community support and the cultural and strategic fit between the festival and the destination, are discussed to support the failure of using the MFF for destination branding.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

It is widely recognised that the local community is important, not only in an event’s success (Lade & Jackson, 2004), but also in destination branding (Morgan, Pritchard, & Piggott, 2003). More specifically, according to Jago et al. (2003), building a destination brand though holding a festival depends greatly on the local community for support. Of the six conditions that the authors identified, they found local community support to be the most important factor for determining the success of an event when branding a destination. Similarly, Lee and Lee (2009) explored the community support for a festival and identified it as the most essential factor playing a role in destination branding from among the five factors they had found.

Ingerson and Westerbeek (2000) also support the importance of community support for events. They analysed the key factors that determine success in bidding for major sporting events. One of the key criteria among the six factors identified is the socio-cultural impact. This includes community support and the image of the city. Although it is in the ‘bid process’, it provides an insight into which measures of success are considered important by both the event organizers and the event owners. Also, this success has a contribution in the destination branding. Lade and Jackson (2004) studied the development of regional Australian festivals and the range of factors that contributed to their success. Community participation and involvement were considered important for the success of the festivals. Also included were volunteer contributions, local business support, development and support of local eateries, local community sponsorship and workshops, the contribution of private accommodation, community infrastructure and facilities, cooperation of local accommodation establishments and the support of the local council and the government bodies.

Community support for festivals depends on the perceived benefits and costs derived from the festival. Local residents are likely to support festivals provided they believe the expected benefits of development will exceed the expected costs (Gursoy & Kenall, 2006). Local support for festivals has, mostly, been based on economic benefits and the long-term awareness derived from the festivals. Turco (1998) found that a majority of residents received social benefits from an event and were thus more willing to support the public funding of facility developments and event promotions. Ritchie and Smith (1991) also support Turco’s (1998) argument in their study of the 1988 Winter Olympic Games by finding that the residents consistently supported the event, because of perceived short- and long-term rewards.

Although most research has focused on the positive impacts of festivals or events, these activities bring both benefits and costs to the host community (Deccio & Baloglu, 2002) and such festival costs may lead the local residents to oppose supporting them. Previous studies suggest that events are likely to result in such problems as, traffic congestion, difficulties with law enforcement and increased crime (Mihalik & Simonetta, 1999). Furthermore, the events may damage the image of the host community or diminish its attractiveness, because of an inadequate infrastructure, poor facilities or improper practices (Ritchie, 1984). They can also create social and cultural conflicts in the community by exacerbating the differences in the culture and social status and highlighting socio-cultural and economic differences between hosts and tourists (Tosun, 2002). These costs of the festivals encourage
the local community not to support a festival even though the festival brings an economic injection into
the local economy; this will contribute to the failure when using a festival for destination branding.

As discussed above that community support is the most important factor for building
destination brand using festivals, a lack of community support because of such festival costs can be
argued as a major reason for the failure of the events helping to brand destinations. For example, the
Australian Festival of Chamber Music in Queensland was not successful in achieving a positive
destination branding because of its lack of community support. The community was not proud of
the festival and did not support it. Consequently, the images of the event and destination have been
somewhat tarnished (Jago et al., 2003). Although the importance of community support for destination
branding by the use of a festival is widely recognised, the failure of using a festival for destination
branding owing to the lack of community support has not been yet investigated with a case study.

CULTURAL AND STRATEGIC FIT BETWEEN THE DESTINATION AND A FESTIVAL

A festival should have a good cultural and strategic fit with a destination and its community, if
it is to play a positive role in branding the destination (Brown, Chalip, Jago, & Mules, 2004; Jago et al.,
2003; Lee & Lee, 2009). Because a brand reflects values, culture and infrastructure, the event’s values,
culture, and requisite infrastructure need to be consistent with those that the community seeks to
communicate through its brand. To retain local support and also to build a desired brand image, the
event should be consistent with the way a community sees itself and the way it wants to be seen by
others. This is important, because the destination’s culture, values and infrastructure affect the
experience that the event visitors obtain and that event the media communicate (Chalip, 2005).

Through workshops with professionals such as destination and event marketers, Jago et al.
(2003), among six conditions, identified the need for a good strategic and cultural fit between the
destination and a festival as the second important condition after to the community support for
determining the success of an event when branding a destination. Similarly, Lee and Lee (2009) also
found that a good cultural and strategic fit between a festival and the destination contributes when
building a destination brand.

Marzano and Scott (2006) analysed the contribution of an event in terms of its consistency
with the destination brand values, using the “Schoolies on the Gold Coast” as a case study. The set of
negative associations related to the Schoolies appear to be inconsistent with the brand values of the Gold
Coast as expressed in the brand “Very GC”, a sophisticated up-scale tourism destination. And clearly,
there was a need for the Gold Coast to ensure consistency between associations with the Gold Coast
derived from the Schoolies and the brand “Very GC”. Consistency with the destination brand values
enhances the destination brand equity. In addition, it has been shown that the greater the perceived
match between an event and its sponsor (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999) or a service and the characteristics of
the service provider (Koerning & Page, 2002), the more positive the attitude toward the sponsor, the
product or the service. The reason for these effects is that a match-up facilitates the processing of the
association between the event and its destination. In other words, the more similar the attributes of the
two are, the easier it is for the consumer to recognize an association between the two.

In light of this, an unmatched cultural and strategic fit between a destination and its
community and a festival seems to be one of important reasons for the failure of the events helping to
brand destinations. Thus, there is a clear need to evaluate the failure of using a festival for destination
branding caused by an unmatched cultural and strategic fit between a destination and a festival.

CASE STUDY: THE MALENY FOLK FESTIVAL (MFF)

In this paper, the Maleny Folk Festival (MFF, now, the Woodford Folk Festival) in southeast
Queensland, Australia, was selected as a case study to understand and evaluate the failure of using a
festival for destination branding when inconsistencies occur between the destination’s desired brand
and the image of the festival. The MFF was the origin of what is now known internationally as the
Woodford Folk Festival. It is a gathering of musically-minded souls, both performers and audience,
that has proved to have a tremendous influence on folk music in Australia. Bill Hauritz, with a
passionate love for folk music, has created the vision and the drive to make it succeed. With a group of like-minded people, he eventually opened the gates to the first MFF in March 1987. Approximately 800 people turned up to enjoy the performances of seven groups. The final MFF in late 1994 has drawn 60,000 people from all around the world and it restarted in the adjacent Woodford in 1995 with a new name, the Woodford Folk Festival (WFF). The MFF is a distinctive example of a festival that has failed to enhance its destination brand, because of the unhelpful relationship between the local community and the unmatched cultural and strategic fit between the festival and the destination. Interestingly, the festival has been successfully enhanced and has changed the destination’s brand after moving to a new destination.

Although the festival grew at Maleny, it became more popular and has evolved from a local event to a highly recognised international festival, after the festival moved from Maleny to Woodford, a nearby town, in 1995, attracting more than 128,000 people, pumping A$20 million (US$17.6 million) into the Queensland economy in 2008 (Queensland Folk Federation, 2008). Before Woodford held the festival, Woodford was just a spot outside a small town in Queensland, synonymous with the Woodford Prison. After the festival moved to Woodford, it has been so popular that it has caused the destination’s image to change from a negative to a positive.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND MEASUREMENT

Two methods are used for this study. First, to identify the perceptions of the image of the WFF and that of Woodford, data were collected by two interviewers during the WFF 08/09 using an on-site survey on 27 December 2008. Randomly, festival visitors were asked to participate every 10 minutes between 10 am and 9 pm. Interviewers could easily access a group of respondents because the people were usually in groups, and once one of the group members had started to fill in the questionnaire, the rest of the group members wanted to take part in the survey. The respondents were relatively cooperative. In total, 202 attendees agreed to participate in the research. Although two questionnaires were partially completed, they were included in the analysis because the questions relative to this analysis were completed. The questionnaire included open-ended questions asking for the image of Woodford and the image of the WFF.

Second, to examine the influence of the conflict between the local community and the festival, and the different culture and characteristics between the destination and the festival on building a destination brand, data were collected through semi-structured interviews involving the local residents and businesses in Maleny where the Folk Festival was previously held. Three trained interviewers collected data for three days in May, 2009. All the questions were open-ended to gain in-depth information and to fully explore the topic. In addition, the questions were designed to allow the participants to think freely and to describe their opinions and experiences with respect to the MFF. It was designed to be completed in 20–30 minutes and 19 people consented to an interview. Interviews were conducted with the 19 people, out of which 17 interviews were considered useful. Questions asked of the local residents and the local businesses covered their support for the MFF at that time, their personal opinions about how Maleny and the MFF fitted strategically and culturally, the benefits and costs to the Maleny caused by holding the festival, and the reason for the MFF moving to Woodford.

RESULTS

Throughout the survey, it was found that the WFF has an image of freedom, music and being hippy, and the image of Woodford itself also has been developed as a free, hippy, and a small country town through the influence of the festival. This shows that the WFF plays a role in effectively building a destination image and a destination brand. It is also found that no one retains an image of Woodford with the Woodford Prison anymore, which shows that Woodford built a destination image positively through the successful festival.

By the end of interviews, the participants had typically reached a consensus about the reason for the failure of using the folk festival for destination branding. Interview participants described a number of issues that indicated the limited use of the MFF for destination branding. The two most
frequently mentioned issues were, (1) the local residents’ opposition to supporting the festival because of damages caused by the festival and, (2) the cultural and strategic non-fit between Maleny and the MFF. Each issue is described below.

Lack of community support because of the damages caused

The interview participants considered the lack of local community support for the festival as one of the reasons of the failure of using the MFF for destination branding. Participants noted that the costs from holding the MFF were more than the benefits for the local residents. While there was an economic injection into the town and many local residents liked the festival itself because it was a good place to have fun, the local residents suffered a loss from the festival. For example, the infrastructures and the facilities in the town, such as accommodation and toilets, were not enough for a huge number of visitors for the festival. It was hard for the local community to build new infrastructures and facilities for only five to six days in a year when the folk festival was held, because they were not needed in the town except during the festival period.

Because festival visitors filled the town beyond its capacity, the visitors violated local residents’ privacy. Visitors, who could not find accommodation tented on private land, such as in the backyards of residences. One of the interviewees added that sometimes drunken festival visitors asked to use the private toilet in the local resident’s house in the middle of the night. Moreover, severe traffic congestion and loud noises were created by the festival in the small town. The local community supported the festival at the beginning of the festival, such as volunteering for the security service and traffic control. The costs of the festivals, however, caused the support to decrease and finally, the local community would not support the festival. As a result, the MFF was not successfully used for destination branding.

An unmatched cultural and strategic fit between the destination and the festival

Interview participants frequently noted that the size and location of the MFF was not appropriate for Maleny. The festival was held in the Maleny showground that is not far from the residential area. Owing to the growing size of the festival, the showground was not suitable for festival visitors. These visitors came out of the showground and damaged the property of the local residents that lived near the showground. As a result, the local people were reticent in supporting the festival. The festival organiser tried to expand the venue of the festival in Maleny, but could not find any place that they could afford to rent with enough land for the festival. The strategic fit between Maleny and the festival was not closely matched.

It was also pointed out that, although the positive economic impact from the festival was important to the local residents and as Maleny is famous for dairy products, such as cheese and milk, the Maleny residents did not want to rely on the artificially-generated economic benefits from a festival and tourism. Thus, there was no reason for the local residents to submit to the damages caused by the festival visitors for the economic injection and increased visits to their town. Some respondents emphasized that the uninhibited attitude and behaviour of some festival performers had notably created a significant friction between the festival performers and the decidedly-conservative local residents. The MFF had established the image associated with the ‘hippy, young, free, drug-taking, drunken and wild’ and the local Maleny community did not enjoy that fact and hesitated to have their recognised hometown as a ‘hippy community’.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

The findings here show the importance of local community support and a good cultural and strategic fit between the destination and a festival for building a destination branding successfully through holding a festival. It is found that the MFF failed to contribute to Maleny by increasing tourist awareness and creating a positive destination image owing to a lack of local community support and an unmatched cultural and strategic fit between Maleny and the festival. The MFF moved to Woodford because of such reasons. Interestingly, the festival has been more successful and it was found through the survey that the festival had contributed to enhancing and changing the destination’s brand after
moving to a new destination. As such, the festival has a potential for use as a tool for building a
destination image and brand. The MFF, however, failed to be used for that.

The main reason that the festival has been more successful after moving to Woodford seems
to be the strong community support and a good cultural and strategic fit between Woodford and the
festival. As Lee and Lee (2009) found, community support, cultural and strategic fit between the
destination and the festival and the longevity of the WFF were the most important factors that helped to
build the Woodford image and brand influence from the festival; the WFF received strong community
support (The Northern Times, 2003, 2007; Townsville Bulletin, 2006). Furthermore, local businesses
also supported the festival positively, because it increased trade by about 2.5 times above the normal
levels (Caboolture Shire Herald, 2008).

For the Woodford residents, the economic injection into the town caused by the festival was
one of the important reasons for supporting the festival, because there is no other special tourist
attraction to attract people from outside the town, nor a special product from inside the town to earn
money from outside of the town. Strong financial outcomes for the local business community lead to
partnerships and further support from within the local business community. If the local businesses feel
little direct benefit, they might fail to support or even oppose it (Chalilp & Leyns, 2002). Maleny
residents, however, have their special products, and they did not rely on the financial outcomes
generated by festival visitors. Thus, they did not need to submit to the damages caused by the festival
visitors for only the financial outcomes. As a result, the local support in Maleny was decreased.

The WFF also made efforts to reduce the local damage. Because the WFF takes place in a
rural valley surrounded by natural bushland separated from the residential area, the local residents are
not annoyed by the noise and traffic congestion caused by the festival. The festival also provides a
huge area for tenting for visitors on site. Hotel and local accommodation are arranged for the visitors. It
is believed that such considerations for the local residents lead to more support from the community.
On the other hand, in Maleny, the festival site was close to the residential area and the site was not big
enough to accommodate visitors. Because the site was close to the residential area, many problems
occurred and these problems disturbed the locals. Again, because they did not have a need to submit to
the damages from the festival visitors, they came to oppose the support for the festival with these
unmatched strategic fits between the festival and Maleny.

In addition, Woodford had a negative image synonymous with the Woodford Prison. Now,
however, Woodford has an image of free, hippy and music through the influence of the WFF. The
community wanted to change their image and it seems to have been successful in changing the
destination image and brand from negative to positive. In contrast, Maleny was famous for dairy
products, such as cheese and milk. Although the festival has an image associated with hippy, free and
music, the community did not see itself or want to be seen by others as a hippy community. As such,
the consistency between the destination’s desired brand and the image of the festival did not help to run
a successful festival or maximize the role of the festival in destination branding with a strong local
community support. Any inconsistency, however, can cause the festival to fail and/or the destination’s
brand to become diluted or eclipsed.

This evaluation of the MFF in destination branding provides insights for festival organisers
and destination marketers for the success of a destination branding. It is recommended that festival
organisers consider the culture and strategic fit between a destination and the destinations’ desired
brand and a festival before organising a festival; hence, festivals that are well-matched with the
destinations’ desired brand can grow and succeed with a strong community support. This study can be
useful to festival organisers and public sectors that are interested in organising new festivals.

This study found that the lack of community support caused by the inconsistency between the
destination and the festival was the main reason for the MFF failing to contribute in the building of a
destination image and brand. Further research could be compared with the Woodford and Maleny
residents, in terms of their support, for the festival through interviewing the residents to provide a more
reliable and consistent insight for the topic.
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MARKETING MALAYSIA AS A FOOD TOURISM DESTINATION

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to examine the potential of Malaysia as a food tourism destination from the international tourists’ perspective. A survey was carried out in the departure hall of Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) and Low Cost Carrier Terminal (LCCT). Results showed internal reliability of above .70 for the sections analyzed. Factor analysis was applied to identify the underlying factors that determine the image of Malaysia as a food destination. Multiple regression analysis was used to assess the relationship between the factors identified and tourists’ overall satisfaction toward Malaysia as a destination for culinary tourism. The findings will significantly fill in the gap in the literature about Malaysian food’s image and the potential of Malaysia being promoted as a food destination. Additionally, the results would indisputably provide better insight to the tourism and hospitality industry on the perceptions of international tourists towards Malaysian food and Malaysia as a food tourism destination.

Keywords: Perceived Image; Satisfaction; Malaysian food; Food destination; Destination marketing

INTRODUCTION

Gastronomy tourism, culinary tourism and food tourism are tourism activities related to food and cuisines in a destination. With the advancement of technology and global networking, people or even culture travelled beyond boundaries. Restaurants selling ethnic cuisines from other countries can be easily found. Despite the convenience of enjoying different ethnic food in a person’s local setting, today’s travellers’ would seek to experience ethnic cuisine in the original setting of the cuisine. At potential tourist destinations, food is usually presented as an attraction by strategizing the promotion of different ethnic food of unfamiliar people and the culture of a country (Cohen & Avieli, 2004).

In response to the needs and demands in the food tourism industry, Malaysia has plenty to offer in terms of gastronomy and culture. Malaysia, a well known multi ethnic country has countless of mouth-watering cuisine originating from each ethnic that made up the country. All this while, tourism industry has been one of the fore front capital generator of Malaysia. However, focus has been emphasized on the panorama of the country (Samsudin et. al., 1997; Liu, 2006). Local delicacies are commonly considered only as part of the highlights in the promotional materials for Malaysia.

In fact, food has been claimed to be one of the crucial factor that aid in differentiating destinations in an effectual way (Okumus et al., 2007). This is because food is capable in representing different ethnic groups visibly. For example, in Malaysia there are Malay cuisine, Chinese cuisine,
Indian cuisine and the indigenous cuisine. Over the years, food and cultures in Malaysia have well assimilated to form the cuisine of Malaysia where similar characteristics could be found among the diverse food in Malaysia.

Given that Malaysia is blessed with its culinary diversity, effort should be directed to positioning the precise image for Malaysian food as well as promotional measures. The act of promoting local cuisine in Malaysia destinations might increase the positive association of the food and destinations in Malaysia. A clear and vivid image of a destination would certainly be more memorable to tourists and this would motivate tourists’ repeat visitation to a destination (Rittichainuwant et al., 2001; Yuksel, 2001) and tourists’ keenness in recommending that destination (Chen & Tsai, 2007).

A mixture of cultural diversity, attractive destinations and authenticity of the cuisine has made Malaysia to be very unique. However there is little effort made to promote Malaysia as a food tourism destination. In addition, Malaysia has yet to be positioned with images that are associated with Malaysian gastronomy and cultures. Therefore it is crucial to explore tourists’ perceptions toward Malaysia as a food tourism destination. This study was designed to meet two objectives. First was to examine the underlying factors for the experiential dimension of Malaysia’s image as a food destination; second to assess the relationship between tourists’ perceived image and their overall satisfaction towards Malaysia as a food tourism destination.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the past, consumer products were the focal point of branding theories (de Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2001). Nonetheless, these days branding is equally imperative in other industry (destination branding, food’s image and wineries branding) as brand was claimed to be proficient in heightening awareness and image development (Scott, 2002). Branding strategy, when applied to marketing a food destination would definitely enhance strong associations of the local food with certain positive symbols, slogans, tangible and intangible features that could appeal to human senses and emotions (Keller, 1993, cited in Scott, 2002).

In competitive environment specifically, branding strategies are well worth to be applied in various conditions in order to be competent and uphold inimitable. Bearing that in mind, there is an optimistic interest of researchers studying on branding strategies in food and tourism industry (Mowle & Merrilees, 2005), as food is one of the undeniable needs for travelers. Besides, food is also a source of economic generator in the tourism industry of a country.

Diverse models were used to study brand image, either in consumer goods, tourism destinations and wineries. Table 1 shows a summary of the brand image models employed by past scholars. The authors had applied functional, symbolic and experiential associations in image branding.

Park et al. (1986) discussed about strategic brand concept-image management which had four stages in the framework; selection, introduction, elaboration and fortification. Each of the stages excluding selection stage, consisted of functional, symbolic and experiential dimensions. These dimensions were used to classify a suitable marketing mix to create a product’s image. Brand concept was claimed to be a long term investment serving to achieve competitive gain. Moreover through positioning, valued image can be communicated on top of dealing with the incessant uncertainties in the consumer market. On the contrary, Keller (1993) covered brand knowledge dimensions more extensively. The conceptual framework developed contained detail subsection illuminating brand knowledge. Brand awareness and the brand image projected by a brand were argued to exert brand knowledge whereas functional, symbolic and experiential associations were linked to brand image as the benefits that one would obtain.
Table 1
Models of Brand Image

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Functional associations</th>
<th>Symbolic associations</th>
<th>Experiential associations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarke (2000)</td>
<td>Functional dimensions</td>
<td>Representational dimensions</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhat &amp; Reddy (1998)</td>
<td>Functional / utilitarian</td>
<td>Symbolism associations</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de Chernatony &amp; McWilliam (1989)</td>
<td>Functional dimensions</td>
<td>Representational dimensions</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park et al. (1986)</td>
<td>Functional needs satisfaction</td>
<td>Symbolic needs satisfaction</td>
<td>Experiential needs satisfaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Supporting Keller’s (1993) work, Gnoth (2002) further discussed on destination branding by utilizing part of Keller’s (1993) brand knowledge framework. The author described the relationship of three theoretical models: the tourism system, the tourism product and the country brand. The model explained marketing strategies for activities in destinations have propensity to amaze potential tourists about the benefits that they would gain in a particular destination. Benefits (functional, symbolic and experiential) inferred to the target market could also be claimed as the destination brand images. It was argued that tourists would be highly motivated and the brand image of a country would emerge, provided tourists could experience uniformity in all the brand image dimensions that a country tried to portray.

Bhat and Reddy (1998) generated attributes for functionality and symbolism through focus groups to develop measurement scales. The concepts of functionality and symbolism were found to be discrete. However the concepts were not considered as two ends of a brand concept scale furthermore brand was asserted to have the possibilities of having both functional and symbolic meanings to consumers. Whereas Pizam (1978) argued that the measurement of tourist satisfaction is a complex matter. Therefore measurement should cover a few dimensions that are capable to measure in different angles that have relative importance to tourist satisfaction. However, experiential dimension was emphasized greater than the instrumental or functional dimension as experience will have greater effect on tourists.

METHODODOLOGY

Based on published literature, this study had adapted the models discussed in the previous section. However this study was premeditated to solely determine the experiential dimension and the influence of the factors derived from the dimension towards tourists’ overall satisfaction on Malaysia as a food tourism destination. The survey instrument was initiated by thorough review of the literature and focus group data. Items used to measure tourists’ perceptions towards Malaysian food were solely extracted from the focus group. Whereas items measuring tourists’ satisfaction were based on previous literature and published dissertation (Pizam et. al., 1978; Yau & Chan, 1990; Choi, et. al., 1999; Karim, 2006; Kivela & Crotts, 2006 Okumus, et. al., 2007).

The target sample was tourists who visited Malaysia within 24 hours to less than 12 months of duration (Mill & Morrison, 1985; Choi, et. al., 1999). Respondents were approached by using
systematic sampling in Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) and Low Cost Carrier Terminal (LCCT). Six trained enumerators took charge in distributing the questionnaires at a predetermined point at the airports. The enumerators approached the potential respondents by introducing themselves and the purpose of the study to them. Potential respondents were also informed that no penalties for refusal of participation. Voluntary respondents had to satisfy a screening question prior to be qualified to participate in the survey. The screening questions were whether the respondent was a resident in Malaysia and whether they had prior experience of tasting Malaysian food. Malaysian residents and tourists who had no prior experience of Malaysian food were excluded from the survey. The survey was conducted between end of April and early of May 2009. In order to minimize biasness, the data collection was administered at three different times in a day across the data collection duration; 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Descriptive analysis was applied to determine the tourists’ characteristics profile. Exploratory factor analysis was used to explore the underlying dimensions that were involved in measuring tourists’ perceptions towards Malaysia as a food destination. Exploratory factor analysis is suggested when there are a huge number of individual variables; this analysis could assist in reducing the data into groups of variables that are very closely related and high in correlation to form concepts or factors (Hair, et. al., 2005). Multiple regression analysis was also applied to determine the relationship between the derived factors on perceptions and the dependent variable which was tourists’ overall satisfaction towards Malaysia as a food tourism destination.

FINDINGS

A total of 392 survey questionnaires were distributed to tourists who were departing from two major airports in Malaysia when the survey was conducted. Out of the total figure, 339 questionnaires were usable whereas 53 were unusable due to massive missing values and incomplete questionnaire.

Respondents’ demographic profile

As shown in Table 2, there were a total of 339 respondents being analyzed. About 63.1% (214) were males and 36.6% (124) were females. Majority of the respondents fell under age group of 21-30 with 30.7% followed by the age group of 31-40 with a frequency of 96 (28.3%). Nearly half of the respondents held executive/managerial/professional position (41.9%) and this might be due to them having higher disposable income. A handful percentage (9.1%) of the respondents’ occupation was clustered under ‘others’ category (Basala & Klenosky, 2001). Respondent selected the category of ‘others’ was required to note their occupation in a prepared column in the questionnaire but most of them did not specify their occupation. Merely a few wrote down their occupation as traveller, photographer and blogger while several others mentioned that it was privacy. Majority of the respondents were Europeans (36.3%) followed by Asians (29.2%) and a minority came from Africa with a percentage of 2.9. There were 27.1% of the respondents stayed in Malaysia for 3-6 days and 15.3% for 1-2 days. A large number of respondents (93.5%) noted that they have tasted Malaysian food more than once and this was positive indications that repeat visitation have occurred whereas only 5.6% of the respondents notified that they had merely experienced Malaysian food for once prior to the survey. Majority visited Malaysia for holiday/pleasure purpose with 51.3% of responses whereas 1.5% indicated they were food lovers and came to Malaysia for Malaysian food in particular.

Underlying Dimensions of the Experiential Attributes of Malaysia as a Food Destination

A total of fourteen 5-points Likert statements were explored using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and varimax rotation. The PCA was used to reduce a larger set of items to a few smaller groups of items that were deduced to signify the image dimensions of Malaysia as a food destination. Only factors with Eigen value above 1.0 were considered in the analysis. Results showed three-factor solution was sorted out from the analysis which accounted for 59.67% of total variance explained (Table 3).
Table 2
Respondents’ Demographic Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic characteristics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>63.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>99.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 and below</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 60</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>99.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production/clerical/administrative</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical/sales</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive/managerial/professional</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academician/educator</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired/unemployed</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>99.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nationality according to region</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>97.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of stay in Malaysia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 24 hours</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 days</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6 days</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About 2 weeks</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About 3 weeks</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About 1 month</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within 1-12 months</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
None of the items had factor loadings below .40 and the reliability test was run to check the internal consistency for each individual factor. All Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were above .70 which indicated high correlation existed among the items in each factor (See Table 3). Each factor was labelled based on the items that it comprised and items with higher loadings were considered to have greater weight on the naming of the factor (Hair et al., 2005). Factor 1 contained seven items pertaining to the food and dining adventure in Malaysia (α = .845). Factor 2 was made up of four items that were related to Malaysian cultures and lifestyles with Cronbach’s alpha coefficient value of .782. Whereas Factor 3 comprised of three items that were correlated with the exclusive culinary experience in Malaysia (α = .707).

The summated means of all factors were above 3.0. This had designated that tourists were deemed to agree with the statements and had favourable image on Malaysia as a food destination. Specifically, exclusive culinary experience in Malaysia (Factor 3) had the highest mean score (3.79) among all which indicated that tourists were highly agreeable with statements under Factor 3 compared to other factors.

### The Relationship between the Perceived Images of Malaysia and Tourists’ Overall Satisfaction

A multiple regression analysis was used in this study to approximate the coefficient of the linear equation that involved three independent variables (factors derived in Table 3) that best predicts the value of the dependent variable (tourists’ overall satisfaction toward Malaysia as a food destination). Table 4 depicts the findings of the regression model. The finding shows a significant model had existed (F3, 335 = 117.825, p = .000).

Standardized coefficient (β) value was examined across the three factors as this value could reflect the importance of each independent variable on the dependent variable. In due course, from the findings, Factor 1 was shown to have the highest β value (.490) which indicated that the most influential image of Malaysia on tourists’ overall satisfaction was food and dining adventure (Factor 1). This was followed by exclusive culinary experience in Malaysia (Factor 3) with β value of .291.
Table 3
Result for Factor Analysis of the Experiential Attributes on Malaysia as a Food

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor and attributes</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Factor loading</th>
<th>Eigen value</th>
<th>Variance explained (%)</th>
<th>Cronbach’s alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor 1: Food and dining Adventure</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>26.19</td>
<td>845</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating Malaysia food is simply a food adventure</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>.707</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing a full range of taste from mild to spicy</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>.705</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing warm and friendly hospitality</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>.677</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing food in different cooking methods</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>.660</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing the richness of herbs and spices in food</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>.631</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An exciting experience to be shared with friends and family</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>.607</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique dining experience</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.599</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 2: Malaysian cultures and lifestyles</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>19.45</td>
<td>.782</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploring Malaysian cultures</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>.833</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing Malaysian lifestyle</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>.828</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning about Malaysian culture through the food</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>.535</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic dining experience</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>.468</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 3: Exclusive culinary experience in Malaysia</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>14.03</td>
<td>.707</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to taste local street food</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>.804</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing alfresco dining</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>.782</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoying variety of food from different ethnic groups</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>.538</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Malaysian cultures and lifestyles (Factor 2) was found to be insignificant as the significant p value was above .05 (Factor 2, p = .533 in Table 4). This explained that Malaysian cultures and lifestyles did not significantly influence tourists’ overall satisfaction. Furthermore, this could also suggest that the effort of projecting Malaysian culture and lifestyles have not been properly strategized to impel more interest among tourists. Thus tourists were not keen to know more in regard to the background or history of the local produce.

The total variance explained by the model with only two factors included was approximately 51.3% of tourists’ overall satisfaction towards Malaysia as a food destination. There was a positive and high correlation between Malaysia’s image and tourists’ overall satisfaction with correlation coefficient value of .717 (See Table 4).
Table 4
Result for Multiple Regression on Respondents’ Perceived Images of Malaysia and Tourists’ Overall Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>105.367</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35.122</td>
<td>117.825</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>99.860</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>.298</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>205.228</td>
<td>338</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Model Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>Standard Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.717a</td>
<td>.513</td>
<td>.509</td>
<td>.54598</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.293</td>
<td>.186</td>
<td>1.578</td>
<td>.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 1</td>
<td>.592</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.490</td>
<td>9.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 2</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 3</td>
<td>.293</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.291</td>
<td>6.195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors:
(Constant),
(Factor 1) Food and Dining Adventure,
(Factor 2) Malaysian cultures and lifestyles,
(Factor 3) Exclusive culinary experience in Malaysia

b. Dependent Variable
Tourists’ Overall Satisfaction

CONCLUSION

The study was in line with recent concern about food and tourism or the food tourism sector. The aim of this study was to examine tourists’ perceptions towards Malaysian food’s image and to determine tourists’ satisfaction towards Malaysian food. With deeper understanding of tourists’ perceptions, the findings could facilitate in multiple contributions in promoting and positioning the identity of Malaysia besides predicting tourists’ revisit intention and likelihood of word-of-mouth.

Overall, the image of Malaysia in terms of food and services were positive. The mean scores of all pertaining attributes on the image of Malaysia as a food destination were relatively high; all above 3 point out of the 5-point Likert scale. The study had provided an extensive observation of Malaysia’s image as a food destination from the international tourists’ perspectives. The findings derived from the multiple regression analysis indicated that two out of the three-factor solution had significantly contributed to tourists’ overall satisfaction towards Malaysia as a food destination. The factors were ‘food and dining adventure’ and ‘exclusive culinary experience in Malaysia’. This is evident that the image of Malaysia can be strategized as a destination that provides adventurous food and dining experience in addition to exclusive culinary experience as the ‘pull’ factors of Malaysia as a food destination. Profusion of effort should be directed to position these images that would aid in marketing Malaysia and further enhance tourists’ memory about Malaysia. In turn, repeat visitation from international tourists would be expected.

Inserting attributes generated through focus group interviews to the survey instrument permitted the study to capture a broader range of salient attributes that might be overlooked by
previous scholars. Similar studies should be replicated using the identical attributes to further validate the scales developed in the present study. Moreover, this could also be done to discover the changes of tourists’ perceptions due to time factor and venue of distributing the questionnaire. This study had targeted on tourists who visited Malaysia within 24 hours to less than 12 months. Therefore, future research is recommended to research on expatriates who have been living in Malaysia for several years. This could definitely shed lights from a different perspective about Malaysian food’s image besides adding to the body of knowledge.

REFERENCES


CHINA’S DESTINATION IMAGE CHANGE BEFORE AND AFTER THE 2008 BEIJING OLYMPIC GAMES: A U.S.-BASED EXAMINATION

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ABSTRACT

The impact of mega events such as the Olympic Games on destination images has been found to be inconsistent among certain sport and tourism consumers. This research aimed to test whether demographic characteristics such as generation differences and education influence change in China’s destination image given the hosting of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. A two-wave online panel survey among American leisure travelers was used to test whether cognitive, affective, conative and overall image perceptions changed as a result of the mega event. Interestingly, the results showed that Mainland China’s image basically remained the same in American leisure travelers’ mind before and after the Olympic Games, after controlling respondents’ education level and age in terms of generations. The only changes were found on very few cognitive and affective image items. Implications of this research were discussed.

Keywords: Olympic Games, destination image, online panel survey, image change, American market

INTRODUCTION

The impact of events on communities has been discussed in the sport management and tourism literature (Chalip, Green, & Hill, 2003; Chalip & McGuirty, 2004; Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2005; Li & Vogelsong, 2006; Xing & Chalip, 2006). Of particular interest is the effect of mega events, such as the Olympic Games. Researchers such as Ritchie and Smith (1991) have shown that the image and awareness level of the hosting destination can be substantially improved during and immediately after a mega event. Although this knowledge indicates an image change, it does not denote how specific affective and cognitive characteristics (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999) of destination images change before and after the completion of the event. Additionally, demographic variables such as age and education can influence destination image significantly and they should be accounted in any comparison (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999) along with international travel experience (Sonnmez & Graefe, 1998).

The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games attracted wide attention among American media and general public, which provided the authors a unique opportunity to track the change, if any, of China’s destination image held by the American public. Specifically, the present study attempts to examine changes, if any, in American leisure travelers’ destination perception of China before and after the 2008
Olympic Games. Based on the literature and taking into consideration the destination image formation factors the following hypotheses arise:

H1: There will be differences before and after the Olympic Games in China’s cognitive destination image among U.S. leisure travelers, after controlling their generation and education levels.

H2: There will be differences before and after the Olympic Games in China’s affective destination image among U.S. leisure travelers, after controlling their generation and education levels.

H3: There will be differences before and after the Olympic Games in China’s conative destination image among U.S. leisure travelers, after controlling their generation and education levels.

H4: There will be differences before and after the Olympic Games in China’s overall destination image among U.S. leisure travelers, after controlling their generation and education levels.

H5: China’s destination image will be more favorable after the Olympic Games than before the games among U.S. leisure travelers.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a two-wave online panel survey. Online panel survey is a fairly popular approach in destination marketing research today (Li & Petrick, 2008). For the purpose of this study, the online survey specifically targeted active American adult leisure travelers (i.e., American adults, age 18 or older, who have taken at least one leisure vacation in the past 12 months). The two waves of surveys were conducted in June and September 2008 respectively (i.e., before and after the Beijing Olympics). The outgoing surveys were demographically balanced to represent the American travel population as reported by the Travel Industry Association (TIA, 2007). Key measures for population balancing included (1) region – following the U.S. census (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.), continental U.S. was divided into four regions: West, Midwest, South, and Northeast; (2) age; (3) household income; and (4) gender.

Cognitive image, affective, conative, and overall images were measured using existing scales (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Gallarza, Saura, & Garcia, 2002; Go & Zhang, 1997; Li & Vogelsong, 2006; Ngamsom, 2001; Pike, 2002; Pike & Ryan, 2004). As for the demographic variables, respondents were divided into the G.I./Silent Generation (born between 1919-1945), the baby boomer generation (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1980), and Generation Y (1981-1990) (Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 2006). Respondents’ education level was divided into three groups (High school graduated or less, some or completed college, and post-graduate).

In addition, following Li and colleagues (Li, Pan, Zhang, & Smith, 2009; Li & Vogelsong, 2006), the authors asked the respondents to self-report their image change in the Wave 2 survey. Results hence generated were used for triangulation purpose. Specifically, respondents were asked about their level of agreement with the statement “I want to visit China as a result of the Beijing Olympic.” They were also asked to answer the question “Do you think Beijing Olympic changes your impression of Mainland China” by choosing from “My impression gets much better because of the Olympics” (1) to “My impression gets much worse because of the Olympics” (5).

FINDINGS

The two-wave online survey generated a total of 3,366 and 1,265 complete responses respectively in the first and second wave. For the purpose of this study, respondents who have previously been to China (or attended the Beijing Olympic Games) were excluded from further analysis, which generates a final sample size of 4,341 (Nw1= 3,151, and Nw2=1,190). Gender distribution among the respondents was fairly even (51.3% were female). The average age was 42.5 years old. Most respondents were white (82.9%), attended at least some college (80.1%), and earned a household income (pre-tax)
between $25,000 and $100,000 (69.8%). As designed, the demographic distribution of the two samples was very similar. Further, the two samples resemble the general American leisure travel population fairly well (TIA, 2007).

To formally test the hypotheses, the authors conducted a series of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare the image(s) before and after Olympics, while controlling education and generation.

To test H1, a MANOVA was performed between the 19 cognitive image items and the three factors (i.e., a dichotomous factor of pre- vs. post-Olympics, education, and generation). Results found no significant (p = 0.088) multivariate effect between pre- and post-event cognitive image ratings after controlling education and generation. Further, the pre-post factor only accounted for 1.3% of the variance (ηp 2 = 0.013, Pillai’s criterion = 0.013, and Wilk’s Lambda = 0.987). Based on these results, H1 was not supported.

To test H2, a MANOVA was performed between the five affective image items and the three factors. Results indicated a marginally significant (p = 0.05) multivariate effect between Wave 1 and Wave 2 affective image ratings with education and generation controlled. However, the pre-post factor only accounted for 0.3% of the variance (ηp 2 = 0.003, Pillai’s criterion = 0.003, and Wilk’s Lambda = 0.997), which again indicates a fairly weak main effect. These results provide partial support to H2.

To test H3, the authors ran ANOVA between the one-item conative image and the three factors. The results showed that the pre-post factor did not significantly affect the DV (p = 0.085). Therefore, H3 is not supported. To test H4, another ANOVA was performed with overall image as the DV. The results also showed that the pre-post factor significantly affects the DV (p =0.012). Therefore, H4 is supported.

Finally, to test H5, the authors conducted a series of t-tests on the differences of respondents’ cognitive, affective, conative, and overall image ratings in Wave 1 and Wave 2 surveys. The results showed that significant changes did occur, but only on very few cognitive and affective image items (Table 1). No impact was revealed in conative image and overall image. With one exception (“unpolluted/unspoiled environment”), most significant changes were toward a positive direction. Thus, H5 is partially supported.

As indicated, the authors conducted an extra analysis on respondents’ self-reported image change, for triangulation purpose. It was revealed that only 14.5 percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I want to visit China as a result of the Beijing Olympic.” Further, more than half (57.5%) of respondents indicated that overall the Olympic Games did not influence their image about China at all. The self-reported image change seems to partially (though indirectly) support the image change hypotheses.

DISCUSSION

The effect of mega events on destination image has been studied for years. Researchers generally believe that a well-organized event should improve the hosting destination’s image, at least for a short period of time. Nevertheless, the present study showed that the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games had limited impact on American leisure travelers’ image of China. These results suggest that when destinations and source markets are far away from each other, and differ substantially in many socio-cultural dimensions, hosting mega-events can have limited impact of destination image building and improvement. The results from this study further reinforce the previous research and suggest that potentially the creation of destination image stereotypes for distant countries can penetrate the perceptions of tourists and do not change as easily, despite the hosting of mega events such as the Olympic Games.
Table 1
Image Rating in Wave 1 and Wave 2 Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive Image</th>
<th>Wave 1 Rating</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Wave 2 Rating</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>t-test(^1)</th>
<th>(p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shopping**</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>-1.99</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural/Historical sites</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>-1.48</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural scenery</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>-0.59</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant climate</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent food</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>-0.45</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suitable accommodations*</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>-1.72</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good service quality</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convention/exhibition facilities</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>-1.10</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendliness of people</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>-1.38</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of getting to the country</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic transportation</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety/security</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>-0.38</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nightlife/Entertainment</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>-0.92</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational opportunities</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>0.89</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minimum language barrier</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>-0.49</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good value for money</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>-0.41</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient tourist information</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>-1.01</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpolluted/Unspoiled environment***</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affective Image</th>
<th>Wave 1 Rating</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Wave 2 Rating</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>t-test(^1)</th>
<th>(p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gloomy (1) - exciting (5)*</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>-1.85</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unpleasant (1) - pleasant (5)</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>-1.64</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sleepy (1) - arousing (5)**</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>-2.19</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distressing (1) - relaxing (5)</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>-1.23</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not enjoyable (1) - enjoyable (5)</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>-1.30</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conative Image</th>
<th>Wave 1 Rating</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Wave 2 Rating</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>t-test(^1)</th>
<th>(p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all likely (1) - Definitely likely (5)</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.872</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>-0.76</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Image</th>
<th>Wave 1 Rating</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Wave 2 Rating</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>t-test(^1)</th>
<th>(p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>highly unfavorable (1) - highly favorable (10)</td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>-1.45</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Welch's \(t\)-test when Levene's test is significant

* \(p < 0.1\)  ** \(p < 0.05\)  *** \(p < 0.01\)
REFERENCES


ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The research team gratefully acknowledges the research funding provided by the China National Tourism Administration and the College of Hospitality, Retail, and Sport Management, University of South Carolina.
WHAT MAKES A PERSON A POTENTIAL TOURIST AND A REGION A POTENTIAL TOURISM DESTINATION? – PREREQUISITES FOR DEMAND AND DESTINATIONS AND THEIR RELEVANCE FOR DESTINATION BRAND MANAGEMENT

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Department of Business Psychology
Germany

ABSTRACT

The paper introduces a conceptual structural model to describe which central factors determine whether and where tourism takes place. It refers to five factors being a prerequisite for tourism: attractiveness, amenities (or facilities) and accessibility on the side of the destination and ability and motivation to travel on the demand side. Empirical evidence is presented based on a large sample population survey in Germany for the strong influence of these five factors. Whether a person becomes a potential tourist or not depends strongly on “ability” and on the motivational intensity. In addition, the perception of attractiveness, amenities, and accessibility (rated for 10 regions/countries) is essential for the selection of regions admitted to the initial consideration set. Both findings support the structure and links used in the conceptual model. They thus emphasize the importance of these basic factors as fundamentals of tourism. The model is helpful in providing a basic understanding of the tourism system. Consequently, with destination branding and destination brand management, these basic factors should be considered. Marketing a destination as a brand does only make sense in those cases where the basic factors for a region to become a tourism destination are fulfilled. Destination brand management has to ensure these prerequisites, and to develop quality and relevance of the destination. In destination branding you can go everywhere when you respect the basics. Your success will be limited though if you ignore them.

Keywords: tourism demand, destination prerequisites, destination brand management

INTRODUCTION

Brands are helpful or necessary in order to distinguish between more or less identical (homogeneous) products and services in the market. Marketers try to develop a distinctive position in the customers’ mental map and consumers welcome brands as they are a means to reduce complexity in decision making. Branding as a technique for marketing tourism destination stems from two perspectives:

(a) The idea that the official geographical name of a region (e.g. Tyrol, Hawaii, Paris) may work in marketing in the same way as a real build-up brand name like Coke or Mercedes-Benz.

(b) The idea that a lot of holiday destinations are interchangeable and one can easily substitute one for the other. Thus branding comes in handy for a necessary differentiation in communication.

“Branding” for tourism destinations is a technique, a goal-oriented activity in marketing. It is a competition with winners and losers, not a strategy to make every producer happy. Generally, we see two reasons, why a branding effort does not lead to the expected outcome:

- “Good” product (a suitable product for at least somebody: the target group) but not performing well enough in the overall race.
- “Bad” product, one does not meet the basic requirements, i.e. not qualified for the competition.

To develop a brand, it is helpful to have a product which offers the basic requirements to be put it into a certain product category. Thus, a region lacking the fundamental requirements of a tourist destination, should not expect to have a lot of success in the market, even when the marketers have created a “name, term, symbol or design or combination of them intended to identify (it)…and to dif-
ferentiate…from competitors” (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007, p. 164, based on Kotler & Armstrong, 2004). There is an abundance of research (or literature) on destination branding. But strategies as well as literature on destination branding is poorly linked to the essentials of tourism. In this paper we want to show why having a look at the tourism basics can help to understand, when and how destination branding is a good idea. Furthermore, we want to identify these basics and their position in a model (conceptual scheme) and present empirical evidence supporting this model.

TOURISM BASICS

A travelling person, the tourist, and a region she or he travels to, the destination, are essential for tourism. However, they come secondary. This assumption is in line with a great deal of the tourism literature (e.g. Burkart & Medlik, 1981, p. 42). Quite often, these basic essentials are not actively presented or discussed. In some papers the importance of the person travelling and the destination are simply stated as a starting point for the argumentation (e.g. Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002 ) or clandestinely pop up in conceptual graphs and figures (e.g. with Pearce, 2005, p. 17). Our approach is to focus on these aspects actively:

- What are the necessary requirements for a normal person to become a potential holiday tourist?
- What are the necessary requirements for a normal region to become a potential destination for holiday tourism?

To this end, we make use of a conceptual structural model to describe which central factors determine whether and where tourism takes place (Figure 1; cf. Lohmann et al., 1998; Lohmann, 2009). The model can be looked at as a “conceptual scheme” in the sense described by Pearce (2005, pp 12-15): It goes beyond mere statements of the observed world but it is not, however, a fully functioning theory. It may prove helpful to organize scientific information and to allocate different phenomena in tourism. The model has already been used for determining possible impacts of external factors to tourism (e.g. Lohmann, 2001a) and challenges in destination management (Lohmann, 2009).

In defining what leads to potential demand and a potential offer in tourism, it refers to the five factors being a prerequisite for tourism: (1) attractiveness, (2) amenities (or facilities) and (3) accessibility on the side of the region to become a destination and (4) ability and (5) motivation to travel on the demand side (Lohmann et al, 1998, 69).

These factors have been identified and discussed in the literature (cf. e.g. Burkart & Medlik, 1974/1981, pp 45-47, and Holloway, 1994, pp. 6-9, with respect to the destination factors; Thibault, 1984, pp. 37-51, on the ability in terms of time and money as a base for leisure behavior; Hudson, 1999, p. 7, and Pearce, 2005, p. 51 on motivation). It is quite common to name these aspects (e.g. attractiveness) together with their specific shape (what is it that makes destination x attractive?) when it comes to analyzing the travelers’ choice process and its determinants (e.g. Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002).

Attractiveness refers to physical features (e.g. the beauty of mountains), but may also be used in connection with some kind of event. Amenities are those essential services that tourists need such as accommodation, food and local transport. Finally, accessibility refers to the means of transportation to the destination as well as the psychological distance (‘to be reached easily’) and the possibility of booking a trip to that specific destination (distribution channels). The assumption is that a region becomes a potentially successful tourist destination (in the sense that it is able to attract a large number of tourists) only if the region is perceived by potential tourists as having all these three characteristics.

Conversely, a person becomes a potential tourist only if she/he is able to travel (usually a question of time, money and health) and has the motivation to do so. Both factors, ability and motivation, are fundamental for the readiness to participate in holiday travel. They are not only necessary predisposition for a person to become a potential holiday traveler, but they also play an important role in determining the choice of a destination, the kind of activities during the vacation, etc.
Figure 1
Conceptual Scheme: Tourism Basics – Framework and Prerequisites
Finally, there are other factors and interactive processes (e.g. communication) responsible for bringing a potential tourist and a potential destination together, resulting in factual tourism. It is here through communication that branding can play a role. In many cases, it is the image of region, i.e. the perception by the potential consumer, that produces a tourist’s decision where to travel (cf. Hudson, 1999, p. 15). And this is an image which provides input for the destination choice process. On this basis a potential tourist is able to assign a region of his awareness set to his consideration set or excluded set (cf. Um & Crompton, 1999, p. 85).

The whole system is embedded in a wider general framework which includes society, economy, nature, politics, technological development etc. Doubtless, the model and its structure appear at least plausible. Nevertheless, given its fundamental importance, we tried to submit the five prime factors to an empirical investigation. The aim was to check the “behavioral relevance” of these factors.

DEMAND BASICS – EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

The model identifies “ability” and “motivation” as basic factors which have to be present, otherwise there would be no potential tourists and hence no tourism. Motivation is an “initial” point in studying tourist behaviour and beyond that for understanding systems of tourism (Pearce, 2005, p. 51; for more detail: Lohmann & Aderhold, Chapter III.1). Psychologists have developed a rather fine-tuned vocabulary and a variety of concepts to describe and analyze the different aspects and facets of motivation, its intensity, reasons and directions, and its relation to action (cf. Brehm & Self, 1989). Tourism motivation is a multi-layered process with a hierarchical and sequential order (Lohmann & Evers, 2008). In the model, however, “motivation” means only the basic and general willingness to engage oneself in travel activities. We do not ask why, we are not interested in directions, we simply take into account if there is any motivation or not, or more precisely the intensity of this willingness to travel.

Contrary to the issue of motivation, there is no vast theoretical framework concerning the concept of ability. The tourism literature often refers to “constraints” instead of ability, thus highlighting the other side of the coin. The topics, however, are the same: time, health, money, and a political framework allowing private mobility (e.g. cf. Lew et. al., 2008, p. 34). Swarbrooke & Horner (2007, p. 63) suggest the same aspects as “circumstances”. Income is probably the most prominent factor affecting the ability to travel and one assumes, that the decision to travel or not is strongly related to this factor (cf. Nicolau & Más, 2005, p. 51).

The model requires both, ability and motivation. Of course, a certain weakness in one aspect (ability, e.g. limited funds) can be balanced by a higher motivational intensity. But if one of the factors is not present at all, we expect the person not to be a potential tourist. In reality, it will be very difficult to find a person with zero ability and/or zero motivation to travel. Therefore, for empirical testing we try to identify groups of people on both ends of the scale, i.e. subjects with a very low ability and/or motivational intensity will be compared to those with no constraints and a lot of motivational power.

For empirical testing, we use the data of a German survey, the so-called Reiseanalyse RA (travel analysis). This yearly survey is designed to monitor the holiday travel behaviour and travel-related opinions and attitudes of Germans and has been carried out annually since 1970, using the same method and a comparable set of questions in the questionnaire (cf. Aderhold 2009, Lohmann & Ziesemer 2005, Lohmann 1998, 2001b). The survey is organised by the FUR, Forschungsgemeinschaft Urlaub und Reisen e.V., Kiel, an independent non-profit organisation of domestic and international users of tourism research in Germany (www.reiseanalyse.de). Data is based on face-to-face interviews with a representative sample (German-speaking population aged 14 years and above, living in private households in Germany) of more than 7,500 respondents, the interviews being carried out in January each year. The sample is randomly selected in several steps. In addition to the face-to-face interviews, in November 2008 a representative sample of n= 1,000 was interviewed in an online-survey (here referred to as “RAonline 11/2008”).
Table 1
Holiday Travel Intentions and Ability (Income) and Motivation (Destination Interest) to Travel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Cases/%</th>
<th>Total Pop. (Germans 14 years+)</th>
<th>ss stating Ability(^1) + Motivation(^3) to travel</th>
<th>No Ability(^2) and/or no Motivation (^4) to travel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( n = )</td>
<td>7815</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday Travel Intention (^5) ( n/% )</td>
<td>4486 (57.4%)</td>
<td>74 (78.2%)</td>
<td>36 (30.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \chi^2 = 65.52; df = 1; p = 0.001 \)

\(^1\) Ability = ss with a monthly household net income of 5000 Euro or more
\(^2\) No Ability = ss with a monthly household net income between 500 and 700 Euro
\(^3\) Motivation = ss interested in visiting more than 15 foreign destinations
\(^4\) No Motivation = ss not interested in visiting any foreign destinations
\(^5\) HTI = Holiday Travel Intention = ss definitely planning a holiday trip in 2009

The central factors influencing possible demand (independent variables) have been defined within the framework of the Reiseanalyse 2009 as follows:
- Ability = subjects (ss) with a monthly household net income of 5000 Euro or more
- No Ability = ss with a monthly household net income between 500 and 700 Euro
- Motivation = ss interested in visiting more than 15 foreign destinations
- No Motivation = ss not interested in visiting any foreign destinations

With the help of these variables we analyze two groups, one which has both the ability and the motivation to travel and another, where at least one of these variables is lacking. The status of a potential tourist has been defined by the expressed holiday travel intentions in January 2009 for the rest of the year. Those definitely planning a trip are considered to be a potential traveller (dependent variable). Results are displayed in table 1. The share of potential travellers with a definite travel intention for 2009 is significantly larger in the ability + motivation group compared to the group of ss without motivation or ability.

We find the same picture in the currently available data set of the RA online 11/2008, a survey carried out in November 2008 which included questions related to expectations about the personal situation and holiday travel plans for the coming year. In this case the sample is smaller, but the possibilities to define groups rather close to the conceptual scheme in the model are better due to different questions (referring directly to time and money as ability factors) in the survey. On the basis of this dataset we define:
- Ability = ss expecting to have sufficient financial means and time to travel next year
- No Ability = ss definitely expecting to have either no sufficient financial means or no time( or both) to travel next year
- Motivation = ss already in November joyfully anticipating next year’s holiday trip
- No Motivation = ss in November not joyfully anticipating next year’s holiday trip
Table 2
Potential Tourist Share and Ability and Motivation to Travel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Cases/%</th>
<th>Total Pop. (Germans 16 years+)</th>
<th>ss stating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ability(^1) + Motivation(^3) to travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 1000</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Potential Tourists\(^5\) n/% | 759 (75.9%) | 302 (97.4%) | 96 (55.8%) |

\(^1\) Ability = subjects (ss) expecting to have sufficient financial means and time to travel next year  
\(^2\) No Ability = ss definitely expecting to have either no sufficient financial means or no time (or both) to travel next year  
\(^3\) Motivation = ss already in November joyfully anticipating next year’s holiday trip  
\(^4\) No Motivation = ss in November not joyfully anticipating next year’s holiday trip  
\(^5\) Potential Tourists = ss expecting to go on at least one holiday trip in the next year and already have a definite idea either about the destination or about the organisation of the trip

\(\chi^2 = 130; df = 1; p = 0.001\)

We are not able to identify absolute non-motivation or non-ability respondents in the sample (which in theoretical terms would be crucial).  
1) Ability = subjects (ss) expecting to have sufficient financial means and time to travel next year  
2) No Ability = ss definitely expecting to have either no sufficient financial means or no time (or both) to travel next year  
3) Motivation = ss already in November joyfully anticipating next years holiday trip  
4) No Motivation = ss in November not joyfully anticipating next years holiday trip  
5) Potential Tourists = ss expecting to go on at least one holiday trip in the next year and already have a definitive idea either about the destination or about the organisation of the trip

With the help of these variables we again analyze two groups, one which has both the ability and the motivation to travel and another, where at least one of these variables is lacking. The status of a potential tourist here has been defined by the expressed holiday travel intentions in November 2008 for the coming year. Again, as the results in table 2 show the share of potential tourists is much larger in the ability + motivation group.

Further analysis of this data is still ahead, looking at; for example, the effects of different combinations of ability and motivation, different ways to operationalise the two concepts within the framework of the questionnaire, and related factors which are responsible for a low/high ability and motivation. So far we can note that the data strongly support the relations assumed in the model. Of course, this empirical approach has its limits and a lot of points for discussion. Just to identify some of them:

- We are not able to identify absolute non-motivation or non-ability respondents in the sample (which in theoretical terms would be crucial).
- The operationalisation for ability and motivation are rather narrow and do not provide a complete picture, e.g. regarding ability we did not look at the aspects of time or health.
- Social influences may modify decisions and thus the status of a potential traveler (e.g. low motivation of an individual may be compensated by a high motivation from his spouse).

Nevertheless, we can already state that being a potential holiday traveller strongly depends on the factors of ability and motivational intensity. This supports the conceptual scheme of the tourism basics. We leave the open questions and discussion points for further research.

**DESTINATION BASICS – EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION**

The model (Fig. 1) states, that the “prime factors” constituting “the tourist qualities of a destination” (Burkart & Medlik, 1974, p. 46) attractiveness, amenities, and accessibility (the three “a”) are necessary, indispensable prerequisites for a region to become a potential tourism destination. Looking at the fundamental character of this assumption an empirical investigation should be the “natural” next step to take. Our research question here is, whether the selection of regions admitted to the initial consideration set (Um & Crompton, 1999, p. 85) of a potential tourist is depends on the perceived realisation of the three “a” in a given country or region.
Together with Ipsos Germany (www.ipsos.de) a representative survey of the German population (n=1,000; aged 14 years or older, living in private households) was carried out in January 2000. Respondents were asked in face-to-face interviews to assess the attractiveness (“attracts me as a destination for holidays”), the amenities (“offers facilities for tourists which I like being on holiday”), and accessibility (“is accessible without problems for me”) of ten countries/regions (independent variables). Respondents could as well state, that no one of this factors is appropriate for a given country or that they simply have no idea about this region. The list of countries represents a rather broad variety of destinations in order to stimulate different ratings: Austria, Belgium, Hawaii, Mallorca, Poland, Schleswig-Holstein (one of the German federal states ‘Länder’ in the North), Sweden, South Africa, South Korea, and Thuringia (another German federal state, in central Germany). Furthermore, as dependent variable, the respondents stated, in which of these countries they spent a holiday within the last five years (= behavioural relevance) or want do so in the coming five years (consideration set).

In line with the literature and the model, the expectation is that if these three aspects/features of a region are really important, people should prefer those destinations which they consider attractive, with appropriate facilities, and accessible to those which do not fulfil these requirements. Furthermore: all three features must come together, if a single one lacks, the destination will have a significant lower probability to be part of the consideration set. Thus, for a given country we will compare two groups: (1) rating the destination “a+a+a” and (2) rating the country a “one or two a” destination. We expect group (1) to have a higher preference for the destination than group (2). We do not research here what makes a region attractive, what the right amenities are and what really constitutes accessibility. We simply concentrate on the perceived realisation of these factors.

Table 3
Perceived features of a region and behavioral relevance and consideration set - the case of Majorca (Mallorca)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>in %</th>
<th>Total Pop. (Germans 14 years+) (n=1000)</th>
<th>ss rating Majorca</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a+a+a (^1) (n=120)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have been there within the last five years</td>
<td>19,0</td>
<td>37,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will most probably go there within the next five years</td>
<td>13,0</td>
<td>29,4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \chi^2 = 7,004; df = 1; p = 0,00 \)

\( \chi^2 = 8,95; df = 1; p = 0,00 \)

\(^1\) Majorca perceived as attractive, as offering appropriate facilities, and as easily accessible

\(^2\) Majorca perceived as having max. two out of the three features

Database: personal interviews in Germany in January 2000, n=1000

The data allow for a ranking of destinations with respect to the three prime factors (e.g. Sweden is more attractive than Hawaii; Austria ranks best in amenities; Belgium is more easily accessible than South Africa) and derived calculations. It also shows that with regard to some countries (e.g. South Korea, Belgium) many Germans simply do not have any idea whether these basic factors apply or not.

With respect to the main question, we have analysed the data for Austria, Majorca and Schleswig-Holstein. As the results for all of these three countries showed the same pattern, we take
Majorca as a pars-pro-toto example (cf. tab. 3). Respondents who put Mallorca into the “a+a+a”-category are more interested in spending a holiday there (and in fact have done so more often within the last years) than those who rate the same country a one or two “a” destination (let alone those, who see none of the three prime factors realised in this country). In addition, though it is not visible in the table: for subjects rating Majorca “a+a+a”, the island is the most preferred destination out of the ten presented. And respondents rating Majorca as a “no a” destination do not want to spend a holiday there at all.

Given the great number of possible holiday destinations (many of our respondents identified more than one destination as offering a+a+a), it is reasonable that even a country offering all three features will not “automatically” be visited by all those seeing the prerequisites realised. In addition, other aspects (e.g. prices) of destinations or personal motivation (e.g. curiosity to explore s.th. new) may influence the consideration set at different stages and the factual destination choice.

As with the demand side empirical approach, a lot of work for an in-depth analysis is ahead here, too. But we can clearly see that the three “prime factors” constituting “the tourist qualities of a destination” do significantly influence destination choice preferences. In tourism marketing, these prime factors are of utmost relevance, but quite often their role is underestimated or completely overlooked.

CONCLUSIONS

Our conclusions first focus on the model and the empirical results and then extend to insights gained for destination brand management.

We have presented some empirical evidence based on large sample population surveys in Germany for the strong influence of the five factors which we have labeled as tourism essentials. Whether a person becomes a potential tourist or not depends strongly on “ability” and on the motivational intensity. In addition, the perception of attractiveness, amenities, and accessibility (rated for 10 regions/countries) is essential for the selection of regions admitted to the initial consideration set. Both findings support the structure and links used in the conceptual model. They thus emphasize the importance of these basic factors as fundamentals of tourism.

The model in turn is helpful in providing a basic understanding of the tourism system. It helps to sort things and aspects, and it comes in very handy for impact analysis (e.g. on how climate change processes can affect tourism, cf. Lohmann, 2001a).

Consequently, with destination branding and destination brand management, these basic factors should be considered. Marketing a destination as a brand does only make sense in those cases where the basic factors for a region to become a tourism destination (“a+a+a”) are present. For each and every tourist expert it will be quite easy to name regions with limited power concerning these basic factors, but still trying to market themselves as a brand.

If the destination essentials are present or not, it has to be evaluated with respect to target groups. The target groups must consist of potential tourists. When the essential destination factors are present, but not perceived by the target groups, communication is a must. Branding is both, a result of and a help for communication processes. But brand management for destinations must go beyond the mere communication. It encompasses:

- Ensuring the existence of the basic factors: attractiveness, amenities, accessibility.
- Developing capacities and qualities, especially within these basic factors.
- Keeping the brand and its products and services relevant for the consumer. Even high quality may come together with a perception of a destination as being old-fashioned and antiquated which consequently will be assigned to the “excluded set”.

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When all these aspects are ensured in an on-going process of efforts, then you may think about trying to mark your product with a brand and to develop added value perceptions. So, to build a good brand:

- Make sure that your product is basically fit to join the competition, i.e. offering the basic features of a destination, otherwise, all your efforts will be wasted.
- Get to know your actual position and define where you want to go.
- Handle the toolbox for branding with care (competitive advantage, make your product recognizable, communication, advertising, relevance for the consumer etc.; c.f. e.g.: Eubank & Simulin (2004)

Then, the good brand will help the destination to be considered in the potential customers’ awareness set and to be convincing in the following multi-stage decision process. In destination branding you can go everywhere when you respect the basics. Your success will be limited though if you ignore them.

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CASINOS AND GAMBLING IN DUBAI: FINDING COMMON GROUND BETWEEN POLARIZED STAKEHOLDERS

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ABSTRACT

The likelihood that one day gambling and casinos may be allowed in Dubai has long been a subject of speculative conversation fueled by the rapid growth and development of the city-state. While it appears unlikely that such activities would be permitted any time soon – if at all – the question about stakeholder response does generate curiosity. In the case of Dubai, two segments who are arguably the most polarized and yet, the most likely to be impacted are tourists and the host people of the country – UAE Nationals. Thus, this research considers that the prospective tourists’ needs and wants as visitors may potentially be counter to the host people’s support and approval. With that in mind, this research sought to identify similarities and differences in the responses from each group. 400 self-administered surveys were distributed throughout urban Dubai – 200 to each respondent segment. The findings suggest that tourists have moderate viewpoints about the impact of gambling and casinos on Dubai society, tourism and economy. UAE Nationals appeared somewhat naïve but nevertheless, hold stronger, but not uncompromising, views about the idea of gaming establishments. Marketing efforts targeted to the UAE Nationals may educate, inform and ultimately gain support from this group. Both respondent segments agreed that if gambling and casinos were to be allowed, then they should be privately operated under government regulations. Limitations include that this study was based on a hypothetical scenario; the extent to which respondents considered that gambling and casinos would ever be permitted may have influenced results.

Keywords: destination, stakeholders, residents, culture, Dubai

INTRODUCTION

Competition for tourists and the accompanying revenue that they inject into an economy is becoming ever more intense (Morgan et al, 2002). It is not uncommon to find local, regional and national governments turning to tourism as one means of stimulating economic well-being through service business initiatives that cater to visitors. The emphasis on tourism is evident in developed countries as well as developing countries (Harrison, 2002).

Dubai burst on to the tourism scene at the end of the twentieth century. Within a few short years, tourism numbers were on target for 15 million visitors by 2010 and hotel developments were projecting 232 percent increase in available rooms (Grant et al, 2007). It appeared that Dubai had found the magic elixir for attracting tourists and would meet and exceed every target set. The 2008 financial downturn reached the small city-state even as the world was feeling the change in the global economy. Tourism numbers dropped, hotel occupancy percentages lowered and retail spending fell. Dubai, once hailed as a ‘must-visit’ destination, became non-distinguishable amongst the many other world tourist locales that were also trying to attract the ever decreasing demand.

With that in mind, this paper revisits data collected before the economic downturn when it appeared that Dubai would always meet its tourism targets. The study was based on the hypothetical
‘what if’ casinos were allowed in Dubai, what would be the tourists’ and local residents’ views about gambling being offered to attract visitors? Two objectives guided the research: (1) to what extent are gambling and casinos viewed as likely to influence the existing culture; and (2) to what extent are views held that gambling and casinos would benefit – or not - Dubai’s tourism and/or Dubai’s economy. The value of this study is supported by the earlier work of Anwar and Sohail (2004, p 162) who note that ‘Very little is known about the behaviour of tourists in interaction with the events designed as a strategic tool for tourism marketing in the UAE’. Additionally, local people can add to a destination’s brand and image as well as to the tourism experience for visitors. Yet, in Dubai’s case, the culture and religion of the host people potentially conflicts with value-add if the tourist activity is considered to be sinful. Thus, this study addresses the need for more research into situations where cultural tensions may exist between tourist and resident stakeholders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing a place is both challenging and complex. By its very nature, a place is singular as well as multi-faceted (Hosany, Ekinci, Uysal, 2007; 2006). Hankinson (2005, p 25) describes places as ‘… holistic entities or nuclear products and as collections of contributory elements or individual services and facilities’. Additionally, visitor experiences are heterogenic given that each encounter will be unique to every person. Although consumption of place, whether whole or a single component, typically occurs in the tourists’ domain, it is also possible that residents engage in activities in a manner similar to any visitor (Henderson, 2000). Thus, the market for a place can be segmented into many different consumer groups (Gonzalez and Bello, 2002; Morgan et al, 2002; Hankinson, 2005) including the consideration that residents can be a distinct category (Henderson, 2000; Eraqi, 2006).

Attracting tourists to a place

Branding, which was once the domain of consumer goods and commodities, has become a key tool for destination marketers (Caldwell and Freire, 2004; Hankinson, 2004). Notably, an important challenge has been tourists’ perceptions about a place (Walmsley and Young, 1998; Trueman et al, 2004). To reach the market, promotion literature in its various forms has typically been the communication medium. The upside to these initiatives is positive awareness and increased likelihood that the target market will visit. The downside is that ‘Distorted and inauthentic images are presented, shaped to suit tourists and the tourism industry which imposes its demands and exploits places and people … [this is] especially evident in representations of the East for consumption by the West’ (Henderson, 2000, p 38).

Recent research has identified lifestyle as an important feature that is increasingly becoming part of branding and communication efforts (Gonzalez and Bello, 2002). For example, a destination that uses celebrity status and conversational value as a means of differentiation reaches potential visitors through hearts and minds emotion as well as lifestyle and status statements (Morgan et al, 2002). In this context, image contributes to perception and to a favourable positioning that represents value-add over and above the destination’s actual attributes and characteristics. The result is an emotional attachment or commitment to a place because it makes a personal statement beyond ‘what can we do on holiday?’ (Ibid, p 338) to answer ‘who can we be on holiday?’ (Ibid, p 338). Framed in another way, vacation destinations may indicate lifestyle and status similar to the way that fashion accessories make such impact statements now (Ibid, 2002).

The strength of this approach is that celebrity and conversation can offset ‘product parity, substitutability and competition’ (Morgan et al, 2002, p 336) because they are key differentiation elements. The emotional rush that comes from ‘we were there’ aspirations realized or ‘wish you were here’ postcard sentiments are value propositions that potentially sway decisions about destination choice. Alternately, if conversation about a destination shifts to the negative, then the celebrity status may still exist but for the wrong reasons. The risk, then, is that visitors talk about the destination but may not consider it in future vacation plans. Dubai is, arguably, a good example of celebrity status and conversation value driving tourist interest in the small city-state. However, it may currently be at risk for negative conversation gaining strength amongst UK travelers. Published statistics are suggesting that the arrest incidence is higher for UK visitors to the UAE than when they visit other countries (Not,
2009). Whether this information will impact UK visitors’ decisions to travel to Dubai in future is as yet unknown.

Supporting research has shown that visitors’ are influenced by the perceived behaviours they will experience rather than the destination attributes, either in whole or in part (Correia et al, 2007). This translates to a value assessment measured as a function of those perceptions. Marketers who understand this premise recognize that what a destination offers may be less important than the behaviours that visitors visualize. A conflict arises, however, if the destination emphasizes culture and heritage. Under such circumstances, tourism may not be ‘appropriate’ if the values sustained by the local residents and communities are not protected and perpetuated (Harrison, 2002). Thus, gambling tourism to Dubai may not be ‘appropriate’ if the city-state’s cultural values are challenged or threatened.

**Destination culture and politics**

The cultural aspects of any destination cannot be ignored nor should they be underestimated. According to Harrison (2002, p 363) ‘… it could be said that any interpretive plan for tourism must first identify the support of the local community as a primary target market for influence and support of the coordinated plan. A supportive, enthusiastic local community is an essential and potent cultural marketing tool’ (Ibid, p 363). Thus, local support for tourism initiatives increases the likelihood of success provided that the efforts do not infringe upon the cultural fabric that binds the community. Information dissemination about strategy and benefits is necessary if buy-in from stakeholders is to be achieved. In addition to culture, reconciling the politics of divergent interests can undermine marketing efforts (Morgan et al, 2002). The argument for overcoming these obstacles is long-term commitment rather than expect that short-term solutions will satisfy special interest groups within the local constituencies.

**Gaming at the destination**

Seminal research that focused on the adoption of gaming activities as a tourism tool to boost communities’ resources looked at an eastern seaboard state in the U.S. (Pizam and Pokela, 1985) and at a mid-west U.S. state (Caneday and Zeiger, 1991). In the first instance, Pizam and Pokela (1985, p 163) found that the community generally welcomed the economic boost that a proposed casino was expected to bring but anticipated it ‘… would reduce the quality of their residential neighborhoods and completely alter the image of their town’. The Caneday and Zeiger (1991) study was conducted after gambling was re-introduced to the legendary small town of Deadwood, South Dakota. The results reflected respondents’ views that the community had changed, for better or worse, from the gaming tourism. Geographically, it was felt that the impact from gaming establishments lessened as distance from the casinos increased. The reference given for areas not affected was parks, beaches and recreation facilities. Overall, the community valued the gaming tourism for the contribution that it made to the ‘… economy, employment opportunities, social structure, lifestyle and environment’ (Ibid, p 48)

**Residents as stakeholders**

An important element of destination marketing is the recognition that residents are a key segment (Caneday and Zeiger, 1991; Gonzalez and Bello, 2002; Sharma and Dyer, 2009a; Sharma and Dyer, 2009b) with potentially distinctive views, similar or different, from tourists (Henderson, 2000; Eraqi, 2006). Early research that made the distinction was Pizam and Pokela (1985). Residents’ views were noted as being generally accepting as long as a proposed casino’s location in the community was ‘not in my backyard’. Later, Caneday and Zeiger (1991) found that residents whose jobs relied on gaming tourism held significantly stronger viewpoints about casinos than those whose employment did not. More recently, Sharma & Dyer (2009a) described residents according to seven demographic variables in a study that examined perceptions about the impact of area tourism development. Residents’ home location showed distinctive results. Those living in tourist areas considered the economic contribution to be positive and the social impact as negative. Those who lived at a distance from the tourist enclaves held the reverse views: negative economic contribution and positive social
impact. A continuation of that study (Sharma and Dyer, 2009b) found that those who received some form of economic benefit from tourism were more likely to be supportive of tourist activities than those that did not.

Henderson (2000) recognized the tourist-resident dichotomy in a project that explored awareness about Singapore’s ‘New Asia’ marketing initiatives. Study results from the 253 respondents, (133 were residents and 120 were tourists), found that the image projected about the destination must be real as well as ‘… capture a genuine sense of the place and its people in order to be sustainable’ (p 42). Then, consulting residents before marketing efforts are finalized is critical given that they must live the values that are being portrayed in promotion communications. Resident respondents in the Eraqi (2006) tourism customer satisfaction study were employed in Egypt’s tourist businesses. The findings supported the need to consider residents as a distinctive stakeholder segment equal to tourists’ importance.

Generally, then, the literature supports the view that residents are stakeholders in destination marketing activities. Additionally, their characteristics define them as an important segment, comparable to tourists, when needs and wants are considered.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study involved three focus groups as well as a self-administered survey. Focus group one identified issues that may concern residents and included participants selected by convenience. Focus group two sought the views about Dubai’s attractiveness as a destination from those not indigenous to the country. Focus group three participants included nationals from the Gulf Cooperative Countries, e.g. Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain and United Arab Emirates, who were asked for their views about gambling and casinos in Dubai. Each session involved six to eight people. The gender split was weighted towards males for focus group one and three with an equal number of women to men participating in focus group two. Information learned from the focus groups, as well as knowledge learned from the literature search, was used to develop the questionnaire. The focus group discussions identified that two groups, tourists and UAE Nationals, would be key respondent segments for continuing the exploratory study.

The survey instrument format included three sections: demographics and one section for each of the objectives, with dichotomous and scale questions. Respondents were approached using a convenience sample drawn from various locations throughout urban Dubai. Before they were offered the clipboard holding the survey, they were asked if they were tourist or National. If they did not fit into either category, they were politely thanked for their interest but not given the questionnaire.

The data collection ended with 400 usable surveys; two hundred respondents in each group. The gender split was: tourists - 52 percent men, 48 percent women, and Nationals – 68 percent men, 32 percent women. An early dichotomous question on the survey qualified if respondents had ever gambled. Notably, making a distinction about gambling for money, gambling for prizes or visiting a casino to gamble was not addressed. Thus, the dichotomous question left the respondents to interpret what constitutes gambling behaviour. The question’s broad scope provided opportunities for the UAE Nationals to answer and yet not to be embarrassed since gambling activities are frowned upon within their religious beliefs. Those who had gambled were: tourists – 42 percent and UAE Nationals – 29 percent.

**FINDINGS**

Objective 1 asked: to what extent are gambling and casinos viewed as likely to influence the existing culture? Within this objective, cultural factors included why people would gamble and/or visit casinos as well as disadvantages that may be incurred if such activities were present and available. Respondents were asked about the likely reasons that people gamble and/or visit casinos (see Table 1). Tourists answered: to have fun, 59 percent; for gambling, 44 percent; to make money, 33 percent. UAE Nationals’ responses were: to have fun, 74 percent; for gambling, 61 percent; to make money, 63 percent. All results were chi-square significant at $p < .05$. 

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Table 1
OBJECTIVE 1 - INFLUENCE THE EXISTING CULTURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons people gamble: % ‘yes’ responses</th>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>UAE Nationals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To have fun</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To gamble</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To make money</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The likelihood that issues related to gambling/casino activities would increase: % ‘yes’ responses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase gambling behaviours</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase compulsive gambling incidents</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in losses of money &amp; property</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in gambling-related crime</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further culture-related comments asked respondents’ about four distinct issues that may be evident in the city-state’s social fabric if gambling/casinos were permitted (see Table 1). Yes answers for the two respondent segments included: increase in gambling behaviours – tourists 44 percent, UAE Nationals 62 percent; increase in incidents of compulsive gambling – tourists 36 percent, UAE Nationals 59 percent; people in the population would suffer loss of money and property – tourists 38 percent, UAE Nationals 49 percent; and increase in crime related to gambling - tourists 32 percent, UAE Nationals 46 percent. All results were chi-square significant at \( p < .05 \).

Additional culture-related questions, which used a 5-point Likert scale, included general statements about religion; legalizing gambling and alcohol (see Table 2). Notably, the results for these statements were chi-square significant at \( p < .05 \). When asked about agreement with the statement: Islamic countries should not have a casino, tourists results were strongly agree, 24 percent; agree, 12 percent. UAE Nationals answered strongly agree, 31 percent; agree, 10 percent. UAE Nationals strongly disagreed, 30 percent compared to tourists at 15 percent. Whether to legalize gambling in casinos in the same manner that alcohol is legalized for sale in clubs and hotels was included in the scale questions. The answers from tourists were strongly agree, 15 percent; agree, 32 percent. UAE Nationals responses were strongly agree, 11 percent; agree, 12 percent. UAE Nationals strongly disagreed, 37 percent compared to tourists at 18 percent. Lastly, agreement with the statement, alcohol should not be available in a casino, indicated that tourists strongly agree, 27 percent and agree, 19 percent, while UAE Nationals strongly agree, 47 percent and agree, 14 percent. UAE Nationals strongly disagreed, 11 percent compared to tourists at 15 percent.

Objective 2 queried: to what extent are views held that gambling and casinos would benefit – or not - Dubai’s tourism and/or Dubai’s economy. A 5-point Likert scale for level of agreement enabled respondents to comment whether tourism and/or the economy would benefit (see Table 3). Results were chi-square significant at \( p < .05 \). Tourists supported the notion that gambling and casinos would be beneficial to tourism: strongly agree, 35 percent and agree 31 percent. UAE Nationals’ views were strongly agree, 24 percent, agree, 16 percent. UAE Nationals strongly disagreed (33 percent) that tourism would benefit compared to tourists (10 percent). The statement that queried whether the economy would benefit had the following results: tourists strongly agree, 22 percent and agree, 31 percent while UAE Nationals strongly agree, 16 percent and agree, 12 percent. The Nationals strongly disagreed in greater numbers, 37 percent, than did tourists, 11 percent.
Table 2
OBJECTIVE 1 – CULTURE-RELATED ISSUES AND CASINOS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>UAE Nationals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Islamic countries should not have a casino</td>
<td>Strongly agree 24%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly disagree 15%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legalize gambling in casinos just as alcohol is legalized for sale in clubs and hotels</td>
<td>Strongly agree 15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 32%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly disagree 18%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol should not be available in casinos</td>
<td>Strongly agree 27%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly disagree 15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3
OBJECTIVE 2 – BENEFIT DUBAI TOURISM, DUBAI ECONOMY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>UAE Nationals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benefit tourism</td>
<td>Strongly agree 35%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 31%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly disagree 10%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit economy</td>
<td>Strongly agree 22%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 31%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly disagree 11%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were asked their views about the preferred business structure should Dubai consent to gambling and casinos at some future date. Tourists answered: privately owned, 26 percent, government owned, 28 percent, privately owned with rules set by government, 44 percent. UAE Nationals said privately owned, 25 percent, government owned, 25 percent, privately owned with rules set by government, 50 percent. When asked if Dubai should have a casino, 55 percent of tourist respondents said yes compared to 28% of UAE Nationals, with chi-square significant at $p < .05$.

DISCUSSION

For objective one, UAE Nationals answered ‘yes’ for all question options compared to the responses from tourists. This may have been the result of their inexperience with gambling and casinos. Tourists, on the other hand, likely had some familiarity or had come into contact with gaming activities while on vacation to other destinations or in their home countries. This suggests some degree of naivety amongst UAE Nationals if their responses were truly the result of less exposure to gambling.
and/or casinos. This is, arguably, substantiated by the high percentage who viewed making money as a reason that people gamble/visit casinos: the inexperienced may not be aware that the ‘house’ is typically favoured in most games of chance leaving amateur gamblers at a distinct disadvantage to increase their financial resources. Additionally, having fun drew the highest response from tourists. This suggests that in a holiday setting, this group is less likely to expect that they would leave a gaming establishment with more money than when they entered. This indicates that tourists view gambling while on vacation as another attraction to experience.

UAE Nationals were more likely than tourists to view gambling and casinos as a negative impact on culture when benchmarked against increasing incidents of various behaviours. To the UAE Nationals, gaming establishments represent a significant departure from the values that are embedded in the culture. On the other hand, tourists’ responses may reflect previous exposure to gambling and casinos to the extent that they do not consider such activities to be distinct within a culture.

Responses to the statement about casinos in Islamic countries drew polarized views from the UAE Nationals. Almost the same percentage strongly agreed as did those who strongly disagreed. This was unexpected. It was anticipated that a much greater percentage would strongly disagree to casinos being established in countries that follow Islamic values. Legalizing gambling had little support amongst UAE Nationals as did mixing alcohol with gambling. These results suggest that UAE Nationals would not be tolerant of attempts to mix ‘sin’ activities if gambling and casinos were ever to be proposed.

Only 40 percent of the UAE Nationals who answered the survey viewed gambling and casinos as a benefit to tourism and only 28 percent considered that the gaming activities would add to the economy. This response to the economy may have been because business was thriving at the time of the study. If repeated now, when Dubai’s financial situation is regular fodder for the world news media and journalists, the results may be different. Also surprising was the willingness of UAE Nationals to have casinos privately owned with rules set by government. However, the actual percentage that would support casinos in Dubai was low, 28 percent, which indicates that the government would have to be very convincing about the need for gaming establishments if they wanted public support. Tourists felt that tourism would benefit from gambling and casinos, 66 percent, while benefit to the economy had a slightly weaker show of support, 53 percent. These results were unexpected given that tourism and the economy were booming at the time of the data collection. Whether tourists felt that something was still missing from their Dubai vacation experience remains unknown.

Overall, these research findings suggest that if Dubai found itself in a position where tourism to the emirate was being competitively challenged and the economy needed a boost, then any thoughts about permitting gambling and casinos should consider both tourists’ and UAE Nationals’ views. In this exploratory study, tourists indicated that gaming establishments would be another attraction but not an integral element of a Dubai vacation. UAE Nationals were, as expected, reticent about gambling and casinos. However, there appears to be opportunities to influence their thinking, if the explanation is based on necessity and benefit. Thus, a marketing campaign targeted to the country’s indigenous people may motivate needed support if ever the need arose. Certainly, marketing initiatives that target the two stakeholder groups, external and internal, would carry significant importance if gambling and casinos were ever to be adopted into the culture.

One limitation of the study was the difficulty distinguishing tourists and UAE Nationals from the general population during data collection. Western dress could not be a determining factor as residents and tourists dress alike with the only noticeable difference occurring in the winter months when tourists are most likely to be the people in shorts. Regarding Arab dress, many other nationalities, besides the indigenous people of the UAE, wear the women’s abaya or the men’s dishdasha. Another limitation was that the survey questions considered hypothetical scenarios and the extent to which respondents believe that Dubai would ever permit gambling and casinos may have impacted their answers. For instance, disbelief in a future where gambling and casinos operate in the emirate may have meant more lenient opinions being expressed. Lastly, this study was an exploratory ‘what if’ project. As a result, the information sought was basic and general. If the study were repeated, more detailed questions would add strength to the project.
CONCLUSION

At the time of this study, tourism was on the rise. The research began from a purely speculative ‘what if’ given that the UAE culture is based on the Muslim religion wherein gambling and casinos are sinful activities. Soon after completing data collection, the world markets began to fall. Recent figures showed that combined revenues within the Dubai tourism industry had declined by 15 percent in the 2009 Q1 (Tempting, 2009) with the typically slow Q2 season seeing only 4 percent growth (Billing, 2009) year over year.

The value of this study has been the contribution to the literature about the views held by two distinct stakeholder segments, particularly when the culture and religion of the host people potentially conflicts with the tourism activity. The findings suggest that tourists have moderate viewpoints about the impact of gambling and casinos on Dubai society, tourism and economy. UAE Nationals appeared somewhat naïve but nevertheless, hold stronger, but not uncompromising, views about the idea of gaming establishments. Marketing efforts targeted to the UAE Nationals may educate, inform and ultimately gain support from this group. Both respondent segments agreed that if gambling and casinos were to be allowed, then they should be privately operated under government regulations.

This exploratory study has potential for other emerging tourist destinations that may be faced with the need to redefine and/or reposition the brand and image. For Dubai, the challenge yet to come may be the need to integrate tourist values with its cultural and religious values if its destination celebrity status wanes.

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CORE COMPETENCIES OF DESTINATION BRAND MANAGEMENT

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Finland

ABSTRACT

Previous literature suggests that marketing competencies associated with superior business performance can be identified and that the marketing capability gap between top-performing benchmarks and other firms explains significant variance in business performance (e.g. Vorhies & Morgan, 2005). However, the kinds of competencies that are relevant in the context of brand management in general, and Destination Brand Management in particular and their relevance in developing successful brands are questions that academic literature has overlooked. This research focused on identifying core competences in developing and maintaining successful destination brands. Nine case studies among ski resorts that have showed excellence and created the strongest brands in their markets were studied in US, Australia and Finland. Theme interview based data was content analyzed. Thirty-four abilities, grouped to twelve core competences were identified. These competences are suggested as cornerstones of excellence in attempts to build and manage successful destination brands.

Keywords: destination branding, brand management, competencies

INTRODUCTION

Countries, cities and tourism destinations are increasingly competing in an attempt to attract tourists, new residents, businesses and investments into their areas. Many places are adopting branding techniques in an attempt to differentiate their identities and to emphasize the uniqueness of their products. This, however, is done by practices adapted largely from the models developed for branding simple physical goods by a single firm, and to large extent incompetent for complex service network products. These models and practices are often poorly adaptable to branding tourism destination products, which are developed through complex networks of a numerous service companies.

Destinations are complex entities to brand, some of the main reasons being the complexity of the product, network nature of production (joint-production, large number of stakeholders or management control related issues), and service nature of tourism products. Additionally, although tourism is very much a service industry, in comparison to other service industries it has several differentiating or even unique features. These include the collective nature of destination marketing, difficulties in defining the entity being branded, inequality of the components, the evolution of the product during its consumption, experiential nature of the tourism product and cyclical changes of the product (e.g. Ritchie & Ritchie, 1998). The service production in a tourism destination is performed by a network of service companies, which have partly common, but also partly diverse and opposite objectives and target segments. Despite the differing objectives, the companies together form the entity within which the tourism product as well as the brand of a destination is created.

If we accept the proposition that brands form pivotal resources for generating and sustaining competitive advantage (for instance Aaker 1989, 1991; Keller 1993, 1998; Kotler 1999, 2003; Grönroos 2001; Morgan & Pritchard, 2002), it follows that brand management is the process and focal point of taking those resources into usage and transforming them into superior market performance. Therefore, brand management forms a central organizational competence that must be understood and further developed.

However, significant empirical effort remains to be developed to improve understanding of brand management processes (Louro & Cunha 2001, p.868, Morgan et al., 2002, p.3-4). Morgan et al (2002, p.4) suggest that the limited research in destination branding is a result of the complexity and that “many have shied away from the topic – arguing that places are too complex to include in branding discussions since they have too many stakeholders and too little management control, have
underdeveloped identities and are not perceived as brands by general public. And yet, destination branding is one of today’s ‘hottest’ topics among place marketers.

Despite the rapidly increasing interest, relatively little research has been done on tourism destination branding (Hankinson 2004; 2001; Morgan et al, 2002; Laws et al 2002). As Laws et al (2002, 52) note, “research into destination branding processes, particularly those in which destination authorities collaborate actively with destination operators, is at an early stage of development.” Hankinson (2004, 118) notes that, “Indeed, the need for the development and refinement of a comprehensive model of the place brand has never been greater.”

THE ROLE OF COMPETENCES IN DEVELOPING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE BY BRANDING

Advantages made in early 90’s, particularly the development of the resource-based view of the firm and brand equity research, have rapidly re-increased attention towards brands both in marketing research (Malhotra, Peterson & Kleiser 1999) and in managerial practice (Aaker 1996, Murphy 1998, Morgan et al 2002). Brands form pivotal resources for generating and sustaining competitive advantage (for instance Aaker 1989, 1991; Keller 1993, 1998; Kotler et al 1999, 2003; Grönroos 2001; Morgan et al 2002), and thus brand management is the process and focal point of taking those resources into usage and transforming them into superior market performance.

Several authors have pointed out to the lack of empirical research relevant to brand management and the link between competences and success. A set of competencies is generally required to produce any type of value, for instance brand equity. The more complex the value system is, the more multifaceted the required set of capabilities becomes (Möller & Svahn, 2003, 220). However, what kind of competencies are relevant in the context of branding destinations, and what is their relative significance in developing successful destination brands is a phenomena rarely addressed in the literature. While it is generally acknowledged that the development of marketing competence is worthwhile and is associated most likely with superior performance (e.g. Vorhies & Morgan, 2005), few studies have examined marketing competence in strategic context (O’Driscoll, Carson & Gilmore, 2000, 184). Vorhies (1998,17-18) argues that “Perhaps the most important issue concerns the need to define better what is meant by the term marketing capabilities... [and that] research is needed that investigates how various marketing capabilities contribute individually to organizational success”. Furthermore, the collective nature of destination branding (e.g. Morgan et al., 2002) takes us into a field of brand management processes which has been, and still is, clearly under-developed. Significant empirical effort remains to be developed to improve understanding of brand management processes (Louro & Cunha 2001, p.868, Morgan et al., 2002, p.3-4).

Resource-based approach emphasizes the role of an organizations (either a firm of a network of firms) portfolio of idiosyncratic and difficult-to-imitate resources and capabilities as the core determinants of firm performance (Barney 1991). According to this perspective brands offer remarkable potential to assist in developing and maintenance of superior performance (Hall 1993; Barney & Hesterley 1996). From Resource-based View (RBV) perspective competences (a high order resource) aid in developing idiosyncratic resources, such as brands, by combining lower order resources in a fashion that cannot be matched competitors, thus creating competitive advantage. The dynamic capability extension of the RBV perspective explores how valuable resources, such as brands, are created and acquired over time in order to create and maintain competitive advantage. Dynamic capabilities describe and explain how ‘ordinary’ capabilities are developed and renewed (Möller & Svahn, 2003, 219). The dynamic capabilities perspective has studied the role of capabilities in creating new resources, in achieving proficiency in using current resources, and in devising new uses for the resources that an organization currently has or can acquire. Creating new capabilities requires building on experience gained in using existing capabilities—therefore that a organizations current capabilities create path dependencies that constrain a organizations ability to change its capabilities in the near term (Teece et al, 1990). The path dependencies make it possible for capabilities to be sources of competitive advantage, because path dependencies limit the ability of competing organizations to replicate a successful organization’s current capabilities (Teece et al, 1990).
Organizational competences are widely recognized as being one of the key factors in determining the competitiveness of firms (e.g. Prahalad & Hamel, 1990; Lambe, Spekman & Hunt, 2003). In this research competence is defined as an organizational ability to deploy tangible and intangible entities in a way that helps an organization, either one stakeholder or a network of them, to generate competitive advantage in the marketplace. ‘Organization’ is understood as any organization, formalized or non-formalized, strategic net (individual company, Destination Management Organization or other arrangement) that is responsible for developing and sustaining the Destination Brand for a ski destination. Brands are idiosyncratic resources, and their ability to create competitive advantage is dependent on the competences of the firm/actor trying to develop and sustain them.

RESEARCH AIM AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of the research was to identify Management Competences required in building and sustaining Successful Destination Brands in one particular context, in the context of ski destinations. To a certain extent, this research responds to Barwise’s (1991), appeal for research on the brand management process and to appeal presented by several authors in the emerging field of destination branding (Hankinson, 2004, 118; Morgan, Pritchard & Piggott, 2003,297; Hankinson, 2001,140) for research on the relationships between stakeholders involved in branding locations by exploring these relationships and identifying good practices.

Starting from the premise that there are critical competences that should drive brand success, we sought to investigate the views of brand managers responsible of world’s best ski-destination brand management in order to increase our understanding about what makes a destination brand successful. I focused on the managers who were responsible of destination brand management in destinations considered to be the best brands in the industry, since they are at the forefront of application, have gained considerable knowledge and experience and are influencing tomorrow’s destination branding agenda. My aim was to appreciate what managers responsible of leading destination brands saw as critical organizational competences for the success of a destination brand.

My second premise was that a tourism destination is a composite of products and services, produced by a number of independent companies, offering an integrated experience to consumers, in a defined geographical region, which is understood by its visitors as a unique entity, with a political framework for marketing and planning, therefore setting an context that is considerably different from that of branding physical goods. With such a paucity of literature on brand management competences in general (discussed above), and destination branding in particular, I wanted to unearth views about factors driving destination brand success. My research was exploratory in nature, seeking to elicit managers' views within their frames of reference, without imposing our preconceptions. The most appropriate method to achieve this was considered to be in-depth interviews (Jones, 1985; Gilmore and Carson, 1996), which was supported with extensive analysis of secondary data including historical records, memos, plans and strategies.

Nine Case destinations from US, Australia and Finland were included in this study. Triangulation was used in case selection. All nine case destination brands are among the best ones in their respective markets, firstly, according to ski-industry associations in the three countries, secondly, according to independent national brand awareness studies in US and in Finland, third, according to the managers of the destinations themselves, and fourth, according to the managers of competing case destinations. All cases were brought up by one or more managers of their competitors, when asked to name best destination brands in the market. The themes of the interviews were

• respondents conceptualization of a brand
• brand planning process, participants, challenges faced and understanding of an ‘ideal’
• brand implementation process, participants, challenges faces and understanding of an ‘ideal’
• brand monitoring arrangements
• respondents understanding of the performance of their brand and competing brands
• what differentiates a ‘good’ ski destination brand from ‘bad’ ski resort brand
• core competences required in developing and maintaining a successful destination brand
Content analysis (Krippendorff, 1980) was then conducted. Within the context of the research aim and following Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework, we noted patterns and themes in the data, drew links with previous literature and identified categories relevant as criteria of network brand management competences.

RESULTS

All case destinations are geographical areas offering a variety of products and services, produced by a network of independent companies and other actors, but understood by their visitors as unique entities into which they are travelling. The geographical boundaries of the case destinations are not clearly bounded, but typically the majority of services are provided within an area no larger than approximately 15 kilometres in diameter.

Despite the fact that eight resorts have started to develop their destinations product offering towards year-round portfolio of products, and one was originally built to be a year-round resort, all nine cases are primarily ski destinations, i.e. still receive great majority of their visitors during the winter season and a majority of their tourism income are generated by the winter product.

The case destinations have opened up for public in different decades, ranging from late 40s to early 80s. Brand management as a phenomenon, however, has emerged later. Conscious attempts to develop and manage “a brand” have begun in first of the case destinations in early 80’s, while the last ones have adopted brand development to their strategic objectives a decade later, in early 90’s.

In terms of size, the case destinations range from mid-size to large ski destinations. The accommodation capacities range from 4500 to 21000 (average 15,000, median 16,000 beds). The uphill capacity ranges from 12,250 to 42,900 persons/hour (average 26,388, median 23,700 persons/hour).

A tourism destination product is typically produced in a network form of production. While the consumer perceives one product, the vacation experience, the production is performed by several independent companies. The case destinations are all large skiing destinations, all have successful brands, and numerous different companies (from several dozens to 360 companies and other actors) operate within all of the case destinations.

The companies operating within all of the nine case destinations have created a network organization to handle issues pertaining to all or part of the business community. In most cases the network organization is a destination marketing organization (DMO), a chamber of commerce or the equivalent. A general overview of the case destinations is presented in table 1.

Identification of competencies

The analysis of nine case studies led to the identification of 34 abilities, which are believed to have an impact on a brand management organizations ability to successfully create and sustain a brand in the context of skiing destinations. These 34 abilities are thematically partly overlapping and were interpreted to represent different facets of smaller number of competencies. The abilities were grouped to twelve categories, which are suggested to be the twelve core competences of creating and sustaining network brands in the context of skiing destinations. The identified abilities and competencies are presented in table 3.
### Table 1
General overview of case destinations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Case1</th>
<th>Case2</th>
<th>Case3</th>
<th>Case4</th>
<th>Case5</th>
<th>Case7</th>
<th>Case8</th>
<th>Case9</th>
<th>Case 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>oriented brand</td>
<td>development started</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed base (approx.)</td>
<td>17.000</td>
<td>16.000</td>
<td>16.000</td>
<td>7.000</td>
<td>4.500</td>
<td>22.300</td>
<td>21.000</td>
<td>7741</td>
<td>25.000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ski lift capacity</td>
<td>25.500</td>
<td>23.700</td>
<td>20.900</td>
<td>12.250</td>
<td>17.841</td>
<td>42.900</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>30.739</td>
<td>37.280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(persons/ hour)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Brand related decision-</td>
<td>Board of Directors of the network organization</td>
<td>Board of Directors of the network organization</td>
<td>Board of Directors of the network organization</td>
<td>Marketing team of the network organization</td>
<td>Strategic group of the Ski Company and its parent company</td>
<td>Management group of the Ski company &amp; Resort</td>
<td>Marketing Council of the network organization</td>
<td>Operations group of the Ski Company &amp; Resort</td>
<td>Management of Ski Company &amp; Resort (winter brand) Board of Directors of the network organization (summer brand)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>making body</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational form</td>
<td>Limited company, Ltd</td>
<td>Association</td>
<td>Association</td>
<td>Association</td>
<td>Ltd</td>
<td>Ltd</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Ltd</td>
<td>Ltd (winter brand), Resort Chamber (summer brand)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of decision-making</td>
<td></td>
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<td>body</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members in decision-</td>
<td>7 members, Owners and highest level managers.</td>
<td>9-11 members, Owners and highest level managers.</td>
<td>10 members, Owners and highest level managers.</td>
<td>7-9 members, Owners and highest level managers.</td>
<td>Marketing Director of the parent company, Brand manager of the Ski Company &amp; Resort, advertising agency representative</td>
<td>Directors of the Ski Company &amp; Resort (N=7)</td>
<td>11 members, Owners and highest level managers.</td>
<td>Upper senior level managers and the CEO</td>
<td>N/A (winter brand) Directors of network member companies (summer brand)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>making body</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities financed by</td>
<td>50% membership fees, 50% booking commissions</td>
<td>Membership fees</td>
<td>Membership fees</td>
<td>Membership fees</td>
<td>Ski Company &amp; Resort</td>
<td>Ski Company &amp; Resort</td>
<td>Membership fees</td>
<td>Ski Company &amp; Resort</td>
<td>Ski Company &amp; Resort (winter brand) Network organization (summer brand)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Classification of approaches to Brand Management

Another significant finding of the study was that while the composition of competencies identified within the 9 case destinations varied to some extent, there appeared to be a logic behind the variations. Despite the fact that all case destinations are operating in relatively similar settings in terms of size and number of individual companies operating in the case destinations, two classifying variables were identified, which enable classifying the case destinations on the basis of their approach to destination brand management.

Firstly, the case destinations may be classified according to the number of companies participating strategic level brand management activities of the ski destinations. Due to the large number of network actors participating in the production process of customer vacation experience, the initial assumption was that network approach would have been applied to Destination Brand management in all case destinations. However, the destination brands are managed in some of the case destinations by the network organization (DMO or other), while in others significant parts of Destination Brand management (namely strategic planning, communications planning and communications implementation) are performed by one single company, the Ski Company and Resort. In five case destinations (Cases 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8) brand management function was a responsibility of a separate network organization (later NEO), within which decision-making takes place in co-operative processes between large numbers (70-95% of all companies) of companies operating within the case destination. In remaining four case destinations (Cases 5, 6, 7, 9) the brand management function is in the hands of one single company (later SCO), typically the largest company in the area, while other companies operating in the area have little or no influence in brand related decision-making other than the processes and activities of their individual firms. This finding is in line with the propositions of Flagestad and Hope (2001), who although focusing on the larger concept of Destination Management Organization identified a continuum between two extreme types of organizational structures: “The Community Model” and “the Corporate Model”. The organizational framework of the Community Model consists of “specialized individual independent business unit (service providers) operating in a decentralized way and where no unit has any dominant administrative power or dominant ownership within the destination (Flagestad & Hope, 2001, 452”). The other extreme, the Corporate Model refers to destination management as often represented or dominated by business corporation, which “manage for profit a strategic selection of business units of service providers incorporated by ownership and/or contracts” (Flagestad & Hope, 2001, 452).

Differing organizational forms of brand management also raise an important question: if the brand is managed by one company, can we still talk about a Destination Brand? We can. In this study network boundaries are formed by organizations that are involved in the value creation system of the Destination Brand. For instance, actors operating within a tourism destination influence the Destination Brand, whether or not they participate in the strategic planning process of the Destination Brand, since they belong to the value-system, manage their own processes, and provide brand contacts which the customer in turn relates to the Destination Brand.

The other identified classifying variable was conceptual understanding of a brand, and accordingly the approach to brand management. Approaches to brand management have been discussed in detail in the seminal study of Louro and Cunha (2001), who discussed four distinct brand management paradigms: Product, Projective, Adaptive and Relational. Hankinson (2004), building on the work of Louro & Cunha, developed a similar categorization and discussed about it in the context of tourism destinations. In Hankinson’s vocabulary the four alternative perspectives on brands are 1) brands as communicators, 2) brands as value enhancers, 3) brands as perceptual entities and 4) brands as relationships.

Using the vocabulary of Louro and Cunha (2001), six out of nine case destinations approached brand management from the relational brand management paradigm, while three of the case destinations approached brand management from the Adaptive brand management paradigm (see table 2). Key differences between the two approaches were their conceptual understanding of a brand, the strategic orientation of brand management and the understanding of stakeholders of brand management. In their conceptualization of “a brand,” the Adaptives emphasized
the role of marketing communication in shaping a perception about the product in the mind of the consumer, while the Relationals emphasized the relationship over marketing communication and paid significantly more attention to the interaction between consumers and service producers in the service encounters. Another difference between the two groups is in the participants in brand management. Where the Adaptives stress the crucial role of the marketing department in planning and implementing the brand, the Relationals stress the role of every member in the organization participating the delivery of the brand in service production processes. A third difference between the two approaches is the strategic orientation of brand management. The Relationals place more weight on the relational aspects, the role of employees and shared co-created values in brand development, while the Adaptives pay little or no attention to communication towards staff and do not seem to connect organizational identity building or corporate culture to brand management. Thus, the case destinations fall into four categories according to the approach to brand management and organizational form of brand management. This classification is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Classification Framework of Approaches to Brand Management in Ski Destinations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach to brand management</th>
<th>Organizational form of Destination Brand Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relational paradigm/Brands as relationships</td>
<td>Network organization (NEO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive paradigm / Brands as perceptual entities</td>
<td>Single Company Organization (SCO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Case 1</td>
<td>• Case 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Case 2</td>
<td>• Case 8</td>
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<td>• Case 3</td>
<td>• Case 9</td>
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<td>• Case 4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Classification of competencies

Some of the identified competencies were found to emerge in all or nearly all case analyses. Similarly some of the competences only emerged in small part of the case analyses. By comparing this finding to the Classification of cases, it was noted that the Classification appears to be related with the types of Brand Management Competences emerging in case analyses. As an example, in cases classified as Network Organizations (NEOs) partly similar but partly different competences than cases classified as Single Company Organizations (SCOs) emerged. Accordingly in the analyses of cases classified as Adaptives partly similar but partly different competences emerge than in the analyses of cases classified as Relationals. Furthermore the internal coherence within the Classification appeared to be strong, i.e. similar bundle of competence requirements emerged in all cases classified as belonging into a single class.

On the basis of this finding a typology of competences was developed. The identified competences were typified as being either Generic Brand Management Competences, Network Management Competences, Relational Management Competences and Network-Relational Management Competences. Generic competences emerged in all case studies. Network competences emerged only in cases which have adopted network form of organizing their brand related activities (either them being classified as Adaptives or Relationals). Relational competences emerged only in cases approaching the issue of brand management from the perspective of Relational brand management paradigm (not depending on their classification to either NEOs or SCOs). Network-Relational competences emerged both from cases approaching brand management from the perspective of Relational paradigm, as well as from cases classified as NEOs. This contingency result is presented in Table 3. The identified 34 abilities, grouped to twelve competences are presented in Table 3.
### Table 3
Destination Brand Management Competencies and Abilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Abilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generic brand management competencies</td>
<td>Consistency.</td>
<td>1) Ability to create a sustainable long term strategic vision for brand identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence in coordinating interrelated resources and capabilities (generic, network and relational)</td>
<td>2) Delivery on product. Ability to ensure that the brand is delivered in all product features</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3) Ability to develop to clear task allocations and adequate resource allocations to support tasks</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4) Ability to provide incentives for network member companies to transform their processes to support the brand</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5) Ability to develop and implement common quality standards in line with the brand identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource base development competence</td>
<td>6) Ability to acquire/access resources inside and outside the organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7) Ability to detect and develop fundamental technological, marketing and other capabilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8) Ability to accumulate knowledge and know-how</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand identity development competence</td>
<td>9) Ability to develop unique brand identity which provides added value to the consumer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10) Ability to capture ‘reality’ in brand identity</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11) Ability to express experiential elements (vs. functional) of the product in brand identity</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitoring competence</td>
<td>12) Ability to develop a monitoring system that provides sufficient information for brand management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13) Ability to develop control loops that challenge the organization’s current strategic logic and management processes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>External communication competence</td>
<td>14) Ability to generate consumer awareness and positive image through communications (Strong execution of the brand)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15) Ability to make sure image and identity match</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16) Ability to express the brand identity in marketing communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17) Ability to communicate added value in a clear way</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18) Ability to convey coherent brand messages through all marketing communication channels.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19) Ability to present network as a unified whole to external audiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network competencies</td>
<td>Co-operation building competence</td>
<td>20) Ability to create an organizational forum for sharing work and responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21) Ability to establish coordination mechanisms between actors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22) Ability to create a decision making system that distributes decision-making power in a just way</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobilization competence</td>
<td>23) Ability to provide appropriate incentives that attract providers of key resources and capabilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making competence</td>
<td>24) Ability to make strategic decisions, ability to avoid diluting decisions with excessive consensus building.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25) Ability to make strategic decisions. Ability to avoid diluting decisions with excessive consensus building.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26) Ability to make ‘fair’ decisions for the benefit of the entire network</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership competence</td>
<td>27) Ability to lead the network of companies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28) Ability to keep the brand development process alive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational management competencies</td>
<td>Organizational identity building (Mainly relational but also generic)</td>
<td>29) Ability to create community spirit, trust, togetherness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30) Ability to increase commitment towards the brand within all levels of the organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31) Ability to generate managerial commitment to the brand within the organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32) Ability to generate culture of open discussion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network-Relational management competence</td>
<td>Internal communication competence</td>
<td>33) Ability to develop effective internal communication processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34) Increasing understanding. Ability to disseminate knowledge and information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Moilanen, 2008, 207)
CONCLUSION

Destinations are complex entities, and accordingly challenging to brand. Despite the scarceness of academic research on the topic, great numbers of destinations are attempting to develop a brand. This is done by practices adapted largely from the models developed for branding simple physical goods by a single firm. These models and practices may be poorly adaptable to branding tourism destination products, which are developed through complex networks of a numerous service companies.

The objective of this research was to identify Management Competences required in building and sustaining Successful Destination Brands in the context of ski destinations. The primary result of this research was identification of 34 abilities, grouped to 12 competences, which are suggested to be key competences in developing and sustaining a successful Destination Brand in the context of skiing destinations. This qualitative research was exploratory by nature. The aim was to contribute to the emerging academic research on destination branding as well as produce results which have direct managerial relevance. The findings are considered to reach these aims as the identified 34 abilities, grouped to 12 competencies, may have direct managerial relevance for managers attempting to develop their destination brands, may give an interesting insight to the relatively little researched area of how to create successful destination brands, and do provide ample suggestions for future research on destination brand management competences.

Large number of interesting research areas continue to exist in the field of destination branding. The author will continue to verify the results of this study with larger quantitative data in the context of ski-destination brands. Comparative studies in different contextual settings, other than ski-destinations, as well as attempting to identify competencies required in developing and maintaining successful destination brands in larger geographical areas (e.g. branding cities or countries) provide particularly fruitful areas for future research.

REFERENCES


THE IMPACT OF POWERFUL ICONS ON DESTINATION IMAGE AND DESTINATION BRANDING AND MARKETING

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Institute For Tourism Studies, Macao
Macao

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the impact of powerful icons on destination image and on destination branding and marketing from a cognitive perspective. A set of logos linked to tourism destinations were tested in controlled experimental conditions to explore the residual information in memory after visual exposure. The major results are the significant differences between the frequencies of correct identification of logos with different characteristics. The results suggest that in terms of memory stability square logos are more effective than lettering logos and that memory recognition produces higher correct identification of the core information from the logos than memory recall. The results also show that there was a high visual stability in the logos tested and that when the colours of the original logos were removed and replaced by shades of gray or when the logos were rotated 90 degrees clockwise the decrease in the correct identification of the core information was not significant. The findings are discussed with a focus on the implications for destination image and destination branding and marketing and on the possible inferences for theory development and follow-up research.

Keywords: destination icon, destination logo, destination image, destination branding, destination marketing

INTRODUCTION

The church of St. Paul in Macao SAR, PR China, was built to be the greatest monument to Christianity in the East (Storey, 1997). The first religious service on record was on the Christmas Eve of 1603 and two centuries later, on the year of 1835, the St. Paul’s Church was destroyed by a big fire (Davies, 1990, Nishiyama, 2001). Disasters possess a destructive power along with a creative force. Reborn from the ashes, the St. Paul’s Church ruins became in modern times an established destination icon, present on a coin of the Macao official currency, on the Macau Government Tourist Office logo, and referred to as a symbol of Macao in the generality of travel guides about the territory (Clewlow, 1983; Davies, 1990; Yogerst, 1994; Harper & Storey, 1999; Brown, Gardner, 2002; Bayley, 2007). The association of the St. Paul’s façade to the international image of Macao as a tourism destination has important implications in terms of destination image and destination branding and marketing. The following citations from travel guides are examples that express the strong link between the monument and the destination.

“Some say the ruins (…) of St. Paul’s Cathedral are the greatest monument to Christianity in the East. The cathedral was finished in the first decade of the 17th century, and the crowned heads of Europe competed to present it with its most prestigious gift” (Storey, 1997:302).

“Some say the marvelous (…) Ruins of St. Paul’s Cathedral are the greatest monument to Christianity in the east. It is a truly magnificent piece of architecture that inspires veneration and awe, despite (or maybe because of) the fact that only the façade remains” (Harper & Storey, 1999:383).

“Macao’s most enduring monument – and its most famous image – is the imposing façade of the church (…) which stands high above the nest of streets to the north of the main avenue” (Brown & Gardner, 2002:207).

“(…) the enclave’s most well-known building is a church gutted by fire during a typhoon. In 1835 the Jesuit-built St. Paul’s Church erupted in flames, the conflagration fanned by howling storm winds. (…) Over the centuries the hollowed-out ruins became a local landmark visible from all over
Macao. (…) the ruins of St. Paul have become Macao’s most famous landmark, beating out even the neon-lit casinos” (Bailey, 2007:55).

“St. Paul’s, the most popular emblem of Macau” (Davies, 1990:70).

“Although it lies in ruins, St Paul’s Church is Macau’s most enduring symbol and most popular landmark” (Yogerst, 1994:25).

“The ruins (of St. Paul’s Church) are Macau’s most famous landmark” (Clewlow, 1983:158).

The Ruins of St. Paul’s Church icon is also included in the Macao MOP5 coins and in the official logo, web page and e-newsletter of the Macau Government Tourism Office (Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4).

Figure 1
The Ruins of St. Paul’s Church in the Macao MOP5 coins

Figure 2
The Ruins of St. Paul’s Church in the logo of the Macau Government Tourism Office

Figure 3
The Ruins of St. Paul’s Church in the webpage of the Macau Government Tourism Office

Figure 4
The Ruins of St. Paul’s Church in the Macau Travel News, the e-newsletter of the Macau Government Tourism Office

These examples show that even integrated with other elements, sometimes resulting in a complex visual composition as is the case of the webpage and the e-newsletter, the icon of the Ruins of St. Paul’s Church is easily identified.

This article discusses the impact of powerful icons on destination image and on destination branding and marketing from a cognitive perspective. A set of logos linked to tourism destination were tested in controlled experimental conditions to explore the residual information in memory after visual
exposure. The findings are discussed with a focus on the implications for destination image and destination branding and marketing, and on inferences for theory development and follow-up research.

**ICONS, DESTINATION IMAGE, DESTINATION BRANDING AND DESTINATION MARKETING**

An emerging theme in the early 1970s, destination image established a prevalent position in the literature and enhanced the understanding of behaviour associated with travel and tourism (Gallarza, Saura & Garcia, 2002; Pike, 2002; Beerli & Martin, 2004). The destination image core themes in the literature focus on the impact of the mental image on travelling decisions and traveller satisfaction, as the image generates an expectation benchmark to which the travelling experience is compared (Chon, 1990). From selected definitions of destination image (Hunt, 1971, Markin, 1974, Lawson, Bond-Bovy, 1977, Crompton, 1979, Dichter, 1985, Reynolds, 1985, Fakeye, Crompton, 1991, Kotler, Haider, Rein, 1994, Arrebola, 1995, all in Gallarza, Saura & Garcia, 2002), the following elements are, in our perspective, central to the concept: expression of knowledge, understanding, mental construct, mental representation, and impression. All these elements represent different stages of information processing that precede and influence decision and travel patterns (Moreira 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2008a, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2004b). The destination image is a special factor influencing travelling decisions. While the destination image is an external stimuli, it is under the influence of destination marketing, and becomes an internal individual factor once the mental representation is formed. Prideaux (2005) recognises this duality including the image in both the external and individual factors influencing tourism flows.

Destination branding can be understood as the sculpturing of a destination image. The image of a destination influences the perception of information about that destination and ultimately the perceived information will influence decisions and travel behaviours.

Destination branding can be defined as the creation and consolidation of a name or symbol that identifies a destination, differentiating it from competing destinations. Branding eventually reduces the search costs of a travelling decision and the perceived risk associated with a destination (Blain, Levy & Ritchie, 2005) and decisions are not independent of risk and risk perception (Moreira 2010in press, 2007a, 2007b, 2007d, 2004a, 2004b). On an early study Roselius (1971) found that the major risk relievers in risk resolution responses to risk perception were brand loyalty and major brand image. The consolidation of a destination brand which represents the uniqueness of the destination is fundamental, given that differentiation is critical in competitive markets (Pike, 2009in press). An important element of branding is consistency (Hem & Iversen, 2004). Consistency is necessary to guarantee a stable input of information to the market that will form the destination image.

Destination logos, being unique and repeatedly exposed to the market have strong impacts on the expected outcomes of branding, identification and differentiation. A destination logo can be defined as “a graphic design used to identify a destination” (Hem & Iversen, 2004:88).

The logo is an element of the brand and becomes a cognitive platform for the information of the destination image. The design of the destination logo is a critical aspect and the logo should be coherent with the destination it is intended to endorse, identifying the destination within the market and generating a differentiation from the competition (Hem & Iversen, 2004). If the logo is central to the destination brand and to the image of a destination and if the image is a critical decision factor, with positive correlations found between destination perceptions and economic decisions (Mayo& Jarvis, 1981, Woodside & Lysonski, 1989, cited in Hem& Iversen, 2004), then the perception of the logo, the most recurrent element of marketing, is also critical to the competitive success of a destination.

Destination marketing involves the management of destination image. Destination image has multiple implications on human behaviour (Gallarza, Gil & Calderon, 2002) and images and perception override reality in influencing decisions (Guthrie & Gale, 1991). Destination marketing depends on the perception’s influence on travelling decision (Kozak, 2002; Moreira, 2008b; Moreira, Vong & McCartney, 2002). In different scenarios, the image of a destination might require to be established, reinforced or altered (MacKay & Fesemmaier, 1997) and, as markets mature, the branding process promotes market segmentation (Marti, 2005). When competition generates a trend of market expansion,
along with the increase of alternatives on the offer side of the market, competition becomes a source of segmentation (in contrast, competition may lead to radical changes in economic environments that may affect population survival or to the contraction of economic markets to a scenario of monopoly (e.g. Moreira, 2008a, 2007e), and the influence of logos in the differentiation and identification of a destination becomes even more important.

An icon is a simplified mental representation of a destination. The meaning of the term icon is associated with symbol and representation (Tang, Morrison, Lehto, Kline & Pearce, 2009). An icon is a very stable part of the destination image, generally above the normal variations across time that are expected in the evolution of the general image of a destination (e.g. Butler, 1980; Buhalís, 2000).

A conceptual distinction between minimal image (involving minimal information, with a small number of elements or a simple structure or organisation of the information elements) and complex image (involving complex information, with a high number of elements or a complex structure or organisation of the information elements) is important to understand how the inclusion of a powerful icon in the destination logo can produce impacts in destination image and destination branding and marketing. Although human perception acts as a filter and does not integrate information in the exact way in which it is presented, producing instead a mental representation of the original, if the information is presented in a simplified from the processing load is less demanding and will involve less losses and modifications of the original stimuli. When the mental representation is established, the representation will then override the original information, and produce impacts on other processes as judgment and decision.

The icon of The Ruins of St. Paul’s Church is included in the Macau Tourism Office logo, combined with the name of Macao. Resembling the real destination Macau, the logo is apparently very simple, revealing an interesting complexity only when is observed with the deserved attention. The colours might add to the meaning. In a free interpretation, the red and the green might be understood as representing the dominant colours of the flags of PR China and Macao, and are also the dominant colours of the flag of Portugal. This privileged coincidence combines in the logo the future, the present and the legacy of the past, through the idea of time, romance and nostalgia of the indistinct sunset or sunrise in the background. Visual aspects of destination marketing, especially if characterised by cognitive simplicity, can have a strong impact in markets associated with the diffusion of destination information. There are references that visual stimuli are better recalled, salient in early stages of destination decision and that the dominant share of the variability of advertisement response is originated by nonverbal factors (Edell& Staelin, 1983; MacInnis& Price, 1987; Mazanec, 1989; Hecker & Stewart, 1988; all cited in MacKay& Fesenmaier, 1997). Although the logo seems extremely powerful as a minimal image of the destination, unless there is memory retention and the identification of the destination after the visual exposure, the positive impacts on destination image and on destination branding and marketing are only speculative. The following sections present the methodology and the results of a first series of empirical tests on a set of logos associated with tourism destinations and analyse the memory retention and destination identification after visual exposure.

**METHOD**

The data was collected at the beginning of the academic year and 132 college students participated in the study. Six experimental groups were tested in the $3 \times 2$ experimental design [logo exposure variation (original, colour absence, rotation) × core information retrieving level (recall, recognition)]. The size of the six experimental groups was similar (GE1 n=23, GE2 n=21, GE3 n=24, GE4 n=19, GE5 n=22, GE6 n=23). The subjects were exposed to a video presentation starting with a picture of a prism in perspective over a gray shades background, after which the logos were presented in individual slides centred with a vertical or horizontal maximum of 1.5 inches (3.81 centimetres) over a white background. The slides were presented in a sequence of five subsets with the city logo followed by one airline logo and one hotel logo. The slides transition was set at intervals of five seconds and a video with the prism of the initial picture rotating for one minute in a slow counter clockwise motion followed the end of the logos sequence. The prism in perspective initial picture and the end video were separated from the logo slides set by a white background slide with the standard slide transition time. In the three
video presentations that defined the experimental conditions, the first, ‘original’, included the original logos, in the second, ‘colour absence’, the original logos were altered to remove the colours and were presented in gray shades, and in the third condition, ‘rotation’, the original logos were rotated 90 degrees clockwise. The logo sets are presented in Figure 5 and the prism in perspective slide in Figure 6.

**Figure 5**
Logo sets included in the slides presentation for the original, colour absence and rotation experimental conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original</th>
<th>Colour absence</th>
<th>Rotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

![Logo sets](image-url)
After the end of the video presentation, the subjects filled the questionnaire form corresponding to the experimental condition ‘recall’ or ‘recognition’ of the group. The questionnaire forms were distinct in the questions asked: 1) write the names of all the cities you saw on the screen presentation (recall condition); 2) mark on the list all the cities you saw on the screen presentation (recognition condition). No time limit was given. After two minutes the subjects were asked if there was a need for extra time and the answer was negative in all the groups. Due to a typo in one of the questionnaire forms, the results for the Singapore logo were not included in the analysis of the results.

RESULTS

The 132 subjects age mean was of 19 years with a standard deviation of 1, a minimum of 17 and a maximum of 24. The gender distribution was of 70% female and 30% male subjects. Table 1 presents the frequencies of correct identification for all experimental conditions. A first analysis of the frequencies suggests a tendency for higher frequencies of correct identification in the recognition than in the recall conditions. The correct identification frequencies of the square logos also seem to be higher than the frequencies for the lettering logos. The statistical analysis in Table 2 confirms that the higher correct identification frequencies of the square logos were significant for all cases and when the recall and recognition groups isolated frequencies were analysed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Original</th>
<th>Colour absence</th>
<th>Rotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GE1</td>
<td>GE2</td>
<td>GE3</td>
<td>GE4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taipei</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macau</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokyo</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

Frequencies of correct identification for all experimental conditions
Table 2
Square logos vs. lettering logos: frequencies of correct identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct identification</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>T-Test</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All cases</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Square</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lettering</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>132</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Square</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lettering</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Square</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lettering</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3
Destination logos: frequencies of correct identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequencies of correct identification</th>
<th>Percentages of correct identification</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Q-Test</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All cases</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macau</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokyo</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taipei</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4
Logo visual stability: frequencies of correct identification in the original, colour absence and rotation experimental conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct identification</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df effect</th>
<th>df error</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All cases</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour absence</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotation</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5
Logo memory stability: frequencies of correct identification in the information recall and recognition experimental conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct identification</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df effect</th>
<th>df error</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All cases</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The destination logos frequencies of correct identification ranking are presented in Table 3. The Macao logo was, as expected due to the sample characteristics, the logo with higher frequency of correct identification, followed by the Tokyo logo, the Taipei logo and the Sydney logo. All the differences
between the logos frequencies of correct identification were significant for p<.01 except between the Tokyo logo and the Taipei logo, significant for p<.05.

The results comparing the logos visual stability in the original, colour absence and rotation experimental conditions in Table 4 revealed a slight decrease of the correct identification mean when the logo colour was removed or when the original logo was rotated. The differences between the means however, did not reach a level of statistical significance.

The logo memory stability was assessed in the information recall and recognition experimental conditions. The results presented in Table 5 confirm the significant differences in the recall and recognition means, with a higher frequency of correct identification for the recognition experimental condition. The frequencies of correct identification of the recognition experimental condition also suggest more consistency, considering that the standard deviation of correct identification in the recall experimental condition is much higher.

**DISCUSSION**

The analysis of the results confirms positive differences for square logos when compared with lettering logos, and for information recognition conditions versus information recall conditions. The visual stability of the logos was high since the removal of the colour or the 90 degrees rotation did not produce a significant decrease in the frequencies of correct identification as expected. This aspect might be further explored in future studies, to find more about the elements that influence visual stability.

The fact that all the frequencies of correct identification of the four logos were different at a significant level and the result confirms the importance of the logos characteristics for memory retention. Logos with different characteristics produce different frequencies of destination correct identifications. Given that the logos information in memory is expected to have a structuring function in the destination image at the individual level, information about the optimal characteristics of logos will be of value to design more effective instruments of destination branding and marketing.

Future developments in this line of research might contribute further to the themes of destination branding and marketing through the advance of the understanding of the impacts of structural elements of destination image on memory and on travel decisions and behaviours.

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TOURIST CREATED CONTENT: RETHINKING DESTINATION BRANDING

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Copenhagen Business School
Denmark

ABSTRACT
This is an exploratory study of tourist created content (TCC) on the Web, and destination branding. It relies on qualitative research methods, content analysis and field research based on the project 'Travel 2.0 promotion in Asia and Pacific' of the Scandinavian Tourism Board Asia/Pacific. The paper provides a classification of destination branding and the different types of TCC. It analyses the production of TCC during the different stages of the tourism experience and critically examines the different strategies that destination management organizations use (DMOs) in relation to TCC. The findings show that tourists do not incorporate the formal elements of the brand in TCC but are very active in image formation, that TCC represents a form of global late-modern risk and that the most common strategies adopted by DMOs have some main weaknesses. Finally, it reflects on the opportunities that the use of a strategy based on analytics represents for destination branding.

Keywords: destination, branding, information and communication technologies, user generated content

INTRODUCTION

Information and telecommunication technologies (ICT) are of great importance to understand the development of today’s tourism destinations (Buhalis, 2008). Their impact has been large in the branding of tourism products in general and in the branding of destinations in particular. However, there is a lack of knowledge related to the impact on destination branding of one of the latest developments in ICT, the popularly phenomenon known as the Web 2.0. This term describes a Web which is “increasingly influenced by intelligent Web services that empower users to contribute to developing, rating, collaborating and distributing Internet content and customizing Internet applications” (Vickery & Wunsch-Vincent, 2007, p.9). These forms of virtual social communication are based upon Content Management System software (Stillman & McGrath, 2008) and include a mixture of different tools such as blogs, wikis, podcasts, messaging applications and other which are meant to encourage the sharing of information.

Web 2.0 tools are widely used by tourists to get information about tourism destinations and to share their tourism experiences. Destination awareness and image creation are influenced by digital content provided by tourists. This development is due to the following factors: more powerful and affordable hardware and software, a faster network edge, advances in easy-to-use tools for creating and sharing content, a higher e-literacy in the population of the world, and the increase of portable and wireless platforms (Parameswaran & Whinston, 2007). These factors have entailed a change in the locus of control in the creation process of the online branding of destinations. Nowadays, web branding content, before controlled by organizations and corporations, is to a larger extent the expression of the interaction and participation of end-users. The enabling of user generated content (UGC) is one of the main characteristics of the Web 2.0 turn. UGC refers to the information that is digitalized, uploaded by the users and made available through the Internet. This paper focuses on a specific type of user generated content: the tourist created content (TCC). The study that takes the point of departure in the findings of previous analysis on TCC (Munar, 2009) analyses the impact of TCC on destination branding.

A large number of researchers have focused on how tourism has been transformed by the technological revolution of ICT (Buhalis & Law, 2008) and there exists a number of studies that have analyzed the interrelation between destinations, consumer search and ICT (Bonn, Furr, & Susskind, 1998; Buhalis, 1998; Fodness & Murray, 1997; Weber, 1999; Werthner & Ricci, 2004; Luo, M., Feng, 2006).
R., & Cai, L. A., 2004; Frías, Rodriguez, & Castañeda, 2008). There are many relevant studies related to branding in tourism (Gartner, 1986; Cai, 2002; Ooi 2004, 2006; Konecnik and Gartner, 2006; Murphy et al., 2006; Marzano and Scott, 2009). Furthermore, social scientists have focused on the Internet as a factor of social, cultural and economic change (Basu, Mok, & Wellman, 2007; Castells, 2001; Cooke & Buckley, 2008; Dellarocas, 2003; Poster, 2005, 2006; Hand, 2008; Lenhart, Madden, Ranking Macgill, & Smith, 2008; Parameswaran & Whinston, 2007; Schwanen & Kwan, 2008; Stillman & McGrath, 2008; Vickery & Wunsch-Vincent, 2007). However, most of the knowledge and sources available on the topic of web 2.0 and UGC in tourism are organizational reports or newspaper and magazine articles, many of them with information provided by Web sources and consultancy firms, which the level of reliability and validity may be questioned. Although there are interesting contributions on the topic of the internet and tourism branding, the knowledge of the impact of TCC and destination branding has not been developed yet.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is an exploratory study of tourist created content, a specific subtype of UGC, and destination branding. It relies on qualitative research methods including text analysis through documentary studies of web content and field research based on the project ‘Travel 2.0 promotion in Asia and Pacific’ of the Scandinavian Tourism Board Asia/Pacific. The theoretical background of the study is founded in the literature of ICT in tourism, in the more general literature of branding and destination management and other related social sciences on the evolution and impact of the Internet. Other literature consulted during the study has been documents and reports provided by organizations which study ICT’s usage and development.

The research design had several phases. The first phase, based on preliminary studies, consisted on the design of a classification system. This task included the establishment of a sample of destination brands and a theoretical sample of websites, the examination of content of the sites according the classification of the UGC of sites as developed by Munar (2009), selection and analysis of a larger sample of sites based on a larger literature review. Furthermore, when choosing sampling, special attention was given to sites which had primary purpose to use and development of UGC (no including sites of organizations which include some Web 2.0 tools to a minor degree), from this a larger effort was dedicated to the study of those sites which raison d’être is related to tourism. The great majority of the analyzed sites can be classified as social network sites (see table 1). During the process, many tourism and travel sites where explored but eliminated from the sample because of their main commercial focus or their main content was based on blogs provided by experts and not opened to all tourists in general (e.g. gridskipper.com, the coolhunter.com or spottedbylocals.com). The examination of these sites was compared to the sample of 19 main destination brands: 18 of those were national brands while 1 was a US state brand. The second phase included the development of a model of strategic analysis. The model identified how destination management organizations (DMOs) try to benefit from TCC and related this analysis to the use that tourists make use of TCC in each one of the stages of the tourism experience. The strategic analysis was based on the work conducted during the project “Travel 2.0 promotion in Asia and Pacific”. This project, which began in January 2009, includes the development of a web 2.0 platform for the Asian tourism market for the DMO of Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland.

The Web contains a myriad of sites which use Web 2.0 tools. However, the analysis of all the available sites is not possible within the scope of this study. The focus of the research is tourist created content and destination branding, while explanations related to other generated content are only given when understand the general phenomenon is necessary. The rapid change in the patterns of use, the fragmentation and massive amount of data associated to the object of analysis represents a challenge to the study of the Web; however it does not make it less relevant. Furthermore, there is a large amount of destination brands that could have been considered. The aim is therefore not to map all the possibilities of TCC and destination branding but to contribute to a wider understanding of how the latest technological developments impact on its development.
Table 1
Sample of Websites with TCC analyzed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blogabond.com</th>
<th>Travelblog.org</th>
<th>Worldreviewer.com</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Couchsurfing.org</td>
<td>Travelersfortravelers.com</td>
<td>Digg.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dopplr.com</td>
<td>Travelistic.com</td>
<td>Facebook.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gowander.com</td>
<td>Travelpod.com</td>
<td>Flickr.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostelz.com</td>
<td>Tripadvisor.com</td>
<td>Myspace.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iGoUgo.com</td>
<td>Tripfilms.com</td>
<td>Twitter.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iTourist.com</td>
<td>Trustedplaces.com</td>
<td>Youtube.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lonelyplanet.com</td>
<td>Virtualtourist.com</td>
<td>IsAnyoneGoingTo.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Thorn Tree)</td>
<td>Wayn.com</td>
<td>Liftshare.com</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOURIST CREATED CONTENT AND DESTINATION BRANDING

UGC is the aggregation and leveraging of users’ contributions on the web. It is related to the digital transformation of cultural objects—text, sounds and images (Poster, 2005). There are several definitions and classifications of this content (Cook, 2008; Cooke & Buckley, 2008; Deshpande & Jadad, 2006; Lenhart & Fox, 2006; Stillman & McGrath, 2008; Vickery & Wunsch-Vincent, 2007; Wellman, 2007; World Tourism Organization, 2008). Cook (2008) defines UGC as a part of broader user contribution systems. User contribution systems “aggregate and leverage various types of user input in ways that are valuable to others” (Cook, 2008, p.62). These systems consist of various types of contributions: active contribution (aggregates content or stuff for sale) and a passive contribution (aggregates behavioral data or aggregates resources). Vickery and Wunsch-Vincent’s analysis of the participative Web provides a difference between UGC and user created content (UCC) and focuses on the creative element of the content generation. Tourist Created Content is the active and creative contributions of the tourists on the web (Munar, 2009). Many of the tools related to UGC (e.g. blogs, podcasts, wikis, etc) are used by tourism corporations and organizations to increase the interaction with their employees/members and the connectivity with suppliers and other business partners. However, the analysis of the business-to-business perspective lies beyond the aims of this study. The focus is on the participative end-user, the tourist and the impact of his/her contributions to destination branding.

The importance of the UGC can be seen in the fact that a number of companies, which intensively use Web 2.0 tools, are already among the top 10 most visited sites by US Internet users eBay (n.7 with 67.5 million visitors in July 2008), Amazon (n.8: 54,1 million), Wikimedia Foundation (n. 9: 52,2 million). Besides, Youtube, eBay and Wikipedia appear also as numbers 6, 8, 10 in the ranking of the top 10 brands, July 2008 (Nielsen, 2008). Data from firms which measure Internet traffic show high level of concentration on some of the most important UGC websites: MySpace having 64 % of the market share of the US (Hitwise, 2008a) YouTube accounted for 75% of all U.S. visits in May 2008 among a custom category of 63 online video websites (Hitwise, 2008). Facebook announced its 200 million members in March 2009 (Stone, 2009). UGC is a massive phenomenon, however not everybody is an active virtual contributor. There is a large territorial diversity of the use of Internet that is related to the unequal distribution of wealth, education and technological infrastructure of the countries of the world (Castells, 2001). Furthermore, other critical perspectives on UGC have been focusing on the lack of quality of the content as well as issues of identity theft (Stillman & McGrath, 2008; Keen, 2007; Poster, 2006; Aspan, 2008).

The numbers of TCC of some specific tourism sites examined in this study are also very large. TripAdvisor received more than 25 million visits during the month of July 2008 (Weisman, 2008), Wayn is a community site with 13 million members (The Times, 2009), Virtualtourist has more than 1.100.000 members over 1.700.000 reviews and 3.500.100 photos (Virtualtourists, 2009a). There is an intense competition among destinations (Kim and Fesenmaier, 2008). This development has been followed by an increased interest in place (Anholt 2003) and destination branding (Cai 2002; Konecnik and Gartner 2006; Pike, 2004; Murphy, Moscardo and Benckendorff 2007). Several authors have focused on the differences between product or service branding and the branding of a destination (Ooi
Destinations are more complex and diverse than specific tourism products. The creation of a destination brand has to address multiple groups of stakeholders, socio-cultural identities and take into consideration the intangibility and multifaceted features of a destination. Image and brand of a destination are two different concepts. However, the brand existence is dependent on the image formation of the destination (Cai 2002). Image “represents the sum of beliefs, attitudes, and impressions that a person or group has of an object” (Nadeau, Heslop, O’Reilly and Luk, 2007). The image of a destination is owned by tourists and it is permeated by the socio-cultural and economic changes that impact their sensitiveness. It is possible to differentiate between the organic evolution of the image, which is due to word-of-mouth and all types of information received about the destination and the induced evolution of the image that results from DMOs’ brand promotion (Gartner, 1986). Destinations compete through the images held in the minds of potential tourists (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999). However, DMOs do not have overall control on the specific attributes of the tourism experience. Therefore, their main effort is in brand awareness and image formation. It is this lack of ownership of the destination product itself that makes the taglines, slogans, logos and commercial campaigns the focus of the destination brand and represents ‘the formal elements of the brand’. Tourists can relate to the destination brand by participating in image formation and by adopting and using these formal elements in their different types of generated content on the web.

BRAND, IMAGE FORMATION AND TYPES OF TOURIST CREATED CONTENT

There are 3 main categories of content: narrative, visual and audio. Tourists can use the different type of content to refer to the destination brand. The written expression of the destination brand is the name of the destination combined with a word, a tagline or slogan, as in the following cases: Denmark – Feel Free, Greece – The True Experience, Amazing Thailand, South Africa – It’s Possible, Italy – Much More or Uniquely Singapore. In some cases the name of the brand is the same as the name of the DMO (e.g. Visit Sweden). This written expression of the brand can be used by the tourist according to different narrative genres (table 2). These genres can be placed on a continuum from the more descriptive and objectivistic narrative (the encyclopedic) to a more subjective and personal (the diary) (Munar, 2009). The fluidity of genres and of media is characteristic of TCC. The different contents can use hypertext at different levels, with links to other sites or documents available in the cyber world. This makes it very difficult to monitor and control all the possible ways in which the different formal elements of the brand may appear in TCC. Furthermore, depending of the system architecture of the site the tourist narrative contributions remain open to contributions by other users, for example some of the sites allow for users to grade how useful the information provided in the review was. The feature of openness and collaborative character of the content is embedded in the system (Munar, 2009). There is a very informal relation to copyrights or authorship, with an intensive use of pseudonyms and nicknames. Furthermore, TCC is about communication and personal expression and the content seems to be placed in a grey zone between ‘truth’ and personal imagination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tourist created content</th>
<th>Destination branding formal elements</th>
<th>Destination image formation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrative (encyclopedic, review, travel diary, blog)</td>
<td>Narrative identity: Slogans, taglines, brand name</td>
<td>Narrative text of the impressions, believes and attitudes on the destination experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual (photography and video)</td>
<td>Visual identity: Logo, advertising campaigns (photos or video).</td>
<td>Images of the destination experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio (narrative and/or musical)</td>
<td>Audio advertising campaigns (music or text)</td>
<td>Audio stories about the destination experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The encyclopedic genre is based on knowledge sharing with a form of peer-review or critical evaluation of the content (Munar, 2009). One example is Wikitravel “a project to create a free, complete, up to date and reliable worldwide travel guide” (Wikitravel 2007a). The encyclopedic type of TCC increases the amount of tourism information available with a focus on a traditional socio-geographical perspective. It uses the destination name, without the use of tags or slogans associated to it and also without relation to the visual characteristics of the brand such as logos. This genre provides the imagination of objectivity and neutrality and avoids any expressions of more commercial type such as slogans. For example, in this type of content Spain is expressed as “Spain” and not as “Smile you are in Spain” which is the slogan of the latest destination branding campaign of this country; Copenhagen is expressed as Copenhagen and not as “Wonderful Copenhagen” or the most recent brand of “C-Open-hagen”. The focus is on reliable and free-from-commercial-interests information on the destination.

This content is destination and not product oriented. The type of destination presented in this content is not an emotional one. Attributes of a psychological or emotional type which can be associated to the brand image are seldom.

The review genre is based on the critical evaluation of a tourism product or experience. A very popular site which mainly relies on this genre is TripAdvisor. This is a type of genre which has created a lot of concern among tourism suppliers. The main focus of this type of content is not the destination brand but brands of tourism ‘products’. This content has a commercial bias. There is a large majority of content used to review suppliers of hospitality, attractions, travel and transport products and services. Although the focus of the review genre is not on the destination as a whole but on specific tourism products, the composite nature of the tourism experience makes this type of TCC also very relevant for the overall image formation of the brand. In the classification the focus is on the geographical name and not on the narrative associated to the destination brand. Different destination brands were compared to the sample sites such as Trip Advisor, Virtual Tourist and IgoYgo. The results show that tourists do not use the brand name, the taglines, or other similar formal elements in their review content. At the same time, there are thousands of results when using the geographical name of the destination as the umbrella of different tourism products. For example, when searching “Copenhagen” in TripAdvisor, there is nothing that relates the information to the official brand, it appears a main title “visiting the city of Copenhagen” and then links to other reviews on accommodation, attractions, etc. In the case of Spain it is announced as “visiting Spain”; and the same for other destinations. Again, as in the previous case, the official brand name, tagline or slogans are missing. In the case of IgoYgo the word Italy has more than 2000 reviews linked and France receives over 1900 reviews, in both cases compared to the sample sites such as Trip Advisor, Virtual Tourist and IgoYgo. The results show that tourists do not use the brand name, the taglines, or other similar formal elements in their review content. At the same time, there are thousands of results when using the geographical name of the destination as the umbrella of different tourism products. For example, when searching “Copenhagen” in TripAdvisor, there is nothing that relates the information to the official brand, it appears a main title “visiting the city of Copenhagen” and then links to other reviews on accommodation, attractions, etc. In the case of Spain it is announced as “visiting Spain”; and the same for other destinations. Again, as in the previous case, the official brand name, tagline or slogans are missing. In the case of IgoYgo the word Italy has more than 2000 reviews linked and France receives over 1900 reviews, in both cases there are zero results when using the national brand “Rendez-vous en France” or “Italy – Much more”, the brand “Uniquely Singapore” receives zero while the geographical name has more than 600 reviews linked, “Amazing Thailand” has one specific review (a tourist that commented on the destination’s official website) while “Thailand” more than 1120.

The diary genre (or travel journal) relates to the narrative explanation of the personal experience of the travel. This genre is also very popular on the Web and its expression is mostly to be found in the form of blogs at the different sites. The formal elements of destination brands with their taglines and slogans are mostly missing in this type of content. For example, the new brand of Greece ‘Greece, the true experience’ does not provide any result in Travelersfortravelers or Gowander. However, in this type of content there is a strong focus on destination image formation. There is a large amount of narrative content related to the experience of the destination, including emotional and personal perceptions, beliefs and attitudes. A similar tendency to that of a much larger use of the geographical name and image formation and a minimum reference to the brand formal elements can be seen in the general blog. This type of content relates to individual opinions about specific issues (Ryu et al., 2009). It is a mix-genre which contains many elements related to the diary, but also can contain encyclopedic knowledge and review passages (Munar, 2009).

Through the examination of the sites, like for example Travelblog, it is possible to find quite many references to some of the formal narrative brand elements such as “Amazing Thailand”. However, these blogs are written by organizations and not by tourists and therefore not TCC.

The visual content can be mainly divided in photos and audiovisual content. It is a popular form of content in tourism sites. The visual expression can be classified according to genres (from reportage to music video) and appears combined with hypertext and other forms of expression by the
use of titles, descriptions attached to the images, tags on the photos, etc (Munar, 2009). Some of the most popular general sites for video and photo sharing are Flickr, Youtube or Travelistic. Many of the images on these sites have a ‘real life’ approach, without any or only a minimum of manipulation. This form of content is a very powerful contribution to destination image formation. However, some of these sites like Youtube are not tourism specific, and therefore the information provided about the destinations does not necessarily have a tourism focus. The main content and focus of these visual contributions is on the personal experience and not on the formal visual elements of the brand. It is possible for destination managers to upload visual content advertising the brand in many of these social network sites (e.g. Amazing Thailand in Travelistic or 100% pure New Zealand in Youtube). However, these corporative contributions do not qualify as TCC. The audio content is to be found in the form of podcasts and it has received a large burst of popularity thanks to the iPods and other mobile technologies. This content can be found with different combinations of multiple media. Audio content was seldom present in the sample of websites studied.

The examination of the websites and different destination brands show that tourists do not use the brands’ formal elements. At the same time, tourists are extremely active in destination image formation. The destinations brands’ taglines, slogans, logos, video or audio advertising are not any essential part of TCC. The extensive analysis of social network sites show that image formations provided by TCC are a large collage of digitalized personal expressions without any structured commercial goal. The tendency of focusing on the destination image and ignoring the destination brand formal elements can be a conscious decision from the tourist to appear independent from commercial interests. This could be a consequence of TCC embedment in Internet cultures with a strong anti-commercial background, such as the hacker culture or the open source movement (Castells, 2006). Another explanation could point towards the lack of reach of today’s destinations branding campaigns in relation to the TCC target group.

**DIGITALIZATION OF THE TOURISM EXPERIENCE**

Jafari’s tourism model (1987) identifies several components representing the different stages of the tourism experience: corporation, emancipation, animation, repatriation and incorporation. TCC takes place during the different stages of the tourism experience and have different type of impact on the destination brand. In the corporation component the tourist-to-be is in a search position and this stage corresponds to the pre-purchase and decision-making phases. Destination marketing campaigns are largely focused on pre-purchase stages. Therefore, there is a strong competition between official channels of information about the destinations that make intensive use of the formal elements of the brand and the social networks of tourist-to-tourist communication and their focus on multilateral image formation. The destination brand tries to induce the person to choose a specific destination among all others (Gartner, 1986). It enhances recognition and awareness among the huge amount of information available. To achieve this, traditional destination branding has made use of marketing campaigns while depending heavily on the word-of-mouth and the organic image of the destination. The introduction of the web has expanded these strategies to include active websites with a locus of control on destination management organizations (DMO) and extensive web marketing tools. The web 2.0 and specifically TCC have enlarged the possible channels of communication with the consumer base in tourism generating regions. However, this new channel of communication presents several challenges to DMOs. TCC acts like the digitalization of the word-of-mouth mechanisms that have been so powerful in shaping tourism demand and it expands the word-of-mouth through a global distribution system of information. The locus of control of communication is no longer on a business-to-customer basis but largely on a customer-to-customer. The Nielsen Global Online Consumer Survey (2009) of over 25,000 online consumers from 50 countries found out that opinions posted by consumers online are among the most trusted forms of advertising globally.

Consumers (tourist-to-be) on this first stage do not upload texts or videos of the tourist destination. At this stage the tourism consumer is on a search mode, a self-reflecting ‘watcher’ of destinations rather than an active uploader of destination images. TCC during corporation includes blogs and other types of content (audio and/or visual podcasts) that refer to the wish and motivation for traveling and the possibilities or impossibilities of doing so. The tourist-to-be is looking for information and enriching his/her image of the destination at this stage. TCC works as an important complement on
the knowledge and opinions that the tourist-to-be has on a specific destination. Therefore the TCC on
destinations, provide by tourists, which already have visited the destination, can be expected to have
the largest impact at this stage by affecting other users’ motivation for travel and purchase choices.

Emancipation is the second component of the model. It refers to the physical travel to the
tourist destination as well as the mental travel, the entering into touristhood. The TCC in this stage
corresponds to the one produced and uploaded during the physical travel to the destination (Munar,
2009). In destination branding is difficult to find a large focus on transportation sites. Usually,
destination brands as the ones examined in this study, focus on the cultural, social and natural features
of the destination. Transportation sites are considered as facilitators of the travel but still standardized
‘international places’ without much local flavor. The repatriation is, due to its focus on transport and
the movement in space, very similar to the emancipation component, however it is very different in its
psychological perspective. During repatriation tourists create and share on the Web content that
indicates their satisfaction or disappointment with the destination experience. Their image of the
destination as well as the brand perception has been transformed by the empirical experience of the
destination with all its features and products, and a new type of image can be expected to take form in
the tourist’s mind. At this stage TCC can reflect a more complete image of the destination.

The animation component corresponds to the “tourist doing tourism in his animated world”
(Jafari, 1987, p.151) and in spatial terms relates to staying at the tourism destination. The most
important content at this stage is the visual one. The tourist can write stories about the destination back
home, but they can only make images of the destination while being there. Visual TCC at this stage
provides a valuable insight in the ways tourists contribute to image formation. TCC produced at this
stage relates to the core of the tourism industry offering; for example reviews of attractions,
accommodations or other type of services at the destination. Content created during this stage shows
the on-going perception of the trip and the narrative texts and the visual content are a combination of
published travel diaries and virtual postcards. The content displayed aims to give an impression of
‘reality’ or ‘authenticity’ compared to the ‘fake’ or ‘inauthentic’ commercial version of the destination.
However, this “reality” of TCC is embedded in Internet cultures and dependent of the limitations of site
architecture, the personal gaze and cultural background of the author.

Destination branding is about focus, coherence, establishment of attributes and image
formation. However, TCC at the animation stage shows the lack of control that DMOs have on their
own tourist destination product. A tourist with a combined mobile and photo/video phone can show
any detail of a destination to the rest of the world, 24 hours a day. TCC can be considered a type of
global late-modern risk. Global risks are characterized by being de-localised, incalculable and non-
compensable (Beck, 2006). TCC is thanks to the web de-localised, because its impact is not limited to a
specific geographical space. It is incalculable, because it is difficult to measure what the impact of a
negative video or a terrible review on a destination may be and non-compensable because a scientific
control of all the dangers and consequences of TCC does not seem possible. Furthermore, TCC shows
how tourists are able to send instant real-life information about any problem, deception or situation
experienced at the destination. This situation is the realization of a ‘surveillance society’ where the ‘big
brother’ is no longer the state or any authoritarian bureaucracy but thousands of web empowered
tourism consumers. The perception of risk is also increased by the impossibility of knowing which of
these billions of bits of information may end having a viral impact and reach thousands of other
consumers, and which ones will just get lost in the massive amount of virtual information.

Finally, a very relevant phase in TCC is the incorporation phase. At this stage the tourist
returns to his/her place of residence and daily life activities. This phase corresponds in many cases to
the post-purchase and post-experience phase, in which tourists upload texts presenting their opinions
and memories of the travel (Munar, 2009). Many of the sites studied show a very high level of activity
at this stage, making the initiatives and strategies related to the post-purchase extremely important for
tourism businesses or DMOs. By analyzing the content posted on the sites it is not possible to verify
from which location has the tourists been creating and uploading the content. However, the use verbs in
past tenses (we were, we travelled to, etc) and in temporal indications (last week, last month, etc) in the
narrative contributions points towards the importance of the post-experience for destination branding
and TCC.
RETHINKING DESTINATION BRANDING

DMOs face the challenge of TCC using 3 different strategies: mimetic, advertising (figure 1) and analytic (figure 2). The first type of strategy is mimetic. In this strategy DMOs copy the style and e-culture of social network sites in their own website. The organization pursues this strategy by opening its official website to TCC and enhancing the creation, uploading and downloading of content by tourists. It is a type of conservative strategy characterized by keeping the main locus of control of web content on the organization. Nevertheless, this option shows a narrow opening to contribution from users. This strategy pursues the establishment of a ‘fake’ social network, the main reason still being the official promotion of the destination and not the user-to-user communication. Some examples of these strategies are DMOs’ websites that invite users to write about their destination experiences or to upload/download photos or videos about their travels.

Figure 1
Mimetic and Marketing Strategic model of destination branding and TCC

There are many different initiatives related to this type of strategy, for example the ‘Videoblog for Visit Britain’ initiative, ‘Your Words’ in the site of New Zealand’s or ‘Your Copenhagen’ in Wonderful Copenhagen. Some other tools allow tourists to share official brand content with their social networks by exporting the information to Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, etc. This type of strategy targets tourists in the animation, repatriation and incorporation components; tourist that are experiencing or have experienced the destination, but has a poor focus on the corporation component. This strategy is an easy and a not very costly way to participate in Web 2.0. It allows DMOs to keep control on the TCC displayed, because it is possible to remove unwanted or inappropriate content. However, it has several weaknesses. A corporate site representing a brand has a very different logic from social network sites that provide value managing user contributions and that have an e-culture based on unclear rules of ownership and openness of content. This strategy achieves some level of participation by tourists but do not benefit from the massive volume of contributions that are taken place in the most popular social network sites such as TripAdvisor, IgoYgo, Youtube, Facebook, etc.

The second strategy, the advertising strategy, follows traditional and conservative ways of dealing with social network sites and TCC. This strategy understands the new sites as advertising platforms. It uses the banners and other possibilities of advertising of the sites. DMOs include ads of their new campaigns in those social network sites that allow it, for example: Dopplr, Wayn, Facebook, etc. Another example is the increased use of ads related to microblogging in Twitter, with 350 DMOs active on that site in June 2009 (Go Sell Tell, 2009). Furthermore, DMOs microblogging is still mostly based on a one-way communication from the DMO (Hubar, 2009). This strategy increases the social media presence of DMOs and their brands. However, it does not benefit from the pool of information provided by TCC, it only re-directs the ads to those sites with the largest traffic of users or increases the volume of DMOs information on those sites.

The analytic strategy has two main dimensions: prevention and knowledge. Through prevention DMOs try to understand how TCC develops in relation to their brands and then prevent crises or take action to minimize damage or improve marketing. This dimension does not need very advanced IT systems or interdisciplinary knowledge, it is applied by using consultancy firms or
webmasters to search and monitor how social network sites portray the destination and report back to the DMOs’ departments. An example of this is the task that the firm GoSellTell provides DMOs like ‘Travel Portland’ in relation to the developments in Twitter (GoSellTell, 2009). The second dimension, knowledge is seldom. It is highly demanding and implies investments in IT development, training and a large innovation effort from an organizational perspective. Nevertheless, this strategy allows DMOs to transform massive and chaotic amounts of TCC into strategic knowledge. It does so by using the possibilities of the semantic web and artificial intelligence tools. The analytic strategy has the opposite logic to that of the mimetic or advertising strategies. It does not aim to ‘fake’ social network sites on corporation sites or to follow traditional commercial campaigns. It is based on the massive amount of TCC that is already available through the web, it is extremely flexible because it follows the tourists there where they contribute. Furthermore, it considers all the different stages of the tourism experience from corporation to incorporation. It does so by using ICT to examine, select, classify, monitor and evaluate TCC. The previous analysis showed how TCC could be considered to be a new type of global risk for the management of destination branding. None of the strategies can totally manage this type of risk. However, the analytic strategy that is based on monitoring and trend analysis is a helping tool in forecasting and therefore can be expected to be more useful in risk analysis.

Figure 2
Analytic Strategic Model of Destination Branding and TCC

An example of this strategy is the case of the project ‘Travel 2.0 promotion in Asia and Pacific’ developed by the Scandinavian Tourism Board, Asia-Pacific (STB). The project is based on two main tools; the search engine and the knowledge exchange database. The search engine allows for the examination, selection and ranking of the digital creative content about Scandinavia of Asian tourists. The knowledge exchange database stores, classifies and structures the content. It provides administrators and partners of the project access to historical data of the content, allows the examination of tourism trends and patterns through time, provides statistical and graphical representations of TCC and allows DMO sites to expose selected content. The development of these tools demands a high level of interdisciplinary skills. In this case the semantic classifications and segmentations have been made by tourism researchers, the functionality of the database and the dialogue among 4 different DMOs by STB managers, software and search specifications by IT researchers and translations by local managers in Asia. All those tasks have been developed through a constant dialogue among the different disciplines and combining practical and theoretical knowledge. For example, the project allows tourism managers to monitor the trends in the perception of Japanese or Korean tourists on a destination like Oslo, to identify increases or decreases of interest in specific attractions or types of tourism (e.g. nature tourism or spa-wellness tourism), to select TCC with positive stories about the destination as part of their branding campaigns or to examine negative TCC for quality management.

Analytic strategy in relation to TCC means to see tourist contributions on the web as a pool of knowledge and presents an enormous potential as an active tool to help DMO understand image formation of their destinations’ brands. However, this demands the enhancement of skills and competences of those responsible of destination branding. Furthermore, there may be a problem with a type of destination branding tailored mainly by the wish and wants of the tourists as expressed through their TCC. The danger is that the host community and other local stakeholders may loose influence on
the destination brand. The local community is not an active participant of TCC. The analytic strategy focuses on tourists’ wishes and behavior, other mechanisms will have to ensure participation of local communities in these processes. Without compensating analytics with participation, the brand may turn being an international success and a local catastrophe.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to widen the knowledge on the relationship between TCC and destination branding and to contribute to a better understanding of the strategies that DMOs use in relation to TCC. This explorative study relied in qualitative research methods, content analysis and field research. Although there is an enormous amount of data available on the Web, the paper has focused on the examination of a sample of relevant social network sites, a majority with a clear tourism focus. The findings show that it is possible to classify the formal elements of the destination brand and image formation in relation to the different genres and types of TCC. The analysis of the use of destination brands in TCC shows that tourists do not incorporate the formal elements of the brands in their story-telling and experience sharing about destinations. Elements such as taglines, slogans or logos are nearly non-existing as part of TCC. However, tourists are extremely active in destination image formation through their narrative, visual and audio contributions. These results point towards the embedment of user contribution systems and TCC in Internet cultures with a strong anti-commercial background, such as the hacker culture or the open source movement (Castells, 2006).

The paper explains the different ways in which tourists can relate to destination branding when producing and uploading TCC during their tourism experience. The analysis based on the tourism model (Jafari, 1987) shows that traditionally destination management organizations have focused on the incorporation stage. However, at this stage tourists are more ‘watchers’ than doers. It is during this first stage when TCC developed by other tourists can be expected to have the largest impact. The animation, repatriation and incorporation components are those stages that show the highest activity of TCC in destination image formation. TCC at the animation stage shows the lack of control that DMOs have on the tourist destination product. Mobile and audiovisual technology combined with Web 2.0 turns TCC into a new type of global late-modern risk that is characterized by being de-localised, incalculable and non-compensable. Furthermore, TCC shows how tourists are active contributors to a new version of the ‘surveillance society’ where the ‘big brother’ is thousands of web empowered tourism consumers.

The study presented three different strategies used by DMO in relation to TCC and destination branding. The three strategies are the mimetic, the advertising and the analytic. The mimetic strategy is conservative and its main instrument is the introduction of Web 2.0 tools which allow for the inclusion of TCC in the website of the DMO. This strategy provides a ‘fake’ imitation of the logic of social network sites without changing the locus of control which still remains in the organization and not in the users. It does not benefit from the amount of TCC available on the web. The advertising strategy focuses on the corporation component and enters social network sites by placing traditional or new forms of ads. It only benefits from TCC as a platform for increased awareness. The analytic strategy is a very demanding strategic proposal based on the intensive use of IT. This strategy has two dimensions, the first one focusing on monitoring and prevention and the second one focusing on knowledge. The latest allows DMO to transform massive amounts of TCC into strategic knowledge by using the possibilities of the semantic web and artificial intelligence tools. The analysis of the project ‘Travel 2.0 promotion in Asia and Pacific’ shows the strengths of this strategy but also indicates some of the possible dangers such as lack of community involvement.

The paper shows that there is a schism between traditional destination branding and the image formation enhanced by TCC. Tourists do not use the formal elements of the destination brands. It is possible to question the future of capacity of destination branding to tailor and frame the image of the destination if TCC wins in intensity and impact capacity. This exploratory study is a call for further research on a topic that is still highly unexplored. Further analysis should focus on several main issues: the possible combinations of different strategic agendas for the use of TCC in destination branding, the analysis of TCC and risk, the impact of these developments in the involvement of local communities and the challenges of the analytic model for traditional DMOs management.
REFERENCES


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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the views that tourists in China have about the country and its people, the country as a destination and the Olympic Games. Responses were gathered during the 2008 Olympic Summer Games in Beijing, China. The results show that tourists perceive China positively in terms of the country and people competencies and the character of the people. China is less positively viewed in terms of country character. As a destination, China is seen positively for its built environment but less positively for its natural environment. The Olympic Games image is characterized by positive experiential and logistical beliefs while the beliefs about security are less positive. There is support for the assertion that the three images are important and related through the evaluations of these images. Further, the evaluation of China as a destination intervenes on the relationship of the country image evaluation to the evaluation of the Olympic Games.

Keywords: Destination image, country image, mega-event image, Olympic Games

INTRODUCTION

One of the benefits of hosting mega-events is that they attract tourists to the city, region or country that is hosting the mega-event. These benefits include both short-term (e.g., spending, attendance at the event) and long-term (i.e., potential return visits, brand) advantages for the host destination. This research focuses on the longer-term impacts of hosting a mega-event by empirically examining tourist views of the host country during a mega-event. Specifically, we explore the multi-sport Summer Olympic Games of 2008 that were held in Beijing China with the aim to examine the influence of a mega-event on tourist perceptions of the host country, its people and the Olympic Games.

A common approach to assessing tourist perceptions of destinations is place image theory. Place images are used to understand the complex reality of geographic locations such as countries, cities, towns, etc. These images are useful in the tourism context where tourism marketers promote, develop and communicate images to attract tourists and where people, as potential tourists, use these images to make decisions about their where to travel (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Goodrich, 1978; Hunt, 1975; Pike & Ryan, 2004; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). Importantly, these destination (or place) images include the beliefs, feelings and impressions associated with a place, and that are developed in people’s minds in a variety of ways (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). The unit of analysis in place image research is typically the country, although a place can certainly refer to a city or region as well. This paper reports on the image of the Olympic Games host at the country level, which we argue is an appropriate level of analysis given that people often refer to country as the host of the mega-events, and that it is most often countries who fund, organize and bid for mega-events. Thus, in an effort to improve our understanding of the role of mega-events in developing images for a country, this paper explores the 2008 Olympic Summer Games host country by examining the influence of the Games on the image of China (its people, country, products and as a destination).
PLACE IMAGE

Research on the topic of place image has evolved from two literature roots: destination images are frequently examined in tourism studies while place images have been investigated in marketing studies exploring the relationship of place images with product selection decisions. To illustrate, the development of the country–of-origin or the product-country image field in marketing has examined the relationship of product and country images on evaluations (Nebenzahl, Jaffe & Lambert, 1997). Other research has demonstrated that the image of the country is a salient consideration in the destination decision-making process (Nadeau et al., 2008). Intuitively, therefore, the host country image is an important aspect of the destination evaluation.

In order to understand place image, it is important to realize that images summarize, standardize, and generalize information from many sources and about many aspects of the image object. That is, an image is created in the mind of an individual from many sources and experiences, some of which can be managed or leveraged by a tourism marketer. The body of literature that explores place image in the tourism context, via empirical assessments of destination image, normally utilizes an attitudinal approach that includes beliefs, evaluative feelings, and behavioral intentions about the destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Like general consumers, potential tourists use images to simplify the complex destination choices that they face by managing information and applying this information to direct their behavior (Kotler & Gertner, 2002). Thus, attitudes play an important role in how images impact consumer behavior, whereby an attitude towards some object is a summary of the many captured psychological influences (Ajzen, 2001). Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) outline how attitudes are built via three aspects – cognition (or beliefs held), affect (emotions or evaluations), and conation (intent to behave) – about image of interest.

While the measurement of place images in the tourism literature has differed, a common thread is a construct multidimensionality that lends itself to an attitudinal framework. This multidimensional approach conceptualizes beliefs about the natural and built environments, as well as evaluations and intentions to visit the destination. For example, the natural environment beliefs construct has included measures about the scenery and climate (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993) and measures about the built environment have included beliefs about quality of shopping, nightlife and sport facilities (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). Further, evaluation measures have included an overall assessment of the destination (Reilly, 1990), while the travel intention measures have included the destination selection decision (Chon, 1990; Foster & Jones, 2000) and the willingness to recommend the place to others (Chon, 1991).

Marketing research on place images typically explores the relationship of place images to product decisions. Building from early uni-dimensional studies of country image (Erickson, Johansson & Chao, 1984; Han, 1988), the field now takes a multidimensional approach that encompasses a context broader than focusing solely on products that includes an attitudinal framework (Heslop et al., 2004, Laroche et al., 2005; Orbaiz & Papadopoulos, 2003). Conceptually, the belief dimensions of product-country image include people character (e.g., likeability, friendliness), country character (e.g., wealth, role in world politics), people competencies (e.g., work ethic, industriousness), and country competencies (e.g., technology level, skill level of workers) (Heslop et al., 2004).

MEGA-EVENTS AND THE SUMMER OLYMPIC GAMES

Mega-events have the ability to reach multiple mass markets, to attain significant resources through sponsorship and media rights, and attract considerable interest from outside the region in which they take place. Previous research has assessed their impact on business and society (Dolles & Söderman, 2008) and empirically examined their reach via sponsorship and intent-to-purchase longitudinally (O’Reilly et al., 2008). Examples of these large global properties which fit the definition of a mega-event include the Olympic Games, the Grey Cup, the FIFA World Cup, the Master’s Golf Tournament, the Ryder Cup, the Super Bowl, the World’s Fair, Mardi Gras, Wimbledon, the Running of the Bulls (Pamplona) and the Tour de France, all of which are argued to play important roles in their local economies and act as central elements of the media-based culture (Wise & Miles, 1997).
When considering a mega-event, like the Summer Olympic Games, tourism marketing begins on the basis that the mega-event provides the host country with an opportunity to reinforce or change the attitudes held by the rest of the world. Recent research emphasizes the economic, social and marketing benefit of mega-events (Dolles & Söderman, 2008; O'Reilly et al., 2008). The focus of this research is an unmatched global property in terms of interest generated, the 2008 Summer Olympic Games, which attracted approximately 10,000 athletes from over 200 countries, with an estimated television audience of more than 4.7 billion people (Nielsen, 2008). “The Games” are a mega-event that involves a two-week multi-sport athletic competition that has taken place every 4 years since 1896 in most of the world’s great cities, including London, Paris, Berlin, Tokyo, and most recently Beijing. The rights holder of the Games is the International Olympic Committee (IOC) who accepts bids (one bid per country) for the Games and awards the Games to a single city approximately 7 years before the Games are scheduled. As such, the Games are rarely held in the same location more than once, thus providing opportunities for cities to bid for the event and build programming around it to promote their country and enhance the related images. The Games were held in a number of venues, mostly around the capital city of Beijing; however there were satellite facilities throughout the China, including Hong Kong.

The IOC (2001, 2002) is very concerned about the image and the desired Olympic values (e.g., peace, festive, cultural exchange, fair play, equality, tradition, honour, etc.), and has demonstrated such in recent years with its efforts in the areas of exclusivity, environment, brand protection, size reduction, new rules for bid cities, etc. (IOC, 1999). Similarly, international perceptions of the host country are important to both the IOC and the host in terms of a variety of important considerations including international relations, revenue generation, tourism, product purchasing, export/import issues and investing decisions. Given the interests of governments, the views of the host country’s citizens are also of considerable interest, where there are both positives (image, infrastructure, legacy, etc.) and negatives (opportunity cost, disruption, etc.) of hosting the Games. The IOC has also established a resilient image that includes the Olympic rings, National Olympic Committee logos, and other related symbols that are recognized around the world (Seguin & O’Reilly, 2008). Previous research (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 1993) has shown that the image of the host country can be altered through hosting the Olympic Games, when they found that hosting the 1988 Olympic Games positively influenced beliefs of South Korea and willingness to buy their products.

A primary motivator for China to host the Olympic Games was the enhancement of its international image (Goodspeed, 2008). In this regard, China has acted to control media stories about the country (Bodeen, 2008; Goodspeed, 2008; Foss & Walkosz, 2008; Fram, 2008; Thomson, 2008). A second important point is that China is a developing country. From an external perspective, China’s status as a developing country suggests that its image would be similar to other developing countries where a poor image is associated with their products and themselves (Ahmed & d’Astous 1993; Chao 1993; Cordell, 1992; Kaynak, Kucukemiroglu & Hyder, 2000; Mohamad, Honeycutt & Tyebkhan, 2000; Tse & Gorn, 1992). Further, previous research illustrates that consumers and retail buyers hold a preference for developed countries and their products (Heslop et al., 2004). Specific to China’s image, other studies have confirmed this general trend and show that consumers do hold a poor image of products from China (Brunner, Flascher & Lou, 1993). Further, there has been negative publicity for China with regards to its product quality and safety (Rennie, 2008). Negative publicity has also occurred in Western media criticizing China’s human rights record, in particular; this coverage intensified as the Olympic Games approached (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

HYPOTHESES

The preceding discussion has identified the theoretical framework for the current study. Theory about attitudes and images provides the basis for this research. These areas help us to understand the relationship around the evaluative dimension of images when hosting a mega-event, such as, the 2008 Olympic Games in China. Although some country image beliefs have been found related to specific dimensions of tourism destination image (Nadeau et al., 2008), it is expected that evaluations will be the main point of relatedness among these images. Evaluations for each image involve a cognitive process enabling the integration of additional information provided by other
images. The hypotheses are graphically illustrated in Figure 1. The examination at the evaluation dimension of the three images is an opportunity to explore the relationships at an equivalent level.

**Figure 1**
Framework for Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1 (H1): The evaluation of the country and people image is positively related to the evaluation of China as a destination.
Hypothesis 2 (H2): The evaluation of the country and people image is positively related to the evaluation of the Olympic Games.
Hypothesis 3 (H3): The evaluation of China as a destination is positively related to the evaluation of the Olympic Games.
Hypothesis 4 (H4): The evaluation of China as a destination intervenes on the relationship between the evaluations of country and people and the Olympic Games.

**METHODOLOGY**

The researchers collected data to test the study’s hypotheses using image measures based on a previous study of country and destination images (Nadeau et al., 2008) and with measures from the literature reviewed above. The questionnaire contained sections to measure attitudes towards China as a destination (22 measures), the country and people of China (33 measures), and the Olympic Games as a destination (26 measures). All image measure responses were made on a 5-point scale (1 being low/poor, 5 being high/good). Demographic questions were also asked to garner information about the respondent’s gender, age and level of education. The sample was gathered during the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. Street- and mall-intercept techniques were employed as tourists were randomly approached in busy public areas. In exchange for their time, respondents received a small token of appreciation. The researchers collected a total sample size of 288. This sample is characterized as 51.4% males with an average age of 21-30 years old. The sample represents those with relatively high levels of education as 39.6% of respondents hold a university degree and 33.9% hold a graduate degree.
RESULTS

Developing countries often have negative or less positive images as a destination (Kale and Weir 1986) or as places of production (Ahmed & d’Astous 1993; Chao 1993; Cordell, 1992; Kaynak, Kucukemiroglu & Hyder, 2000; Mohamad, Honeycutt & Tyebkhan, 2000; Tse & Gorn, 1992) when compared to developed countries. The preference for developed countries is reflected in some of the descriptive results of country image presented in Table 1. For instance, the character of the country achieved less positive mean scores than other dimensions of their country image. Indeed, two items representing the country character construct were below the scale midpoint of 3 (rights and freedoms=2.22, environmental/pollution controls=2.21). These items seem to reflect the public criticisms China experienced around the Olympic Games on these issues (e.g. Human Rights Watch, 2007). However, China was also viewed very positively as the people character and the country and people competencies measurement items achieve relatively strong ratings indicating the people are well liked and are considered to be well skilled and hard working. In addition, the evaluations of China’s image are generally positive. However, the alignment with one’s own country is one item that is below the scale midpoint.

The table also presents the Cronbach’s Alpha test of reliability for each construct. The test scores are all generally in the acceptable range of greater than .7 with one exception. The evaluations of people and country, achieved a relatively low Cronbach’s Alpha value of .685. The construct receives a much higher Cronbach’s Alpha value of .795 when one item is dropped (i.e. appealing culture). Therefore, the item was dropped from further analysis and not included in a summary variable based on average responses to these items representing the construct. The relatively low Cronbach’s Alpha value of .696 for the country and people competencies construct is improved to .780 by dropping the education level item from further analysis.

Using attitude theory as a guide for organizing the constructs, a linear regression demonstrates that the three aggregate belief constructs of people character, country character and country and people competencies are significantly related to the evaluation of China’s country image (adj.$R^2=0.487$, $F=76.6$, sig.=.000). At the individual construct level, people character (std.beta=.392, sig.=.000) and country character (std.beta=.434, sig.=.000) are found to be related to the country image evaluation while the competencies of the country and people (std.beta=.021, sig.=.745) was found to be not related to the evaluation construct. Therefore, the relatively weak image dimension of country character for China does seem to be harming the country’s overall image in this case. Further, the evaluation of country’s image is related to the linkages respondents would like to see between China and their home country (adj.$R^2=.300$, $F=76.6$, sig.=.000, std.beta=.547, sig.=.000).

A similar finding is discovered with China’s destination image where one belief construct is viewed more positively than the other. Table 2 presents the mean scores for the destination image items. The table is organized by relevant tourism destination image constructs and shows the Cronbach’s Alpha values attained by each construct in parentheses. The mean scores for the belief constructs show overall that the built environment of China is more positively viewed than the natural environment. The natural environment has one item with a mean score below the scale midpoint of 3 (climate=2.82) while the build environment had three items achieve ratings over 4 (culturally interesting=4.52, tourist attractions=4.15, shopping facilities=4.06). The relatively low Cronbach’s Alpha value of .697 for the destination evaluation construct may be improved dramatically to .848 by dropping one item (i.e. memorability of experience). Therefore, this item was dropped from the summary construct in further testing. A linear regression analysis testing the attitude theory base of cognition leading to evaluations and intentions demonstrated support (adj.$R^2=0.549$, $F=148.2$, sig.=.000). Both the natural environment beliefs (std.beta=.331, sig.=.000) and the built environment beliefs (std.beta=.483, sig.=.000) constructs were shown to be related to the evaluations of China as a destination. These results show that the built environment is more important to the evaluation as indicated by the higher standardized beta coefficient. However, both environmental belief sets are important with strong relationships to the evaluation of China. Further, the destination evaluation construct was found to be related to respondents’ travel intentions (adj.$R^2=.639$, $F=468.4$, sig.=.000, std.beta=.800, sig.=.000). Therefore, both belief sets are found to be ultimately related to travel intentions about China.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale (1=low/poor, 5=high/good)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People Character of China (.906)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likeability</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fascinating people</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendliness</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>3.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courteous</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Character (.839)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role in world politics</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political stability</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealth</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights and freedoms</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enviro/pollution controls</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>2.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country and People Competencies (.696)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industriousness</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Ethic</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology level</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avail. skilled workers</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stability of economy</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>3.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers skill level</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluations of People and Country (.685)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appealing culture</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy being with</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall rate</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of China</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rating compared to others</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alignment with own country</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desired Links (.779)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourists to China</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>3.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitors from China</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>3.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exports to China</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political/Economic ties</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imports from China</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration from China</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The country as a destination, the people and the country itself provide the context for the Olympic Games. However, the mega-event itself has a unique image and the attributes of this image are presented in Table 3. Attribute based image research on mega-events or, more specifically, the Olympic Games, are limited (Walliser, 2003). Therefore, a more exploratory approach to the constructs has been embraced for this portion of the study and the items are organized by the results of a factor analysis. The table provides the Eigen value for each factor in parentheses as well as the loadings for each item. This approach yields 5 factors with Eigen values over 1 and these factors reflect the underlying theoretical framework of attitudes and its three components (i.e. cognitive, affect and conative). While the value for money item has a low loading with the evaluation factor, is included here to present the mean score in the empirically and theoretically best fitting factor. Further, the construct achieves a Cronbach’s Alpha value of .886 when the item is included indicating that the item contributes to the reflection of the underlying evaluation construct.

Table 2
Mean Responses for Destination Image Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale (1=low/poor, 5=high/good)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural Environment of China (.764)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractive scenery</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>3.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of activities</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peaceful/quiet</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilderness</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>2.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built Environment Beliefs (.858)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally interesting</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist attractions</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping facilities</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>4.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nightlife/entertainment</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of restaurants</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of service</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of finding interesting places</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport facilities</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of getting around</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluations of Destination (.697)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorability of experience</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>4.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Originality of experience</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>4.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proud to visit</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>4.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value for money</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall rating</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall satisfaction</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative to expectations</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rating compared to others</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of destination</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Intentions (.927)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like to visit again</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to recommend</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to return</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention to visit again</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>3.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to extend stay</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are three belief sets with the experiential beliefs achieving the highest mean scores followed by logistics beliefs and security beliefs. A linear regression of these belief sets on the evaluation of the Olympic Games’ image shows overall support for the attitudinal framework (adj.R²=.542, F=104.6, sig.=.000). Among the three belief constructs, experiential (std.beta=.497, sig.=.000) and logistics (std.beta=.257, sig.=.000) beliefs are significantly related to evaluations while there is no support for the relationship with the security beliefs construct (std.beta=.082, sig.=.106). Further, the evaluation of the Olympic Games’ image was found to be related to respondents’ intentions about engaging in the event (adj.R²=.349, F=147.1, sig.=.000, std.beta=.592, sig.=.000). Therefore, despite less positive perceptions about security issues with the Games, intentions to engage in the event are ultimately driven by beliefs about the experience and logistical issues.

Table 3
Mean Responses for Olympic Games Image Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale (1=low/poor, 5=high/good)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiential Beliefs (2.41)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorability</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>.567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Originality of experience</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>.777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally interesting</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>.772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractive facilities</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>.562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of activities</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>.718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment/nightlife</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>.604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistics Beliefs (1.23)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall satisfaction</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>.546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of finding something of interest</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>.569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of service</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>.532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of getting around</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>.735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of attending</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>.653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security Beliefs (1.10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>.736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the family</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>.707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peaceful</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>.798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation (10.58)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rating compared to other events</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>.699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractive</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>.767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall rating</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>.727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likeability</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>.693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proud to visit</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>.503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worthy</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>.790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value for money</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>.336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentions (1.46)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to watch on TV</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>.727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to recommend to friends</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>.796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to read about</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>.802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to travel</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>.641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the Olympic Games</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>.620</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The descriptive statistics provide the views of respondents for China and its people, for the country as a destination, and for the Olympic Games. However, the hypothesis testing is focused on understanding the relationship of these images at the evaluation level. For hypothesis testing, the summary measures of the constructs, calculated by creating an average score among those items that
reflect the evaluations of each image, are used to assess the relationships. The results of the hypotheses
tests using linear regression are presented in table 4. The results demonstrate support for the four
hypotheses. There is little concern about multicollinearity of the data as the VIF statistics are all under
the value of 10 that normally indicates a problem (Stevens, 1992).

Therefore, there is support to show direct relationships between the country image evaluation
and the image evaluations of China as a destination (H1) and of the Olympic Games (H2). However,
the support for the relationship between tourism destination evaluation and the evaluation of the
Olympic Games’ image (H3) suggests that an alternative understanding of the images may exist.
Support for the intervening nature of the evaluation of tourism destination image on the relationship
between the evaluation of the host country image and of the Olympic Games itself (H4) indicates that
an alternative, more holistic understanding of these relationships is required. Therefore, all three
images appear to be important to assess the impact of hosting mega-events. It is particularly
noteworthy that the relationship between country image evaluation and the Olympic Games evaluation
becomes insignificant under the holistic testing condition. This suggests that the influence of country
image on the Olympic Games’ image works through the destination image. While country image
remains important to the evaluation of the mega-event, it provides the context for the image of the
destination. This interpretation is consistent to previous research that found country image beliefs
informed the beliefs and evaluation of the destination image (Nadeau et al., 2008).

Table 4
Hypothesis Testing Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model for Hypothesis 1: Country Image Evaluation – Tourism Destination Image Evaluation</th>
<th>Adj. R-Square</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig. of F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CIEval-TDIEval</td>
<td>.524</td>
<td>.416</td>
<td>282.5</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Std. Beta Coeff.</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig. of t</th>
<th>Collinearity (VIF)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CIEval-TDIEval</td>
<td>.724</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>16.81</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model for Hypothesis 2: Country Image Evaluation – Olympic Games Image Evaluation</th>
<th>Adj. R-Square</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig. of F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CIEval-OGEval</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>.578</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>.000</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Std. Beta Coeff.</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig. of t</th>
<th>Collinearity (VIF)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CIEval-OGEval</td>
<td>.335</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model for Hypothesis 3: Tourism Destination Image Evaluation – Olympic Games Image Evaluation</th>
<th>Adj. R-Square</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig. of F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TDIEval-OGEval</td>
<td>.198</td>
<td>.547</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Std. Beta Coeff.</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig. of t</th>
<th>Collinearity (VIF)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TDIEval-OGEval</td>
<td>.449</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td>8.114</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CIEval-OGEval</td>
<td>.183</td>
<td>.551</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Std. Beta Coeff.</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig. of t</th>
<th>Collinearity (VIF)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CIEval-OGEval</td>
<td>.425</td>
<td>.085</td>
<td>5.101</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>2.105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| CIEval-OGEval                     | .014             | .069       | .168 | .867      | 2.105               |

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CONCLUSIONS

The findings reported on in this study have several practical implications derived from the images of the country, the destination and the Olympic Games. First, the country image of China among tourists is based upon the competencies of the country and its people as well as the character of its people. This multi-dimensional approach to country image is reflective of previous research in the area (Heslop et al., 2004; Laroche et al., 2005). The perceived character about the country was seen as less positive than the other country image dimensions. However, this is not detrimental to China because the country character dimension was not seen to be an important determinant of China’s image. Therefore, communications about China need not include reference to country character issues and should convey its strengths, building upon the character of the people (e.g. friendliness, helpful, courteous) and the country’s competencies (e.g. industriousness, work ethic, technology). Character of the people and the country and people competencies are the important dimensions that seem to influence country image evaluations.

Second, the destination image of China contains two dimensions: the natural and the built environments. This reflects previous tourism destination image research that acknowledges the importance of the natural and built environments (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Nadeau et al., 2008). The built environment is viewed more positively than the natural environment. While both dimensions appear influential in the evaluation of the destination image and indirectly lead to travel intentions, the built environment has a stronger relationship to the destination evaluation than the natural environment. Therefore, China should exploit its strengths as a destination that is culturally interesting, has many tourist attractions and shopping facilities, and is safe. Meanwhile, the country should also address some natural environment weaknesses in perceptions about its climate, wilderness and peacefulness.

Third, organizers of the Olympic Games will be interested to find its image is comprised of three main belief dimensions: experiential, logistics, and security. The image of the Games is most positively associated with the experiential dimension and organizers should promote the event in this way. Message communication should position the event as a memorable, original and culturally interesting event with excellent facilities, a variety of activities and good entertainment value. Event organizers should also integrate the logistics dimension by communicating the ease of finding something of interest while addressing less positive aspects of navigating and attending the event. Both of these dimensions were found to be related to the evaluation of the Olympic Games and ultimately to the intentions people had about their engagement with the event.

The results of the study also contribute to the theoretical understanding of mega-event images and the relationship of these images to those of their host country. The results showed that the image of the host country as a destination intervened on the relationship between the host country image and the image of the mega-event (i.e. Olympic Games). Further, the finding provides support for previous research that found country image acts as the context for a destination image (Nadeau et al., 2008) and, by extension, the image of mega-events that are hosted by the country. These results demonstrate the salience of all three images and reinforce the importance of considering perceptions about potential host countries when making the selection decision.

There are some limitations of the study based upon the methodology employed. First, the study presents the country and destination images of China during the staging of a mega-event. The image among tourists may be significantly different if a sample was drawn at an alternative point in time. Second, the Olympic Games represent a single mega-event. While the nature of the Olympic Games as a rotational country hosting event is ideal for testing linkages of relationships that include country image, future research may seek to replicate the study with an alternative event and in a different country. In addition, future research should broaden its scope to explore the relationships of country and mega-event images with other important images (i.e. sponsors).
REFERENCES


ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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THE ROLES OF JOB CHARACTERISTICS IN INFLUENCING HOTEL FRONT LINERS TO BECOME CUSTOMER-ORIENTED

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ABSTRACT

Customer-orientation behaviour is defined as the employee’s tendency or predisposition to meet client’s need in the job context. It has become an interest for companies wishing to market and promote products to the clients. In the hotel industry in particular, one way to improve the quality of services offered is through the prompt and courteous service quality given by the front liners, that is by adopting customer-orientation behaviour. Therefore, utilization of customer-orientation behaviour has been aggressively promoted by hoteliers. However, a complete understanding of the process and its antecedents is presently lacking. Using a survey method, this study explores the influence of job characteristics on customer-orientation behaviour of the front liners. Hypothesized relationships are tested, using survey responses from a sample of 142 hotel front liners in Malaysia. Results revealed that in order to encourage front liners to become customer-oriented, they must be exposed to a variety of jobs, provided with jobs that they should be able to do, an entire or whole piece of work, and can clearly identify the results of their efforts and give them autonomy to do their jobs. Results are compared with earlier findings and implications for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Customer-orientation, hotel industry, job characteristics

INTRODUCTION

Today, companies, large and small alike, are facing both challenges and opportunities as they attempt to take advantage of the growing concern for the environment. Companies must continuously maintain and develop resources and competencies that will enable them to sustain their competitive advantage over rivals. Similar to other industries, the hotel industry also faces stiff competition and hoteliers are fighting intensely for a share of the customer’s pocket book. In this competitive environment, there is a constant pressure on hoteliers to innovate and develop new ways to improve the number of guests. Ultimately, the success of any marketing strategy implemented by hoteliers is determined by the satisfaction of guests needs. In a marketing service such as the hotel industry, they are subject to failures in service delivery because they must depend on customer-contact employees, known as front liners to deliver service to their customers. Because the delivery of service occurs during the interaction between front liners and customers (service encounter), the attitudes and behaviours of front liners can influence customers’ perceptions of the service (Hartline & Ferrel, 1996).

Research has shown that employees’ behavioral responses can positively and negatively affect customers’ perceptions of the service encounter and their judgments of service quality (Bitner, 1990). For example Bateson (1985) argues that contact employees are better able to satisfy customers when the employee has some control over the service encounter. Similarly, Bitner (1990) and Bitner, Booms and Tetreault (1990) show through qualitative studies that customers are more satisfied with the service encounter when employees possess the ability, willingness and competence to solve their problems. Several studies also shown that the friendliness, enthusiasm and attentiveness of contact employees positively affect customers’ perceptions of service quality (Bowen & Schneider, 1985; Rafaeli, 1993). These indicate that front liners in hotel industry occupy a critical role to improve hotel performance. Considering the crucial role these employees play in linking a firm with its customers and thus in
building relationships, hotels are aggressively finding ways to effectively manage their front liners to help ensure that their behaviours are conducive to the delivery of quality service.

One of the various ways which has been emphasized by hoteliers to improve quality of service is the adoption of customer-orientation among their front liners (Kim & Cha, 2002). Customer-orientation in this context refers to the employee’s tendency or predisposition to meet customer needs in the job context (Brown et al., 2002). The extent to which customer-orientation is displayed by front liners can have an impact on the level of satisfaction experienced by customers and the quality and duration of the relationship between the company and its customers (Dunlap et al., 1988; Saxe & Weitz, 1982). In delivering service to customers, customer-oriented employees provide service as promised and continue to put customers’ needs and interests ahead of his or her own (Kim & Cha, 2002). The more guest contact service employees have communicated benefits, the stronger the customers’ perception that employees put customers’ needs first (Swan et al., 1985). When employees of customer-oriented service organizations provide superior service as a representative of the organization, the service image of the organization will improve and guest satisfaction will increase (Kelly, 1992). This may ultimately lead to better overall corporate performance for the hotels. Kim & Cha (2002) suggest that front liners in hotel industry are becoming an important part of today’s trend towards high quality service. The degree of customer-orientation displayed by front liners in the hotel industry can thus be a competitive advantage for that hotel. Given the importance of customer-orientation in hotel industry, therefore, it seems appropriate to choose customer-orientation as the focal variable in this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of work in the area of customer-orientation indicates a substantial number of studies have examined the antecedents of this behaviour (Brown, Widing & Coulter, 1991; Dunlap et al., 1998; Hoffman & Ingram, 1991; Kelly, 1992; Michaels & Day, 1985; O’Hara et al., 1991; Siguaw et al., 1994). These researches focus on three areas: organizational, personal and role perception antecedents (Boles et al., 2001; Flaherty et al., 1999). However, despite the extensive studies undertaken, results of these studies indicate that the antecedent factors being analyzed were inconclusive, and tend to vary across different environment in terms of their impact on customer-orientation behaviour (Martin & Bush, 2003). Recognition of the need to bridge these gaps in knowledge regarding the antecedents of customer-orientation behaviour is apparent in many calls for further empirical research (Boles et al., 2001; Flaherty et al., 1999; Widmier, 2002; Williams & Atttaway, 1996).

A large amount of research was carried out in an attempt to identify the influence of organizational elements on employees’ customer-orientation behaviour. Within this context, variables such as the structure of an incentive system and locus of decision making have been shown to influence employees’ customer-orientation behaviour. For example, studies by Dunlap et al. (1988), Moynahan (1986) and Wiener (1982) among salespeople have found that an organizational incentive scheme in the form of commissions, positively influence salespeople to adopt customer-orientation behaviour rather than straight salary. Apart from an incentive system, there has also been research devoted to identify the effect of locus of organizational decision making authority on employees’ customer-orientation behaviour. In relation to that, centralized decision making authority is found to limit employee’s action to quickly respond to customers’ problems and reduces flexibility in satisfying customers’ needs (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993). Furthermore, when decision making is centralized, it reduces the ability of the salespeople to make individual decisions based on customers’ needs and problems, and therefore giving less consideration to customers’ point of view (Saxe & Weitz, 1982).

Besides having to confront a variety of organizational elements in their job specifications, employees face a variety of role perception factors. Role perception corresponds to specific task-related and environment-related boundary role perceptions held by the employees (Menguc, 1996). In customer-orientation behaviour in particular, effects of these role perceptions namely role conflict and role ambiguity have been studied in various settings. In general, most of the studies found that role ambiguity limits employees’ ability to deal with customers. The negative relationship between role
ambiguity and customer-orientation behaviour is demonstrated by Kelly (1990) who found role ambiguity was negatively related with the level of customer-orientation behaviour among the customer contact personnel. Employees who do not understand what is expected from them in the performance of their duties exhibit less focus on their customers. Later research by Kelly (1992) among bank employees also found a negative association between customer-orientation and role ambiguity. Similarly, Flaherty et al. (1999) also demonstrated the negative impact of role ambiguity on the way salespeople deal with customers. When experiencing role ambiguity, salespeople become confused about their duties and are unlikely to deliver satisfactory service to customers. Consequently, these negative role perception outcomes are detrimental to a salesperson’s ability to engage in customer-orientation behaviour. However, in some cases, role ambiguity can be positively linked to customer-orientation behaviour of subordinates. For example, in a non-selling situation, a study conducted by Darby and Daniel (1999) among nurses in Australia discovered that role ambiguity experienced by the nurses positively impact the way they treat patients. Rather than being an obstacle to their jobs, role ambiguity provides them with the challenge to deal with patients.

Similar to the impact of role ambiguity on customer-orientation behaviour, the impact of role conflict on customer-orientation behaviour is also inconclusive (Darby & Daniel, 1999; Flaherty et al., 1999). Both of these studies showed that when employees faced incompatible demands, they suffered mental anxiety or job-related tension and consequently lost focus on clients. However, Hoffman and Ingram (1991) found that in the situation when salespeople experienced role conflict, it did not appear to have any impact on the way they treat customers.

The third group of antecedent factors which have been frequently cited in customer-orientation behaviour studies is personal-related factors. From demographic perspective, Busch and Bush (1978) for instance have shown that women when compared to their male counterparts place greater value on their relationships with customers. Women are regarded to be better listeners and better at developing interdependent and ongoing relationships (Levy & Sharma, 1994) and are found more likely to serve as problem-solving consultants and to assist their customers in achieving their goals rather than just attempting to make the sale regardless of customers’ needs (Siguaw & Honeycutt, 1995). Beside gender, job tenure defined as the length of time one has worked for his or her current company (Ingram & Bellenger, 1983) has also been linked with customer-orientation. They found that the longer the employees’ job tenure, the more experience they have with the company. With such experience, they are better able to “read” the sales situation and adjust their behaviour and develop greater product-related knowledge that they can utilize with customers. This is evident in the study by Levy and Sharma (1994) and Shoemaker and Johlke (2002) that in a sales environment, experienced salespeople are likely to tailor their offerings to customers’ needs better than less experienced salespeople.

Apart from factors discussed above, another factor that is the interest of this study is job characteristics. For job characteristics, certain job characteristics, as they are perceived by the employees may influence their behaviour in organizations (Lau & Huang, 1999). The employee’s perception of his or her work, in terms of the characteristics of the tasks he or she has to carry out, may likely affect the way he or she deals with customers. This is because dealing with customers represents one core component of the service provider’s work (Agarwal & Ramaswani, 1993).

Basically, there are four “core dimensions” of a job which may arouse employees’ reactions (Hackman & Lawler, 1971). The four are job variety, job autonomy, job identity and feedback (Agarwal & Ramaswani, 1993). Job variety refers to “the degree that a job requires an employee to perform a wide range of operations and activities and to use a variety of procedures in his or her work” (Hackman & Lawler, 1971). Hackman & Oldham (1976) defined job autonomy as “the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in better job performance”. Job identity is defined as “the extent to which the employees do an entire or whole piece of work and can clearly identify the results of their efforts” (Sim et al., 1976). Feedback is defined as “the degree to which an employee receives information regarding how well he or she is performing” (Hackman & Lawler, 1971). The four dimensions of a job are not mutually exclusive and two or more aspects of these variables can be absent or present in a job together. Theory and previous research have found that by providing workers with greater variety, autonomy, identity and feedback, employees’ affective and cognitive reactions to their jobs may improve.

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Hence, job characteristics can potentially influence employees’ affective and conative reactions to the way they deal with customers and affect their levels of customer-orientation (Saxe & Weitz, 1984). On the basis of the literature reviewed, the following research hypotheses will guide the empirical study.

**H1:** The higher the job variety, the higher the front liner’s customer-orientation behaviour.

**H2:** The higher the job autonomy, the higher the front liner’s customer-orientation behaviour.

**H3:** The higher the job identity, the higher the front liner’s customer-orientation behaviour.

**H4:** The higher the level of feedback given, the higher the front liner’s customer-orientation behaviour.

**METHODOLOGY**

The unit of analysis for this study was the individual front liner limited to those who work as full-time front liners in Malaysian hotels and treating each front liner’s response as an individual data source. Data was collected by self-report questionnaire from the front liners working in various small and medium sized hotels in Penang. It was decided to randomly choose only ten hotels due to time and financial constraints faced by the researcher. For data collection purposes, 250 questionnaires were distributed to front liners in ten hotels in Penang. Out of this number, 178 were returned, 12 of which were excluded because they are part-timers and 24 questionnaires were incomplete. Thus, a total of 142 responses were usable and used for subsequent analysis, giving a response rate of 57 percent. A majority (71%) of the respondents are females. The age of the respondents are between 18 to 47 years old with the mean value of 29 years old. In terms of academic qualifications, a majority of the respondents (54%) had acquired the Malaysian Education Certificate as their highest academic qualification. In general, the working experience in the present hotel among respondents is new. A majority (75%) of the respondents have between one to 5 years working experience in the present hotel. This is in line with the age structure where most of the respondents are young (below 40 years).

For the purpose of this study, Customer-orientation behaviour was measured using the scale developed by Kim & Cha (2002). It consisted of 5 items. Customer-orientation behaviour is operationalized in two dimensions; customer-needs and conflict resolution. Understanding customer needs is measured by (i) a hotel employee is knowledgeable about guests’ needs and (ii) a hotel employee tries to understand the change of guests’ needs. Conflict resolution is measured by (i) a hotel employee deals with guest inquiry and complaint courteously; (ii) a hotel employee deals with guest inquiry and complaint expeditiously and (iii) a hotel employee resolves guest inquiry or complaint even though these are not within his or her direct responsibility. Job characteristics, operationalized as four core dimensions; job variety, job autonomy, job identity and feedback (Hackman & Lawler, 1971) were measured using the instrument developed by Sim et al. (1976). Job variety that refers to the degree that a job requires an employee to perform a wide range of operations and activities and to use a variety of procedures in his or her work is operationalized by using 5 items. Job autonomy that refers to the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in better job performance is measured using 5 items. Job identity that refers to the extent to which the employees do an entire or whole piece of work and can clearly identify the results of their efforts (Sim et al., 1976) is measured by using 4 items. Last, but not least, feedback that refers to the degree to which an employee receives information regarding how well he or she is performing (Hackman & Lawler, 1971) was measured by 3 items. Based on the reliability test, all the scale \( \alpha \) values were in between 0.63 and 0.78 and all above the cut off limit, the constructs used are considered reliable. To ensure consistency, all the measurements used were based on the 5-point Likert scale. Table 1 indicates the reliability of measures.
Table 1
Reliability of Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
<th>No. of item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer-orientation behaviour</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job autonomy</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job variety</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job identity</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=142

Table 2
Construct Correlation Matrix, Mean and Standard Deviation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>COB</th>
<th>JV</th>
<th>JA</th>
<th>JI</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COB</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JV</td>
<td>0.22**</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JA</td>
<td>0.36**</td>
<td>0.32**</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JI</td>
<td>0.22**</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td>0.52**</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0.34**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p<0.01; COB= Customer-orientation behaviour; M=Mean value; SD=Standard deviation; JV= job variety; JA= job autonomy; JI= Job identity; F= feedback

Table 3
The Influence of Job Characteristics on Customer-Orientation Behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SEB</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job variety</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.12**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job autonomy</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.01**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job identity</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.03**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R²=0.14; F= 23.74; Sig. F=0.00 **p<0.01; B=Unstandardized Beta Coefficients; SEB=Unstandardized Coefficients Standard Error; β =Standardized Beta Coefficients

RESULTS

The means and standard deviation of the scales used in this study are shown in Table 2. The hypotheses regarding the impact of job characteristics on customer-orientation behaviour were tested using multiple regressions following the guidelines established by Hair et al. (1998). Prior to performing the actual hypotheses tests, correlations between the constructs were derived. This is shown in Table 2. The individual hypotheses were then tested using a multiple regression prediction model (Hair et al., 1998) with customer-orientation behaviour as the dependent variable. The results obtained, as shown in Table 3, revealed that all the four hypotheses were found to be significant in the prediction model. The results provide support for hypotheses H1, H2, H3 and H4, that is, positive relationships between job variety (β=0.12; p<0.01), job autonomy (β=0.01; p<0.01), job identity (β=0.03; p<0.01), and feedback with customer-orientation behaviour (β=0.01; p<0.01).
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Several important conclusions have emerged from these findings. First, it can be concluded that the drivers of customer-orientation behaviour are diverse in their nature. The significant effect of four dimensions of job characteristics on customer-orientation behaviour explained how various dimensions of a job can intrinsically motivate employees to become customer-oriented. Managers should acknowledge that different job characteristics intrinsically motivate employees differently. Therefore, managers should be able to design jobs in such a way that it will motivate employees to become customer-oriented. In order to encourage the front liners to become customer-oriented, hoteliers should be able to design the job characteristics for their employees in such a way that the jobs are able to provide employees to perform a wide range of operations and activities and to use a variety of procedures in their work, provides substantial freedom, independence and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in better job performance. It was also discovered that front liners who are given freedom to do an entire or whole piece of work and can clearly identify the results of their efforts are more customer-oriented. Last but not least, to encourage front liners to become customer-oriented, the job should be designed so that the employees should be able to receive information regarding how well they are performing.

To encourage front liners to become customer-oriented, the job of the front liners should be varied and provide substantial freedom and independence and require the employees doing the job from start to finish, with a visible outcome. The moderate $R^2$ obtained showed that the antecedent factors appear to be less influential in explaining customer-orientation behaviour among front liners. This, in turn, suggests that other antecedents of customer-orientation behaviour need to be considered in future studies. In addition, exploring moderators reflecting work environment context will improve the explanatory power of the antecedents, as it has already been indicated in the literature that impact of antecedents on customer-orientation behavior vary across different context. Thus, issues such as personal factor and environment may moderate the relationship and contribute toward higher explanatory power. Furthermore, if one were to include control variables; the overall $R^2$ may improve significantly.

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IMPACT OF INNOVATION DRIVERS AND TYPES ON THE SUCCESS OF TOURISM DESTINATION: FINDINGS FROM INDONESIA

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Indonesia

ABSTRACT

The need for innovation is critical to becoming the winner in a dynamic and highly competitive market of tourism destination. Tourism innovation can be driven by supply (pull factor), demand (push factor) and competition. In addition, innovation types could be classified into incremental (new features which do not bring novel and valuable benefits to the market) and radical (new features which create new and substantial benefits to the market) innovation. These drivers and types of innovation are argued to interact and subsequently bring a significant impact to the long-term success of innovation initiatives in a tourism destination. Interviews with tourism experts, literature reviews, and case studies from Bali and Bandung, Indonesia, as the focal tourism destination, reveal some interesting findings. Incremental innovations in the tourism destination make the highest impact on the long term success of innovation when the drivers are push and pull factors, while radical innovations make the highest impact on the success of innovation when the driver is mainly competition. The tourism destination should put more caution in managing their innovation initiatives in order to make a sustainable success of the business.

Keywords: Radical innovation, incremental innovation, tourism destination, innovation drivers, innovation types

BACKGROUND

Tourism as one of the biggest industries in the world plays an important role in the world economy. As tourism is growing in every part of the countries, the competition across the nations is also becoming stiffer. Therefore, the need for innovation is critical in order to win in this dynamic and highly competitive market of tourism destinations. Innovation can be said as putting ideas into value or bringing the ideas to life. It can be distinguished into incremental innovation and radical innovation. Incremental innovation is appropriate for an established, incumbent business which already possesses solid resources and competencies that it can be used to leverage its processes and offerings to be able to operate in highly competitive markets. It only needs a regular, continuous, linear and modest improvement of existing technologies, products, services, infrastructure and environment and makes low but sustainable, consistent profits. The key objective of incremental innovation is to run low risks. Radical innovation is proper for a newly emerging business. Novelty is a large advantage to a new entrant, because it has no problem of changing managerial mindset, knowledge background and existing technologies. Radical innovation involves different knowledge, resources and mindset, and large technological advances. Its key objective is to run high risks aiming at high profits.

Innovation could also be seen from another perspective, i.e. from the point of view of the innovation enabler or the driver of innovation itself. We further classify drivers of innovation into three categories, namely demand driver (e.g. economic distance/time and cost, cultural distance, cost of services, quality of service, seasonality, marketing effectiveness, psychographic and demographic), supply driver (e.g. natural resources and environment, built environment, operating sectors and spirit of hospitality and cultural resources), and competition driver (e.g. competing tourism destination in a proximate area).
The subsequent arising question is which type of innovation shall be embraced by a tourism destination in order to ensure long term sustainable success, given different drivers of innovation. Against this backdrop, this research explores the impact of innovation types on the long term success of a tourism destination by looking at the tourism innovation drivers: supply or pull factors, demand or push factors, and competition.

The author used a few methods in obtaining data for the research. The main source of information was in depth interview with tourism stakeholders in Indonesia, e.g. tourism development and planning consultant and scholars, case analysis using Bali and Bandung as the focal tourism destinations. We found key findings that if the drivers are of supply type and demand type, apparently incremental innovations shall give higher impact to the long term success of a tourism destination. Meanwhile, radical innovation shall result in better success when the innovation driver is of competition. Figure 1 shows the research framework that we used:

Figure 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Innovation Drivers</th>
<th>Innovation Types</th>
<th>Long term success of a tourism destination</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supply (pull factors)</td>
<td>Incremental Innovation</td>
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<td>Demand (push factors)</td>
<td>Radical Innovation</td>
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LITERATURE REVIEW

There are various definitions of innovation. It is derived from the Latin “innovatio” which means to create something new. The most usable definition of innovation is probably provided by Schumpeter who categorized innovation into five areas: generation of new or improved products, introduction of new production processes, development of new sales markets, development of new supply markets and reorganization and/or restructuring of the company (Peters and Pikkemaat, 2006). As quoted by Scocco (2006), Peter Drucker stated that innovation is a change that creates a new dimension of performance. Paul Schumann defined innovation as the way of transforming the resources of an enterprise through the creativity of people into new resources and wealth. Whereas David Schmittlen asserted that innovation did not relate just to a new product that was coming into the marketplace; innovation could also occur in production processes and in approaches to the marketplace.

Innovation can be classified into incremental and radical by nature. Incremental innovation is built upon existing knowledge and resources within a certain company, and it involves modest technological changes. A radical innovation will require new knowledge and/or resources, and it involves large technological advancements (Scocco, 2006). Zach and Fesenmaier (2009) wrote that Nord and Tucker proposed incremental innovation as the improvement of existing products and services, whereas radical innovation is the introduction of something new to the focal organization. While Martinez-Ros and Orfila-Sintes (2009) wrote that incremental innovation is the introduction of additional characteristics to existing attributes whereas radical innovation is the adoption of a new attribute.

According to Goeldner and Ritchie (2006), the components of tourism supplies consists of natural resources and environment, built environment, operating sectors and the spirit of hospitality and cultural resources. Natural resources have a great effect on tourism demand. The quality of the natural resources such as landform, climate, air, flora and fauna, beaches, natural beauty, water supply and

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terrain must be well maintained to create tourist enjoyment in order to sustain the demand. Infrastructure and superstructure as built environment are also important determinants in the tourism destination success. This may include gas lines, electricity, drainage systems, roads, airports, railroads, shopping centers, entertainment centers, museums, accommodations, restaurants and cafes. Tourists are attracted to visit a destination if there is an ease to go there. Therefore, those structures must be built and developed with careful planning since it is expensive and time-consuming. Accommodations and transportation as the operating sectors must also be taken into great consideration. They must be available in sufficient quantity to match the number of visitors who come to the destination. The quality and services of accommodations and transportation must also be satisfactory, otherwise, the demand will drop. Last but not least is the hospitality and cultural resources. No matter how great are the infrastructure, superstructure, accommodations and transportation and how wonderful is the natural environment, all these would not be of great worth if the visitors feel unwelcome. Therefore, it is important to create a warm welcome feeling to the visitors and to ensure that the visitors can do activities that they may enjoy, such as shopping, visiting museums and art galleries, attending special events and other entertainment programs.

Tourism demand is the fundamental measure of any area’s success in attracting visitors. Demand can be said as the amount of any product or service that people are willing and able to buy at a specific price in a set of possible prices during some specified period of time (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2006, p.358). Furthermore, Goeldner and Ritchie stated that demand to a destination is the function of propensity (how willing the person is to travel) and resistance (relative attractiveness of various destinations). Propensity depends on the traveler’s psychographic, demographic/ socioeconomic status and marketing effectiveness. Resistance depends on economic distance or the time and cost involved in traveling, cultural distance (the extent to which the culture of where a tourist come from differs from that of the host region), cost of services, quality of service and seasonality. Francane (2009) wrote that tourism destination can be described as entity that involves a great amount of stakeholders groups with their different interests and ambitions.

Competition (between destinations) originates from the choices tourists make between alternative destinations (Karl W. Woebber, 2006). It can be said that when a customer considers two destinations in the same decision process and requests similar information items, than those two destinations are competing. Furthermore, Woebber wrote that competition in tourism is the perception of customers rather than physical characteristics and is an early phase of the decision making process. Keller (2005) affirmed that competition in tourism is primarily competition between destinations, and only secondary competition between individual service providers. Visitors begin by choosing a destination, then, they will choose the combination of products and services they wish to consume.

Tourism is the activity in which people spend a short period, of at least one night, away from home for leisure or business (Swarbrooke and Horner, 1999). WTO defined tourism as the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited. Tourism can also be defined as a stay of one or more nights away from home for holidays, visits to friends and relatives, business conferences or any other purposes except such things as boarding education or semi-permanent employment. Tourists travel to destinations; places within some form of actual or perceived boundary, such as the physical boundary of an island, political boundaries or even market-created boundary (Kotler et al., 2006). According to Pike (2004), destinations are places that attract visitors for a temporary stay, and range from continents to countries to states and provinces to cities to villages to purpose-built resort areas.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The data and information for this paper were obtained through personal interviews with several stakeholders such as tourism consultants and academicians who have been working and involved in tourism sectors for many years, cases from Bali and Bandung, Indonesia, and literature research (secondary data). Since the interview is not aimed to test hypotheses, but to seek explorative information, the interview tends to be open and is less structured than for the first one. At the interviews, stakeholders were asked about the factors that determine the choice of doing incremental or
radical innovation; whether radical innovation is best used for competition driver while incremental innovation is best used when drivers are supply and demand. They were also requested to describe the latest competitive situation in Indonesia’s tourism industry, to define the success factors of a destination, and to describe the innovation used to increase Bali tourism after Bali bombing in 2002 and 2005 and the actions being done for recovery from the social-economic atrophy.

We combined the three most frequently used techniques in the dept interview, which are laddering, hidden issue questionig, and symbolic analysis (Malhotra, 2007). With laddering technique, we started the interview by asking the informants with characteristics of tourism destination. Hidden issue techniques were used with the aim that we could tap into informants’ sore spots related to deeply felt personal concern on tourism issues. As for the symbolic analysis, we tried to confront informants with similar competing tourism destinations and obtained their insights into the comparisons being made.

FINDINGS

Based on the literature research and interview with stakeholders, several findings can be concluded as follows:

- Incremental innovation is best used to create long-term sustainability, while radical innovation is best applied for gaining short-term profits
- In a very intense competition, when the tourism destinations are at the stages of introduction and decline, it needs dramatic innovations which are driven by new and high technologies and knowledge (radical innovation). This kind of innovations will stimulate market curiosity to go to a destination. Modest, regular and linear improvement is not adequate to win high competition
- Incremental innovation involves only the enhancement of existing resources (supplies) and offerings (products and services) (demand). It does not need extensive and new knowledge and technological advancement to destroy (render obsolete) existing competencies. When tourism destinations are at growth and mature stages, incremental innovation is then more suitable.

DISCUSSION

Visitors nowadays prefer the holiday experience which can be tailored to their own specific needs rather than standardized products. They want personalized service. Therefore, destinations must be able to adapt quickly to the ever changing needs and tastes of the individual visitors. Indonesia, rich in terms of natural and cultural resources, has splendid tourist destinations spread all over the country. Yet, Indonesia’s tourism competitiveness is still far below the neighboring nations such as Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. According to the World Tourism Competitiveness Index 2008, which was issued by the World Economic Forum, Indonesia ranked 80 out of 133 countries surveyed, a drop by 20 places from the 2007 index (ranked 60 out of 124 countries). The government of Indonesia and all tourism stakeholders need to find ways to boost Indonesia’s tourism through creativity and innovation. The government efforts to open a number of Indonesian tourism promotion offices abroad, in line with visa-on-arrival to tourists will be positive for Indonesia’s tourism development. However, good facilities and services, better infrastructure and safety and security issues are no less essential and are also requiring urgent treatment. Indonesia’s marketing efforts on an international level and domestic level also need a lot of development: develop real tourism plan, and strengthen the relations with the industry.

Based on the Global Competitiveness Report 2009-2010 released by World Economic Forum, Indonesia’s tourism is still lacking innovation. Based on the economic indicator on tourism destination success which includes the number of foreign tourist arrivals, tourist expenditures and length of stay, Indonesia is still far behind Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand in their aspects.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>5,002,100</td>
<td>4,871,400</td>
<td>5,505,800</td>
<td>6,234,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>16,431,100</td>
<td>18,471,700</td>
<td>20,236,000</td>
<td>22,051,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>8,942,000</td>
<td>9,751,700</td>
<td>10,287,600</td>
<td>10,116,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>11,516,900</td>
<td>13,822,100</td>
<td>14,464,200</td>
<td>14,931,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ASEAN Tourism Statistic Database (2009)

Based on the above figure, we can assume that a radical innovation is needed for the development of Indonesia’s tourism in a short term in order to compete against the neighboring countries in this highly competitive market. We should come up with something new which will attract the market to try experiencing Indonesia’s tourism. One example is a tourism packaging. As suggested by Mr. Dorojatun Kuncorojakti, an advisor to the Indonesia’s Tourism Council (Indonesialogue.com, 2009), Indonesia should offer a travel-pass system, consisting of round-trip tickets to destinations throughout Indonesia using any means of transportation. Of course for the long-term development and sustainability, we must implement incremental innovations related with the augmented products and services. In addition, we must also think of creating a slogan which is easily remembered by people. Indonesia’s slogan, “Indonesia, the Ultimate in Diversity” is too long and not easily pronounced, even though it has a deep meaning to show that Indonesia is a multi-cultural country. We should create a simpler slogan. Uniquely Singapore, Amazing Thailand and Malaysia Truly Asia are examples of short, yet catchy slogans. Many Indonesians are not aware of their own tourism slogan, but they are quite familiar with Singapore’s or Malaysia’s slogans.

As stated earlier, this paper explores some of the innovations in Bali and Bandung, as the two major tourist destinations in Indonesia. In Indonesia’s tourism industry, only Bali is the Indonesia’s destination that has proved itself to be able to survive the mounting and expanding competition in the international tourism industry. As a matured destination, Bali needs to pursue incremental innovation. To retain its competitiveness it relies on continuous, regular improvement, rather than on dramatic, extensive innovations. Most other Indonesian destinations are still far below Bali in the level of competitiveness. They are relatively new entrants. They should introduce dramatic innovations in tourism services and infrastructure, yet retaining and maximizing the exoticism and uniqueness of their landscapes, environment and cultures. A simple example of introducing a dramatic innovation by maximizing potential culture: producing local high-qualified food (which has long been neglected) and build this into the total exotic tourism experience.

Bali, as the leading tourism destination in Indonesia, will be commissioned to provide examples of incremental innovations. The remarkable resurgence of Bali tourism after the bombings in 2002 and 2005 was made through an incremental innovation which consists of increased modifications and improvements infrastructure, technologies, tourist attractions, marketing efforts, quality management, etc. No new technologies and knowledge and dramatic changes were needed and introduced in order to bring back Bali’s popularity and competitive advantages.

In 2001, Bali generated more than 25% of Indonesia’s foreign exchange earnings and Bali’s economy accounted for 1.3% of the national economy. After the first Bali bomb in 2002, Bali’s tourism suffered from the sharp decline in international arrivals amounting 57% and very low average hotel’s occupancy of 18% (Andari, 2008). However, Bali’s recovery after the second bombing in 2005 was faster than the first one, with a high level of international arrivals. This situation happened because Bali had already regained its image as an island of paradise and it had won several recognitions as the most favorite tourism destination in the world. Of course, to regain its image was not easily and quickly done after the first bombing. However, there were several factors that supported Bali market recovery (Knight Frank Research, 2006), such as the extensive renovation of hotel rooms during the low period, the addition of seat capacity for Garuda flight from Australia, Garuda resuming direct flight from Denpasar to Seoul and the increase of accessibility from Moscow to Bali which enabled 5-star hotels to capture the growth of high-yielding Russian market. These recovery activities resulted in the immense increase of Bali’s hotel average room rate in 2006. After the first bombing, PATA established a Bali Recovery Task Force (PBRTF) to help Bali’s tourism get back. The recovery was successful. It showed
a positive growth in the number of visitors to Bali both from domestic and international market which amounting to more than 1 million tourists.

PBRTF recommended several actions to bring back the image of Bali as “paradise on earth”. To restore the confidence in Bali as a singular, lush destination, PBRTF suggested among others: travel advisories from key producing markets such as Australia and UK should be lifted or softened, an outreach campaign in key source markets should be boasted, security and safety systems need to be enhanced, a comprehensive publicity and communication program must be more keenly formulated and carried out and cooperation between tourism authorities, government, national police and tourism association must be emphasized. Furthermore, it is also of crucial importance to pay more attention to the acquisition and management of long-term funds for tourism promotion and projects, to design updated promotional materials featuring various activities and events that expose Bali as an attractive destination and to create more accomplished CD rom/videos that showcase the friendly faces of Bali. The creation of an environment within which issues of safety and security are addressed, infrastructure and effective strategic planning must be developed: these should be accomplished to ensure long-term sustainability across all functional areas of the tourism industry. Another recommendation given was that the Bali Government should establish an Integrated Crisis Management Plan in coordination with the National Government; this should include guidelines and procedures for crisis communication. In term of access, tourism authorities should work more closely with the aviation sector due to its importance as the providers of the means of transport to the destinations. They should coordinate with Garuda Indonesia to increase capacity to Bali to meet the rising demand such as sharing booking information, adopting and publicizing a single theme for Bali in unison, rather than having different themes which are advertised by different parties. Rebuilding destination branding should be done through private/public/consumer sectors which involve four stages: recovery, rehabilitation, normalization and expansion. To accomplish this, internet campaigns and public relations and other marketing tools should be strongly integrated. The adoption of branding as the main platform for all joint marketing efforts and the restructuring of all associations to become “one for all” comprehensively broaden the Bali brand towards culture and heritage, innovatively introduce Bali brand to contemporary market platform (the need to start adapting to the new trends in Asian tourism), and increase brand awareness through partnership marketing. As for the implementation, PBRTF recommended three stages of actions: stage 1-Immediate Response, stage 2-Execution of the Action Plan, and stage 3-Concurrent Actions. The Immediate response is to launch a major, single recovery campaign that can be referred to as Project Bali Magic. The action plan execution or putting words into action would cover the consolidation and building up of a strong events calendar, the organization of a single media/sales kit, the binding engagement of the sales forces of international hotel chains in Bali, the creation of unified meeting/incentive and trade campaigns to encourage travel trade professionals to visit Bali. Furthermore, some other key issues should also be addressed, including aviation relations, wholesaler relations, media relations (to engage media to ensure consistent and sustained international publicity), customer relations (to promote goodwill and positive word-of-mouth communication), government relations (to engage western governments to lift travel warnings), and community relations (to spread the positive messages of tourism), (PATA, 2003). The incremental innovation approach was used successfully in recovering Bali, because this island of gods predominantly offers unique cultural and natural heritages which have been preserved well for ages and are still a tourism magnet. Bali only needs to improve and develop its built environment, accommodations, transportation, service, promotion and safety and security management. Bandung which is located in West Java probably gives good examples of radical innovation in tourism. Bandung is one of the most favorite holiday destinations for domestic tourists. The number of tourist arrivals, both domestic and foreign tourists to Bandung amounting to 2 million per month, in which 1,200 (0.06%) are foreign tourists (Voice of Bandung, July 20, 2009). Bandung most famous attractions are culinary and fashion (factory outlets). It is well known for the culinary innovation. In fact, many domestic tourists visit Bandung for the great variety of unique foods. People are willing to queue for hours to taste Bandung’s “taste treats” or even to leave home at midnight just to try some of Bandung delicacies (Tourism Indonesia, April 6, 2009). The numbers of foreign tourists, especially from Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand are steadily increasing. In 2009, Malaysian tourists increase to 30% with the average arrival of 500 arrivals per day (Kompas.com, January 13, 2009). To accommodate the increase of tourist arrivals from Malaysia and Singapore, Air Asia opened a new
route from Singapore to Bandung last March and added flight schedule from Kuala Lumpur to Bandung to 3 times per day, from previous schedule of 2 times per day (BentarNews.com, March 30, 2009). Currently, Bandung has 52 star-rated hotels with 3,137 rooms, 166 non-star rated hotels with 3,331 rooms and 121 restaurants (Suarakarya online, April 17, 2009).

**CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

This research managed to conclude the following salient points

- Incremental innovation is preferred to create long-term tourism sustainability, while radical innovation is preferred when the horizon for success is shorter
- When competition gets stiffer and when the tourism destinations are at the stages of introduction, tourism destination needs more substantial innovation which is driven by new and high technology and knowledge.
- Incremental innovation deals with the enhancement of existing resources and offerings. It does not need extensive and new knowledge and technology. When tourism destinations are at growing mode, incremental innovation is more preferred.
- Future research shall provide quantitative data analysis in order to reach more tenable and reliable conclusions

**REFERENCES**


DESTINATION MARKETING INTERNET AND E-TOURISM: LESSONS FROM CRETE AND CYPRUS

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ABSTRACT

Mediterranean is the biggest tourist region in the world, occupying approximately 30% of international tourist arrivals. A great amount of these tourists is attracted to the islands of the region. This study examines the destination marketing patterns via the use of e-tourism in a two countries’ research, on the two largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea. The examined regions are the island of Crete in Greece, and the island of Cyprus. Both islands are globally famous as traditional summertime tourist destinations, hosting millions of mass tourists every year. The research was undertaken at the international airports of Heraklion (Crete) and Larnaka (Cyprus) to departed tourists that had chosen their vacations’ destination via internet use. The paper provides information focusing on the evaluation of the important components on island destination marketing, and their influence on destination selection. Furthermore, it investigates the extent of internet success as a destination marketing tool in comparison with the traditional destination marketing promotion (brochures, tourist agents, and mass media). In addition it formulates a model while e-tourism can be used as a mean for more successful marketing in island regions. Finally, it suggests more sufficient ways of e-tourism use in destination marketing patterns. The perceptions of the respondents are analyzed toward their socio-demographic characteristics of gender, age, and level of education.

Keywords: Internet, e-Tourism, Destination Marketing, Crete, Cyprus

INTRODUCTION

The last ten to fifteen years, millions of computer users worldwide have begun to explore the internet and engage in commercial online activities. Many have joined one or more of the online communities that have sprung up to serve consumer needs for communication, information, and entertainment (Wang et al., 2002). In the end of 1990’s, virtual communities began to be depicted as central to models of commercial internet development as well as to the future of narrow casting and mass customization in the wider world of marketing and advertising (Werry, 1999). In the travel industry, the Web is becoming the collective “travel square” as more and more travellers are turning to online travel communities to fulfill their travel-related tasks, ranging from seeking travel information and tips, making travel transactions, and finding travel companions, while travel organizations are beginning to realize the importance of utilizing the power of virtual communities in their endeavor of relationship marketing (Wang et al., 2002). The aim of this paper is to provide information dealing with the evaluation of the important components on island destination marketing, and their influence on visitors’ destination selection. Moreover, it investigates the extent of internet success as a destination marketing tool in comparison with the traditional destination marketing promotion. Additionally, it structures a model while e-tourism can be used as a marketing tool for more successful destination advertising and promotion. Finally, it proposes more sufficient ways of e-tourism use in destination marketing techniques.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The internet has proven effective for advertising, marketing, distributing goods, and providing information services (Hoffman & Novak, 1996). The information-intensive nature of the tourism industry suggests an important role for the internet and Web technology in destination promotion and marketing (Doolin et al., 2002). The Web has great potential for promoting regional tourism, and is relatively inexpensive compared with other promotion and advertising media (Standing & Vasudavan, 2000). The development of advent of the internet as a universal and interactive means of communication, and a parallel change in consumer behaviour and attitude, have therefore, shifted the traditional way tourism and travel products are distributed (O’Connor & Frew, 2000). Increasingly,
consumers can undertake their entire tourism product search and booking on-line and, therefore, the role of e-Mediaries has been changing dramatically (Buhalis & Licata, 2002).

The internet has transformed the distribution and marketing of tourism products (Buhalis & Spada, 2000), and information consumption patterns have been reshaped. Image projection on the web is receiving greater attention from researchers and destination marketing practitioners (Choi et al., 2007). The global availability of internet access and the blurring boundaries of competition have resulted in a proliferation of destination identities being communicated (Govers & Go, 2003). In addition, e-tourism offers great potential to influence consumers’ perceived images, including creating virtual experiences of destinations (Gretzel et al., 2000). Furthermore, the 21st century market environment requires a rethinking of the traditional image formation process and a redefinition the role of information agents in shaping destination images (Choi et al., 2007). As a result, the influence of online digital information on image formation has become an important issue for tourism researchers (Govers & Go, 2004).

All the above define internet and e-tourism as a foreseeable prominent medium in tourism marketing (O’Connor & Murphy, 2004; Oh et al., 2004). It has been actively used by hotels (Baloglu & Pekcan, 2006; Fam et al., 2004), airlines (Chu, 2001), travel agencies (Ozturan & Roney, 2004), convention and visitors bureaus (Yuan et al., 2003) and other destination marketing organizations (Stamboulis & Skayannis, 2003). Travel and tourism services appear to be especially well suited for internet marketing because of their intangibility as well as high price, risk, and involvement levels (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2006). Finally, on the demand side, an increasing number of people are using the internet for information search because the World Wide Web provides more in-depth materials and richer content compared with conventional promotional agents (Govers & Go, 2003; Heung, 2004).

The Study Areas

Crete is located in south-eastern Europe with a population of 594,368 and a per capita GDP of € 18,539. It hosts approximately the ¼ of total tourist arrivals in Greece. Its tourism is dominated by western Europeans, mainly Germans (N.S.S.G., 2009). The island is known as a ‘sun and sea’ holiday centre and is popular with families. The flow of international tourists to Crete is mainly directed by international tour operators offering “mass tourism” (Ekinci et al., 2003). After the Olympic Games in 2004, tourist arrivals in Crete are nearly 4 million, while overnights exceed 13.5 million. (G.N.T.O., 2007).

Cyprus is situated in south of Turkey, with a population of 784,301 and a per capita GDP of US$ 21,600. It is a very popular holiday resort, with the tourist industry accounting for about 10% of the GDP, 40% of export earnings and 12% of the total working population (Cyprus Statistical Service, 2009). Employment in the tourism sector doubled during the period 1985–1998 and remained stable in subsequent years. European visitors dominate tourism in Cyprus. The surpluses in the national travel account tripled over the period 1985–1998 (Hoti et al., 2007). Furthermore, the importance of tourism industry is reflected at the significant share of the international tourism receipts, which accounts for more than 50% of total services receipts (Republic of Cyprus, 2008).

On both islands the vast majority of tourist firms are SME’s (Small and Medium Enterprises). These firms are often weakly managed and marketed, since they lack the resources on the one hand to employ specialised personnel, and on the other hand to promote themselves adequately (Bastakis et al., 2004). These weaknesses coupled with the lack of basic business information force most tourist enterprises to adopt a “product oriented” than a “market oriented” approach in their tourism offer (Buhalis, 1993). SME’s in tourism become the “weakest link” within the distribution channel, and their dependency on intermediaries becomes unavoidable (Bastakis et al., 2004). The use of internet and the evolution of e-tourism give the opportunity to the examined destinations and their tourism and hospitality firms to reorient their marketing tools, more sufficiently promote themselves, and deteriorate their dependency from Tour Operators.
METHODOLOGY

From more than 3.9 million tourists in Crete (G.N.T.O., 2008) and nearly 3.8 million tourists in Cyprus (Republic of Cyprus, 2008) that visit these islands every year, the vast majority arrives during summertime. This is the reason that the study was conducted during summertime and more specifically from June till the end of July 2009. It was undertaken the technique of personal interviewing in order to reach the objectives since it is “the most versatile and productive method of communication, it enables spontaneity, and also provides the skill of guiding the discussion back to the topic outlined when discussions are unfruitful” (Sekaran, 2000).

The research was undertaken at the International Airport of Crete “N. Kazantzakis” at the Cretan city of Heraklion (20 – 30 June 2009), and Larnaca International Airport in Cyprus (15 – 25 July 2009) to visitors that had chosen their vacations’ destination via internet use. These tourists were chosen because the research wanted to measure their degree of preferences on transportation, hospitality and destination, and the reasons that lead tourists to use I.T. (Information Technology) instead of traditional ways of selection (tourist agents, brochures, mass media) in order to arrange their holidays. The tourists were asked for their perceptions during their waiting for departure.

The degree of representative sampling size was a fundamental criterion in order to determine the amount of the sample. As a consequence, in order to determine the technique of data collection, the next step was the determination of the interviewed population. Since the proportions of population were unknown, it has taken a conservative response format 50 / 50 percent, meaning the assumption that 50% of the respondents have negative perceptions of tourism impacts, and 50 percent have not. At least 95 percent confidence and five percent sampling error was selected. The appropriate sample size was determined to be 384. The calculation of the sampling size is independent of the total population size hence the sampling size determines the error (Aaker & Day, 1990).

The questionnaire consists of 23 questions and statements. These were:

- Three questions dealing with the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample (gender, age, education).
- 20 Likert Scale (1 – 5) statements assessing tourists’ perspectives in three different areas. These were:
  - Five statements dealing with the advantages internet provides in tourism.
  - Six statements dealing with the searching preferences of tourists via internet.
  - Nine statements dealing with the e-tourism success as a destination marketing tool in comparison with the traditional destination marketing promotion.

For the analysis of the collected data, the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS, 16.0) was used. The variables were analyzed by t-Test, ANOVA, and Cross tabulations. The statistical significance was based at the 0.05 level of confidence. The variance of the expressed opinions and the statistical significances that are formulated toward the expressed perceptions are directly connected with the individual characteristics of the sample population. Many studies reveal that gender is the main factor of the perspectives’ formulation in a host destination (Britton, 1991; Fairburn-Dunlop, 1994; Hess and Ferree, 1987; Kinnaird and Hall, 1996; Mason and Cheyne, 2000; Picard, 1990; Swain, 1989). Some others, such as the researches of Walmsley and Jenkins (1993), Oppermann (1995), Trakolis (2001), Collins and Tisdell (2002), and Treheway and Mak (2006), support that the differentiations of the respondents’ age create very important alternations to their perceptions. On the contrary, the level of education of the sample population is considered as a crucial factor for the creation of significant differences in the expressed perspectives (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Teye et al., 2002). This paper takes under consideration all the above studies and researches, and examines the variation of perceptions toward gender, age, and level of education of the respondents.

FINDINGS

Because of sample stratification toward location and gender, 200 were tourists visiting Crete, and another 200 were visitors in Cyprus, having an equal division toward men and women in these two
regions (100 men and 100 women in each periphery). Respondents were asked to select their age, and level of education. Survey respondents were 52 percent from 18 till 35 years old (208 persons), 35.25 percent from 36 till 50 years old (141 persons), and 12.75 percent over 50 years old (51 persons). 42.75 percent (171 persons) have achieved a bachelor’s or higher degree, while most respondents (229 persons / 57.25 percent) stated they were primary or secondary education graduates.

**Internet Use**

Dealing with the advantages that internet provides in tourism, the most profound one is focused on transport prices followed by the accuracy of information and the ability to compare similar destinations (Table 1). Most of the statistical significances were revealed toward age. In all cases (Hotel Prices, Accurate Information, Destination Comparison) the younger the respondents were, the more positive with internet advantages seemed to be. This clear tense can be explained due to the higher familiarity with I.T. (Information Technology) younger people have. Higher familiarity also produces more extensive internet use, and as a result larger trust and satisfaction from internet advantages.

Toward location and level of education the statistical significance appears on the accuracy of information that can be provided via internet. Toward location, the overall disagreements in Crete reached 5.5 percent while the same proportion for Cyprus was almost doubled (10 percent). This tense can be explained since the official government of Cyprus gives detailed information only for the southern part of the island. The state of Northern Cyprus is not internationally recognized since it was produced after the Turkish military invasion to the island in 1974. Even after the entrance of Cyprus in the E.U. (European Union) in 2004, the European Entrance Protocol for Cyprus postpones the E.U. legislation in Northern Cyprus because of the Turkish occupation, and the lack of control from the official Cypriot state in these territories (C.T.O., 2007: 14). As a consequence, this anomaly may influence the respondents’ perspectives dealing with the accuracy of internet information for Cyprus. Toward level of education, the sample population with higher studies seems to have wider skepticism and higher distrust for the provided information via internet, producing overall disagreements by 10.9 percent. On the other hand the overall disagreements for the primary and secondary education graduates were 3.5 percent.

Focusing on transport prices, the statistical significance appears toward gender. Even if the overall agreements the difference between men and women is negligible, men strongly agreed by 60.5 percent (121 people), while that proportion for women was only 32 percent (64 people). Concerning the searching preferences of tourists via internet, travel costs were the most preferable among the respondents, followed by the destination’s sightseeing. Life and entertainment is one more parameter that tourists seemed to take under consideration. On the contrary, hotel costs did not appear to be one of the priorities of tourists’ searching preferences via internet, maybe because the mass accommodation booking from tour operators leads to higher reduction prices than an individual booking by an internet user.

Examining the searching preferences for tourists via internet, for once more, most of the statistical significances were produced toward age. For hotel costs and life and entertainment, younger people seem to be more interested in order to search and find information. It is profound that younger people seek out for entertainment opportunities, more unique and crowded places to go, and vivid nightlife in every destination they visit. Thus their proportions on these statements (sightseeing, and life and entertainment) are higher than the other age groups. On the contrary, focusing on sanitation and safety to destination, the older the respondents were, the more they were focused on finding information via internet. As previous studies revealed elder people show higher concern for sanitation (Pappas, 2009) and destination safety (Pappas & Zerva, 2009) matters.
### Table 1
Provided Tourism Advantages and Searching Preferences of Internet Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provision of Internet Advantages in Tourism</th>
<th>Searching Preferences of Tourists via Internet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transport Prices</td>
<td>Hotel Prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Mean</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>.620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crete</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T Ratio</td>
<td>.645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance*</td>
<td>.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENDER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T Ratio</td>
<td>-4.525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance*</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 – 35</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 – 50</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance*</td>
<td>.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pr. &amp; Second.</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T Ratio</td>
<td>-3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance*</td>
<td>.580</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The values shown in bold indicate a statistical significance at the .05 level of confidence.
The statistical significance toward location at the statement focusing on hotel prices was produced mainly because of responses of tourists in Crete. These tourists had the highest proportion on strong agreements (13 percent out of 7.5 percent in Cyprus), and strong disagreements (5.5 percent out of 2.5 percent in Cyprus). The very high diversity of accommodation prices in comparison with hospitality services and quality that Crete provides might create this differentiation. On the other hand, the statistical significance toward gender produced on the statement concerning travel costs can be characterized as the continuity and confirmation of the statistical significance on transport prices (see Table 1 section: Provision of Internet Advantages in Tourism).

The last statistical significance emphasizes on life and entertainment, while people having higher education seem to have lower proportion on agreements (76.4 percent out of 84.7 percent) and higher on disagreements (9.6 percent out of 3.5 percent). It is necessary to be pointed out that as many studies reveal, some places in Crete (i.e.: Hersonissos, Malia etc) (Andriotis, 2006) and Cyprus (i.e.: Agia Napa, Limassol, etc.) (Sharpley, 2000, 2002; Sharpley & Forster, 2003) are considered as globally traditional places for youth nightlife. Hundreds of thousands of young people (many of them students) reach these places every year for vivid nightlife and easy erotic adventures. Thus it is easily understandable why they search on the internet for opportunities they seek out. This is something that also confirms the statistical significance that has produced on the same statement toward the socio-demographic characteristic of age.

**e-Tourism via Traditional Promotion**

In general terms, respondents preferred to gain information via internet than from traditional means (tourist agents, brochures, and mass media). On the other hand, they didn’t seem to adapt the perspective that internet is more trustworthy than tourist agents. They also rejected the idea that internet is more convincing than those on brochures and mass media. Maybe this might be the outcome of the increasing distrust from consumers to advertisements, and furthermore on the web-based ones, since, as Sillence et. al. (2006) state, trust is a key factor in consumer decisions about website engagement. As it seems, for consumers, an advertisement is always an advertisement no matter the promoted mean. Finally, the respondents perceive that internet truly provides more information than a tourist agent, but a tourist advertisement on internet does not provide more information than an advertisement in a brochure or mass media (Table 2).

Most of the statistical significances appeared on the statement focusing on the comparison of internet and brochures as information provider’s preference (gender, age, and education). The overall disagreements and neutral tenses were 17.04 percent for men, 24 percent for women, 9.1 percent for people aged from 18 till 35 years, 28.4 percent from 36 till 50 years old, 27.45 percent for respondents over 50 years old, 18.3 percent for primary and secondary education graduates, and 21.4 percent for bachelor degree holders. As results indicate, internet in more trustworthy on young men, something that confirms the responses on dealing with the accuracy of internet information (Table 1: 3rd Statement). Furthermore, it seems that the higher the education is, the more information people seek out, and search on different resources. The other statistical significance on information provider’s preference was toward age on the comparison of internet and mass media. Results indicate that as people getting older, their trust and preference on mass media increases.

Attending the responses on the statements focusing on the degree that advertisements are convincing, there is evidence that dealing with mass media the highest differences of sample’s proportions were produced toward location and gender, while on brochures these were on the socio-demographic characteristics of age and education. Concerning brochures, the overall agreements were 1.9 percent from 18 till 35 years old, 0.7 percent from 36 till 50 years old, while none over 50 years old agreed with the statement. Toward education the overall agreements were 1.75 percent for primary and secondary education, and 0.87 for tertiary education graduates. On mass media, there were no agreements toward location or gender. The strong disagreements were 16.5 percent for Crete, 29 percent for Cyprus, 19.5 percent for men, and 26 percent for women. Even if the distrust has a very significant high proportion in both statements, the production of these statistical significances indicates that the lack of confidence on advertisements creates a very difficult field on marketers to successfully promote tourist products and destinations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Provider’s Preference</th>
<th>Trustworthy Ads</th>
<th>Convincing Ads</th>
<th>Quantity of Provided Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet / Tour Agent</td>
<td>Internet / Brochures</td>
<td>Internet / Mass Media</td>
<td>Total Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Mean</strong></td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Std. Deviation</strong></td>
<td>.733</td>
<td>.700</td>
<td>.671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGION</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crete</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T Ratio</td>
<td>-.477</td>
<td>.785</td>
<td>-.298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance*</td>
<td>.254</td>
<td>.174</td>
<td>.621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENDER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T Ratio</td>
<td>-.194</td>
<td>-2.218</td>
<td>.127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance*</td>
<td>.782</td>
<td><strong>.002</strong></td>
<td>.340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 – 35</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 – 50</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Ratio</td>
<td>.609</td>
<td>13.304</td>
<td>40.248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance*</td>
<td>.544</td>
<td><strong>.000</strong></td>
<td><strong>.000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pr. &amp; Secondary</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T Ratio</td>
<td>-.999</td>
<td>-1.573</td>
<td>-2.303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance*</td>
<td>.142</td>
<td><strong>.009</strong></td>
<td>.139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The values shown in bold indicate a statistical significance at the .05 level of confidence.
Statistical significance appeared in all statements dealing with the quantity of provided information. On the internet comparison with tourist agents, the tourists in Cyprus seemed to agree more than those in Crete, having much higher proportion on strong agreements (21.5 and 14 percent respectively). This might actually produced due to the more explicit information that visitors need for Cyprus due to its extended part (almost 37 percent of its territory), which is not controlled by the official Cypriot government. Under this perspective when tourists reach Cyprus they actually visit two countries (one official and one not), with different traditions, customs structural - operational systems, political leaderships, languages, religions and monetary units. On the other hand, the internet advertisement comparison with brochures and mass media produces totally different characteristics. As it was expected the respondents perceived that the provided information is actually the same in all promotional means.

MARKETING MODEL FOR e-TOURISM

The internet is widely used as a means to deliver up-to-date content. As a result, it created the conditions for the emergence of a wide range of new tourism e-Mediaries (Buhalis & Licata, 2002). In order to promote a destination within a competitive context, destination authorities have to use not only the traditional means of marketing but also the new tourism e-Mediaries.

As it is shown in Figure 1, destination authorities need to provide to tourist agents and tour operators (T.A. & T.O.) the essential destination information for the territory and the foreseeable changes and reformations that are planning to do. They can also continue destination marketing through the traditional promotional channels. Additionally, they need to strengthen the destination’s hospitality industry with the necessary infrastructure aiming to have the ability to use information technology on their every day life and operational systems. The distributors of tourist product (T.A. & T.O.) can now interactively cooperate with the hotel firms focusing on the reorientation of tourism production and distribution. T.A. and T.O. can also continue the promotion at the destination’s tourist products and services through their traditional distribution channels to tourists.

The use of e-tourism actually gives the opportunity to hospitality companies also to enter the market as distributors. Within this frame they have the ability to directly promote and sell their tourist services to consumers. Furthermore, e-tourism helps destination authorities to interactively communicate with tourists and find out their special needs, their preferences, and their perceptions for the destination and the competitive destinations. They can have the ability to reorient the destination’s tourist products and services while they target higher consumers’ satisfaction, gain higher destination competitiveness, enlarge the amount of tourists that want to revisit the destination (repeaters), deteriorate the destination’s dependence from T.O. and T.A., and increase the profitability of destination’s tourism and hospitality companies.

Both destination authorities and hospitality firms have to structure the new patterns of destination marketing. e-Tourism reshapes the extent and use of traditional marketing tools (brochures, mass media etc.), and dynamically introduces the application of e-marketing tools (internet, virtual reality etc.) through the reformed tourist market segmentation. As the research findings revealed, the traditional marketing tools still play a very crucial role for destination promotion. Many tourists (even on those who started to use information technology) need the traditional marketing tools in order to gain additional information. On the other hand, e-marketing tools continue to rapidly develop and influence important market segments such as young consumers.

Traditional and e-marketing tools are going to reorient specific marketing policies in order to promote the destination on the tourist market. The structures of marketing policies have to specify and serve the needs of modern tourists, no matter if they are addressed to traditional tourists or e-users. Since e-users tend to be the younger consumers, this market appears increasing tenses of enlargement. On the contrary, the amount of tourists that prefers the traditional channels of information and selection seems to be stabilized and in the nearby future will start to decrease. It has to be pointed out that a significant part of tourists needs both traditional and e-marketing tools in order to gain information and select the preferable destination.
CONCLUSIONS

Tourism is vividly influenced by the business process re-engineering experienced due to the technological revolution. WTO (1988) states that ‘the key to success lies in the quick identification of consumer needs and in reaching potential clients with comprehensive, personalized and up-to-date information’. The research findings revealed that the provision of internet advantages in tourism was very important for consumers especially in the field of transportation prices, the accuracy of necessary information for destinations and accommodation, and the use of Information Technology for destination comparison. Furthermore, the searching preferences of tourists via internet were mainly focused on travel and accommodation costs, sightseeing, and life and entertainment at the destination.
On the contrary, tourists appeared to have very high proportions of distrust on tourist advertisements no matter the promotional mean. They also seemed to have higher trust on the internet than the traditional channels of information (brochure, mass media, and tourist agents). Tourist agents were still considered as a trustworthy source of information, while internet was perceived as a more sufficient channel of provisional information than tourist agents.

Dealing with the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, most of the statistical significances appeared toward age. Young people seemed to have much higher familiarity with the technological advantages. They were much more frequent users of internet and they also had higher proportions of trust on Information Technology than the other age groups. This population looked like the future of e-tourism evolution and the constant development of e-Mediaries. The research also revealed that tertiary education graduates need more both traditional and e-tourism information channels than the primary and secondary education graduates. They actually had higher proportions of trust on traditional means of information, without rejecting e-tourism. Moreover, men had higher proportions of use and trust on the internet than women. Tourists in Cyprus seemed to be more confused with the provision and trust of destination’s information than those in Crete, maybe because of the state division on the island and the political, structural, operational, and financial – monetary differences between the Greek – Cypriot and Turkish – Cypriot sites.

The development and further evolution of both traditional marketing and e-marketing tools can create more sufficient marketing policies, easier the approach of potential tourists, strengthen destinations’ competitiveness and increase the profitability of tourism and hospitality firms. It is vital for hospitality firms to use Information Technology and promote e-tourism, especially on mass tourism destinations. New oriented tourism needs to deteriorate the high destination dependency on T.O. and T.A. It is also necessary to promote new and reformed distribution channels where tourists can have direct access to tourist products and services. Tourist must have the ability to evaluate, compare and buy directly from the producers.

Nowadays every computer can become a selling point of transportation and accommodation. Every electronic calculator can be transformed on a pantheon of tourist information and a comparison tool. Via e-tourism, tourist offices have entered to everyone’s home. Tourism destinations can use e-tourism in order to have the unique opportunity to start controlling their development, select the market segments they want, and rejuvenate such tourism enterprising growth able to achieve higher profitability and competitiveness. If e-tourism is fully exploited by destination’s decision makers and marketers, local authorities can better serve their fundamental aim, which is the sufficient development, evolution, and prosperity of destination’s local community.

REFERENCES


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FROM DESTINATION IMAGE BUILDING TO IDENTITY-BASED BRANDING

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Finland

ABSTRACT

The co-creation view of brands and branding is a neglected area in destination branding literature. Much the same way, the destination branding research, in particular, lacks models that profoundly describe branding activities. More importantly, although destination branding has gained growing academic interest, the empirical knowledge of it is still rare. This study provided an empirically-grounded framework of destination branding process that also described the branding activities relying on the empirical evidences. Co-creation and stakeholder views are taken when modelling the branding process in the country context.

Keywords: destination image building, destination branding, identity-based branding, country branding

INTRODUCTION

The general branding literature is fragmented and lacks a model that describes brand building activities of the company (Wallström et al., 2008). In much the same way, the destination branding research, in particular, lacks models that profoundly describe branding activities. In his literature review, Pike (2009) identified three notable research streams in destination branding: 1) destination brand identity development, 2) destination brand positioning and 3) destination brand equity measurement and tracking. However, he stated that all of these areas lack particularly in-depth analysis of activities involved.

Some recent attempts to develop framework for destination brand management or destination branding, however, occur, stressing that destination branding has special features, or activities, of its own that have to be understood. These views also suggest that corporate branding and service branding approaches have important and useful similarities with destination branding (Hankinson, 2007; 2009; Saraniemi, 2009). Furthermore, in general marketing and recently in branding literature, as well, emerging streams have recognized that companies and all their stakeholders co-create value that is “perceived use value” of the stakeholders (e.g. Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Merz et al., 2009). This co-creation view seems to be particularly useful in tourism destination context, where customers and providers co-produce experiences in interaction (c.f. Hankinson, 2007; Saraniemi & Kylänen, forthcoming). However, the co-creation view of brands and branding is a neglected area in destination branding literature. More importantly, although destination branding has gained growing academic interest, the empirical knowledge of it is still rare.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to identify the destination brand building activities during the branding process. This aim is achieved by answering the research question: how are destination branding and image building processes related? The perspective is that of a national tourism organisation (NTO). This study draws from emerging identity-based branding literature (see e.g Burmann et al., 2009; de Chernatony and Cottam, 2005; de Chernatony and Harris, 2000; Dunn and Davies, 2003; Urde, 2003) that emphasises the internal aspects, for example supportive culture of the organisation when branding. In addition, this approach calls for further research on relationships between identity and image dimensions of organisations (see Burmann et al., 2009).

The empirical part is conducted as a case study of one country and its image building activities during a 30 year period. The multiple data was gathered through standardised personal interviews in the chosen target market, conversational interviews with tourism practitioners in the NTO and in both domestic tourism companies and companies in the target market. In addition, marketing documents of the NTO and the vast press media data were content analysed. As a result of the study and for covering
the above mentioned research gaps in destination branding literature, an empirically-grounded model for co-created destination branding is constructed.

The paper is structured as follows: first, the literature review of streams in destination brand conceptualisation as well as destination brand building activities and processes is presented. Thereafter, the methodology of the study is described. After that, an empirically grounded framework of co-created destination branding is presented. Finally, conclusions are drawn and further studies are suggested.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Merz et al. (2009) divide the evolution of branding literature into the four brand eras that conceptualise the brand and brand value from different perspectives: 1) Individual Goods-Focus Brand Era, 2) Value-Focus Brand Era, 3) Relationship-Focus Brand Era and 4) Stakeholder-Focus Brand Era. According to the first view, brand value was embedded in the physical goods, whereas the second view emphasised creation of the brand image. The Relationship-Focus Brand Era highlighted dyadic brand relationships and brand as a promise. Finally, the stakeholder view acknowledges brands as dynamic and social processes between the firm, brand and all stakeholders. (Merz et al., 2009). This division is useful also when understanding the evolution of the destination branding literature and practices. Saraniemi and Ahonen (2008) in their overview of the current destination branding literature noted that tourism research has adapted several perspectives from general branding literature. Still, according to their analysis, brand management and especially image approach have emphasised the research (e.g. Hankinson, 2005; Hosany et al., 2006; Prebensen, 2007). These perspectives refer strongly to the Value-Focus Brand Era with some features from Relationship-Focus.

For example, one of the most cited definitions for destination brand is that introduced by Ritchie and Ritchie (1998): “A name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the place; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the place; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce pleasurable memories of the place experience” (italics added). Although this definition delimits a brand being only a symbol of the place, it clearly infers that ‘brand’ is related to differentiation and is something that happens in relation to competitors, being not an isolated perception as ‘image’ might be (cf. Konecnik & Go, 2008). Interestingly, the early definitions of value in marketing literature, for example in the benefits-sacrifice approach to value, define value as the trade-off between benefits and sacrifices, including also a third component; ‘relative to competition’ (see e.g. de Chernatony, Harris, Dall’Olmo Riley, 2000), and stressing that customers compare alternatives when making the evaluation. Thus, the concepts of brand and value seem to have common features and it is therefore reasonable to argue that both brand and value are possible to co-create.

Konecnik (2004) proposed that evaluating the destination image is a self-analysis process towards branding. Therefore, considering the images in the target market (see also Konecnik & Gartner, 2008) is an important activity of the branding process. However, particularly, in destination branding literature, there are only a few models that encompass the destination brand building process and only a couple that have incorporated image evaluation or image building as part of the process. None has encompassed the co-creation approach to the brand.

Cai’s (2002) co-operative branding model included image building, but falls short as an explicit process or activity description. Niininen et al. (2007) presented a process model, but that did not take images into consideration. However, their model notes many challenges of destination branding, such as planning of brand strategy and managing of stakeholder relationships. The model by Niininen et al. (2007) includes following phases 1) determining a brand vision, 2) communicating the brand vision, 3) managing partnerships and 4) measuring brand performance. Konecnik and Go (2008) criticised destination branding studies as being ‘customer-centric’ and proposed a framework for destination brand identity that adapted the product brand leadership model by Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000). This destination brand identity framework acknowledges the importance of the producer in the branding process and emphasises the role of brand identity. Accordingly, this view highlights the role of internal stakeholders and relates to the Relationship-Focus Brand Era (cf. Merz et al., 2009). According to Cai
(2002), the missing link between image building and branding is the brand identity that becomes an integral part of the destination branding process.

According to Merz et al. (2009), the stakeholder perspective emphasises that process rather than output orientation is important and that all stakeholders contribute to a brand’s value, whether they are part of e.g. a brand community or not. In addition, Gregory (2007) proposed that the brand process is dynamic, evolving and negotiated by the firm and its stakeholders. In the destination context, the importance of stakeholders is acknowledged (e.g. Morgan et al., 2003) but the co-creation perspective is under theorised.

**METHODODOLOGY**

This study is an intensive single case study that focuses on finding out as much as possible on one or few cases. The key interest is the case itself, although the research is theoretically informed and capable of developing a theory (Dyer & Wilkins, 1991). This study was intended to produce a story of image building activities of a particular NTO. Thus, the case is bound to be the phenomenon of destination branding at country context. The setting, on the other hand, describes the actors in the case (Stake, 2000). The setting here is the NTO. The study has also a specific example market for destination branding which is chosen according to its importance as a target market.

This is characteristically a development story whose internal changes are important to identify. The possibility to follow the changes makes the case unique and worth of this study. The research process portrays several data collection and analysis methods. This is useful when conducting case study research which typically draws on multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2007).

This case study introduces the image building efforts of the specific NTO (supply side/induced image formation) during the last three decades, press media influence (independent/autonomous) and tourists’ associations (demand side/organic) on that. Data includes 1) standardised interviews (n=2001) of the spontaneous country images in the target market, 2) open, conversational interviews with tourism practitioners in the NTO, domestic companies and tour operators in the target market (18 interviews, 21 interviewees), and 3) press articles about the country from the target market press (n=155). In addition, the marketing documents of the NTO from the studied period were content analysed. Analysing methods included theme-based categorisation of the interviews. The press article data was analysed using theme-based categorisation for texts and content analysis for pictures and for detailed analysis of arranged press media tours originated articles, rhetorical analysis. As interviews may not reflect the “reality” but the memories and constructed realities and understanding of the respondents, they are cross-checked several times and also verified by using secondary data of archives considering for example marketing plans done in the NTO during the years.

The research process started by conducting standardised interviews, with open responses, in the seven target markets of the NTO. The aim of the spontaneous images research was to identify the prevailing images of the country to provide the basis of brand strategy. Then, for identifying background of the revealed country image in the chosen target market, press articles filed by NTO were analysed. These first steps focused on image in the market. Next, the focus turned towards the image building activities of the NTO. At the same time, image as a dimension of the destination brand started to emerge. The following step deepened understanding of the media work of the NTO and the press media influence on the demand side image. Finally, different manager-level interviews in the NTO, and tourism practitioners interviews were analysed to understand the image building and branding activities of the NTO during the three decades. These all were reflected with the literature in an abductive?? manner.

**EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

Image building as a dimension of branding emerges from the analysis. In the figure 1, two models of 1) image building and 2) identity-based branding are in interaction and related. The self-analysis of the destination image is often the first activity of the branding process. The spontaneous images study of seven target markets was conducted for identifying the images as a basis of the brand
strategy. However, in NTO, the full utilisation of it did not exist. Positioning and identifying the target markets is another activity for both processes. According to the general manager of NTO, at least earlier, the problem has been the lack of targeted marketing and difficulties in arousing initial interest in the country within the markets.

The first two steps of the both models are the same and after them, differences occur in the actions. “We tried to decide what the Country represents...and amongst a huge number of attributes, these four were gradually identified” (General manager). This comment relates to an initial branding process of the NTO and the phase where the brand identity, or “philosophy behind the brand”, was determined in a small group of the important stakeholders.

However, the empirical evidences of this study referred mostly to an image building process. For example, “Attempts have been made to brand or strengthen and promote the country’s image for decades and by several different actors”. (General manager in NTO). This refers to “enhancing favourable images”. The lack of co-ordination with different stakeholders has hindered “the communication of the brand promise”: “With relatively little coordination every operator has promoted the Country’s image, each in his own way.” (General manager in NTO). The message seen for example in promotional pictures was not based on any particular planning or research. “I assume that the choosing of pictures and preference of artists was based on experience and knowledge”. (Former general manager).

Apparently, the internal characteristics and activities of the NTO are important when implementing the branding process. This study revealed that structures, strategy and culture of the NTO, that is the identity of the NTO, are in particular role. For example, the results of the image study and the planned marketing campaign were forgotten for years before the branding process started systematically:

“It was approved by the operative steering group of tourism companies and regional DMOs and afterwards, it was forgotten.” (Marketing manager). Therefore, by identity-based branding, I do not mean only destination identity but the identity of the NTO and stakeholders, as well. These all affect the process, anyway.

The NTO has co-operated with its stakeholders during the years with varying success. “The tourism industry started to gain respect from other industries and fruitful cooperation abroad started, resulting in me becoming a board member of the Foreign Trade Association”. (Former general manager). However, later comment revealed that “It is a pity that for so long the activities were not undertaken systematically, together.” (General manager). The concrete involvement of stakeholders in the branding process has not occurred during the research process. The systematic branding process, however, was in a very initial phase. Furthermore, if we see producing experiences together with customers and stakeholders as a part of the branding process, the co-creation of the brand does exist. But it has not been a systematically planned process like branding, according to many definitions, is.

From the stakeholder perspective, the image building process produces projected images to interpret and identity-based branding a promise. The former process implements tactical, reactive planning and the latter strategic, proactive planning with monitoring the brand performance regularly.

Although identifying the values-based identity of the destination and involving stakeholders to the branding process (as co-creators) are the main actions that seem to differentiate destination branding from image building, the conclusive remark is that destination branding includes image building. Moreover, image building is analogous with product-bound branding whereas the identity-based branding is not just a branding structure or an implementation strategy, but a way for understanding the branding in the destination. The branding philosophy may well change in the destination, while the process is usually long. Thus, it is useful to do historical studies whenever it is possible in this context. In this NTO, the analysed time-period can be divided into 1) the period of “traditional” image building, concentrating on the (potential) customer’s perspective on image, and 2) initial period of identity-based, or inside-out branding, where the basis of the brand promise, the destination values, are identified.
Figure 1
Empirically-grounded model of the destination image building and identity-based branding

1) Image building / product-bound branding
   - Self-analysis of destination image, markets and competitors
   - Positioning and identifying target markets
   - Enhancing favorable images

2) Identity-based branding
   - Incorporating destination values based on NTO, stakeholder and brand values, history and culture
   - Identifying destination’s brand identity based on destination values
   - Determining the brand vision
   - Communicating the brand promise
   - Measuring and monitoring the brand performance regularly, implementing strategic planning proactively

Stakeholder / destination interface
- Interpretation of the projected image by the market
- Stakeholder / destination interface
- Direct and indirect, physical and virtual experiences co-created in various interactions between stakeholders, destination and NTO

Involving stakeholders in the branding process
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study provided an empirically-grounded framework of co-created destination branding process that also described the branding activities relying on the empirical evidences.

It seems that the approach of branding or philosophy of branding makes the biggest difference between image building and branding. In particular, branding philosophies are differentiated by the level of involvement of stakeholders and involvement of the destination’s internal values, towards the destination branding process. Product-bound branding approaches (c.f. Burmann, 2009) presented by e.g. Ritchie & Ritchie (1988) do not differ greatly from image building techniques in the “senders-end” of the destination. Considering both the internal i.e. destination (including DMO) -generated activities and external activities and factors of the destination, more comprehensively, distinguishes the later approaches of branding from image building. For example, Hankinson (2007) modelled the destination brand management using the concepts of internal and external brand identities. However, although the existing advantages of the destination branding framework to some extent seem to adopt product-bound branding, they still do not describe the branding process in the destination clearly enough and, moreover, they do not take into consideration the co-creation view of the brand.

In conclusion, the destination brand is defined in a number of hierarchically connected ways. First, it is a subjective impression that conveys the core values, commitment and promise uniquely associated with a particular place emerging from the identities of the destination and its supply-side and demand-side stakeholders (c.f. Urde, 2003). Supply-side stakeholders are e.g. tourism dependent businesses, government agencies, and in the demand-side are customers. The destination brand emerges and evolves from the interactions of all stakeholders. Second, it is a holistic co-created identity based on a destination's core values which are interpreted by both supply and demand side stakeholders. For example, Hankinson (2007) notes co-production of services by providers and customers in the destination.

Third, the destination identity emerges from interactions between all stakeholders and is not controlled by anyone. However, the brand identity seems to be the communicative part and to some extent manageable part of the more stable destination identity. Fourth, destinations should be viewed as an evolving process and not a fixed and completed identity.

For managers, this study suggests that without systematic and strategic, pro-active branding activities the image emerges in the market as less manageable. In addition, it is useful to co-ordinate different image building activities under the same branding strategy (e.g. publicity management). All the image building activities should have follow-up systems, as well. It is also useful to understand branding as a philosophy, rather than taking it as just a collection of advertising campaigns or just a brand strategy choice. In this regard, the branding philosophy relates to a brand orientation concept of the organisation (c.f. Urde, 2003).

Obviously, this study has its limitations. The demand-side data in this study is restricted to the certain market and to the certain communications channel (press media). This may cause bias for the results. However, analysing the supply-side (NTO) activities from the wider than only one market’s perspective, gave me complementary knowledge about branding process in the studied NTO.

The study opens up several new insights for further study. Among most interesting areas yet to be studied in this context are brand equity, brand value and brand architectures (see e.g. Dinnie, 2008). In addition, as previous literature suggested (e.g. Hankinson, 2004; 2007), management of different stakeholder groups and relationships within them also occurred as an important action of the NTO in this study. This perspective and especially brand co-creation with these stakeholders has many possibilities for further studies. The tourism context may well be an interesting theory-generating context for general marketing and branding research in this study area, as well.
REFERENCES


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The formation of the Chinese national identity is the result of a complicated historical progression. Since the 1980s, the process of globalization and the introduction of the market system have played an important role in shaping the national identity. The assertion of nation, as a means to reinforce the common identity of residents of different ethnicities, now also seeks to communicate distinctive, valuable qualities in foreign markets and has thus become not only a political process but also a way to survive in the international market system. Branding the nation in the globalised world is a strategy or tool in the competition for attention and wealth; and a tool of self-affirmation. Branding is a deliberate process applied to the shaping of a nation’s image and reputation on the global stage, in the heightened global competition for ascendancy. This paper studied national branding and nation building from the perspective of international tourism promotion and development. It has reviewed the literature of national identity and nation branding to develop a conceptual framework which was then applied to the current situation in China. This conceptual framework was based on the concepts of co-branding and perceived fit. It discusses the type of nation brand that China may develop and how this related to individual destinations through a brand architecture.

Keys: China, image, brand architecture, brand fit, destination management

INTRODUCTION

The formation of the Chinese national identity is the result of a complicated historical progression and is in fact a new phenomenon to the Chinese people very much linked with the process of modernity in the late 19th and early 20th century as it is in other developing countries. Over this time Chinese national identity, though often in debate, has become a core force for national coherence, and plays an important role in the shaping, enriching and carrying forward the Chinese national spirit. The identity of China was reinforced and reinterpreted under the new China with its strong government control.

Today, China has taken a central role in world affairs and in adopting a market economy has stimulated the growth of tourism along with many other sectors. In doing so China now competes on the international stage and must mobilize all its resources to ensure it maximizes its competitive advantage. Branding the nation in the globalised world is a strategy or tool in the competition for attention and wealth as well as a tool of self-affirmation of national identity. Branding is a deliberate process applied to the shaping of a nation’s image and reputation on the global stage, in the heightened global competition for ascendancy. This paper examines the concepts of nation branding and nation building from the perspective of international tourism promotion and development. It will review the literature of branding and nation branding to develop a conceptual framework which is then applied to the current situation in China.
Increasingly nations are developing nation brands. These countries include Australia (Brand Australia), New Zealand (100% pure) The United Kingdom (Cool Britannia) and India (Incredible India). Yet development of nation brands is expensive and not guaranteed to be successful. Tourism Australia's $40m "Where the bloody hell are you?" campaign, is generally considered to have been unsuccessful. Its replacement that sought to capitalize on the launch of the movie epic ‘Australia’ has been criticized on the basis of the poor box office performance of that movie. On the other hand, New Zealand’s national brand introduced in 1999 is still considered to be performing well and reports suggest that the government is interested in taking it "to the next level" in order to get "better alignment" between all of those sectors that are marketing New Zealand products and services abroad (Lee, 2009). Here we see an example of how a nation brand can provide some sense of unity and collaboration between various components of the economy.

Studies on country or destination brand image (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Hui & Aung, 2009; Laws, Scott, & Parfitt, 2002; Pike, 2002; Stabler, 1988) indicated that positive destination image underpins the success of tourism marketing. Nation branding however is a more intricate task than branding a product, company or destination. The complexity is due to the many stakeholder groups involved in developing such a brand with these groups extending well beyond the tourism sector. Nation branding also encompasses issues of national identity. Chinese national identity, though often in debate, has become a core force for national coherence, and plays an important role in the shaping, enriching and carrying forward the Chinese national spirit. Thus the definition of the nation brand for China is a political as well as economic issue. The assertion of nation, as a means to reinforce the common identity of residents of different ethnicities, is being adapted to communicate distinctive, valuable qualities in foreign markets and has thus become not only a political process but also a way to survive in the international market system.

In order to address the complex issue of nation branding in the context of China, this paper reviewed a number of relevant concepts and then examine the literature relating to brand architecture to understand the relationship between the parts of a nation brand. It then adopted the concept of co-branding as important to understand this relationship and provides a framework with which to examine the ‘brand fit’ between different components of the national brand architecture. It therefore provided a conceptual contribution to the study of nation branding by bringing previously separate literatures together and demonstrating the advantage of considering a nation brand as involving co-branding. This paper begins by reviewing the concepts of brand and co-brand in the context of nation branding and then examines brand architecture. It applies the concept of ‘brand fit’ to provide a practical method for assessing the contribution of individual brands to that of Brand China.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

The word ‘brand’ according to Blackett and Russell (1999) is derived from the old Norse word meaning “to burn” from when livestock was marked by owners to identify or distinguish their cattle from those of their neighbors. Branding was applied to products when craftsmen applied distinctive marks so customers could easily recognize their products or workmanship. This usage underpins the definition of a brand as a tangible a name, term, sign, symbol, or design (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993; Marconi, 2000). A second psychological definition (ie Calkins (2005) indicates that a brand is a set of associations linking a name, mark or symbol associated with a product or service thus focusing on the mental effects of the tangible mark. A third type of definition expands the scope of these psychological associations to encompass the benefits and added value that customers think about when considering the brand (Marconi, 2000). Thus from this psychological perspective brand names communicate attributes and meaning which are designed to enhance the value of a product beyond its functional value. A brand facilitates rapid identification of the product and its (re)purchase by customers (McDowell & Batten, 2005). Brands are important because they give consumers information about product quality and other characteristics (Rao & Ruekert, 1994). Here the definition of de Chernatony and Riley (1994, p. 18) is adopted as: ‘an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant unique added values which match their needs most closely’. The concept of a brand “lies at the heart of marketing theory and practice” (Pearson, 1996, p. 6), and in particular, when building a new brand the concept should lead to consumer satisfaction and to competitive advantage.
Brand orientation involves the processes of creating, developing and protection of brand identity in communication with target market groups (Simoes & Dibb, 2001).

There has been a considerable application within the tourism literature of the concept of branding to destinations (Crockett & Wood, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Gilmore, 2002; Hui & Aung, 2009; Laws, et al., 2002; Morgan, Pritchard, & Piggott, 2002; Pike, 2002; Pritchard & Morgan, 1998; Stabler, 1988) but surprisingly little discussion of another aspect of tourism branding; the co-branding of tourism products and services. Tourism service businesses may be considered to be linked to each other in a chain, for example, tourists first receive information prior to travel from the travel agent and stay within a hotel at the destination, eat in a restaurant, go out and interact with locals or visit tourist attractions and journey back home (Zehrer & Pechlaner, 2006). Mostly the tourism literature focused on functional integration between tourism chain partners but there is also the opportunity for development co-marketing alliances. Bucklin and Sengupta (1993, p. 32) defined a co-marketing alliance as ‘the mutual recognition and understanding that the success of each firm depends in part on the other firm’. This concept is implicited in the idea of destination branding where the greatest challenge to implementation is communicating the importance and value of individual operators working together. Outside tourism there are a number of examples of companies developing co-marketing alliances. For example, Lipton increased its sales of tea by 500 percent in the first four years through a partnership with Pepsi (Keller, 2003). In brief, the overall tourist experience is co-produced by many different suppliers, and co-branding is a form of marketing strategy that may strengthen this link to the benefit of two suppliers as well as the destination overall.

There is no single definition of co-branding that has been agreed but co-branding definitions have some similar characteristics. Firstly, co-branding is the conjunction of two or more brands, both with significant customer recognition, secondly all participating brand names are retained and thirdly co-branding applies these two brand names to a separate and unique product. Examples include IBM with Intel and Northwest Airlines with Visa Card (Leuthesser, Kohli, & Suri, 2003; Rao & Ruekert, 1994). Here, co-branding is defined as two recognised brands joined together and located in one space. The concept of brand extension is distinct from co-branding. A brand extension involves developing a new product based on an existing brand name; for example, one brand produces toothpaste and the extended brand produces mouthwash (Aaker, 1990; Herr, Farquhar, & Fazio, 1996). Co-branding occurs when two or more branded products are integrated together; for example Bacardi Rum and Coca-Cola (Rao & Ruekert, 1994).

Nation brand, image and identity

The literature of nation branding is developing (see Journal of Brand Management 2000 Special Issue) but there remains some definitional issues which needs resolution. Here we should firstly distinguish between a nation’s image and nation branding (the process of developing a nation brand). A nation’s image can be defined as the total sum of all mental associations about a nation in the mind of international stakeholders (Fan 2008) and may be considered to have ‘parts’ or components related to the political, economic and cultural environment and history of the nation. Nation branding refers to the application of branding and marketing communications techniques to promote and manage a nation’s image; thus a nation’s brand may be considered the desired image or what is projected to other. Thus, a nation’s brand is what a nation’s people want the world to understand about it and incorporates its most central, enduring and distinctive features.

Nation identity, based on Albert and Whetten’s definition of organisational identity (1985), is the collective understanding by a nation’s people of the features presumed to be central and relatively permanent, and that distinguish the nation from other nations.

‘National identity embodies the characteristics of a nation that its people perceive to be central, distinctive, and enduring (CED) in a nation when past, present and future are taken into account. It refers to the essentially irrational psychological bond that binds fellow nationals together and which is supposed to constitute the essence of national identity’ (Fan 2008, p. 3).
Triandafyllidou (1998) considered that this psychological bond is similar to the concept of “a sense of belonging” and point an important relationship between an individual and the nation. More specially, national identity has the following key elements: an historic territory, or homeland; common myths and historical memories; a common, mass public culture; common legal rights and duties for all members; and a common economy with territorial mobility for all members (Smith, 1991:14). A nation’s identity, image and brand are all mental associations generated by knowledge and past experience. A nation’s image exists without conscious effort and every country has a current image to its international audience, be it strong or weak, clear or vague (Fan 2008). Several studies on nation branding, country of origin effects and destination image have demonstrated the marketing values of positive nation/destination image on the consumers’ purchase decisions. Country image can therefore affect attitude towards product brands as well (Tse & Gorn, 1993) as well as those of destinations.

**Nation brands and brand architecture**

As may be seen from the above, developing a nation brand is a purposive process in some ways similar to development of a corporate brands (Balmer and Grey, 2003; Riel and Balmer, 1997), but there are significant differences between the two as shown in Figure 1 from Dooley and Bowie (2005, p. 403). The development of a nation brand is far more complicated than the change of a corporate brand. In fact some consider that ‘the image of a nation is so complex and fluid as to deny the clarity implicit in a term such as brand image’ (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2000, p. 58). A country may have a strong awareness overseas but internal political events may affect parts of its overall identity and thus it is difficult and complex to communicate an image of a country that is coherent because there is a continual rearrangement of a countries attributes due to uncontrolled (and uncontrollable) events.

![Brand architecture](image)

**Figure 1**
Brand architecture: The structure of corporate and nation umbrella brands

A second issue that needs to be addressed is the inclusion of stakeholders in developing the nation brand. Relevant industry groups involved in the effort to develop a nation brand and hence ‘improve’ a country's image include chambers of commerce, councils, tourist boards from various destinations within the country, government agencies and representatives from sectors such as mining, agriculture, sport, etc. The accommodation of such diversity is a major challenge for countries seeking to brand themselves effectively. For example a major challenge for Scotland the Brand is to forge a national brand that promotes not only the traditional sectors for which the country is known but also the high-tech sector for which the established image of Scotland has little resonance. New Zealand has a dilemma caused by a country attempting to develop and implement a national brand which can be sufficiently encompassing to promote strong primary industries (sheep, rugby and trees in the case of New Zealand) and at the same time successfully promote pharmaceutical and high-tech industries.
The solution to this second difficulty is possible through identification of some sort of brand architecture. Brand architecture’s origins can be traced back to discussions on structures of the brand portfolio when prior to this brands were considered to be stand-alone entities. A pioneer study by Olins (1989) depicted three basic portfolio structures; monolithic, endorsed and branded. In a monolithic structure sub-brands are merely an extension of the corporate umbrella brand. In a branded structure the opposite is true: sub-brands are very much separated from the corporate brand and each brand has its own name and visual identity. The endorsed structure lies between the monolithic and the branded structures. In this case each brand possesses a unique identity but is also affiliated to a certain degree with the corporate identity (Dooley & Bowie, 2005).

**Brand architecture of nations and regions**

One approach to organizing the architecture of a nation is in terms of its relationship to its component parts in this case a region and this has been analysed using the Brand Box Model of de Chernatony and McWilliam (1990). These authors have used two dimensions to describe a brand, the symbolic and functional dimensions. The symbolic dimension is characterised as having ‘value-expressive’ aspects whereby people choose to visit a place to display their own self-concept (see Figure 2). The second dimension, functionality, captures the consumer’s concern for the performance of the place (for example, weather, beaches, mountains and sky, museums, shops, and so on). A number of authors have used this model to examine how nations and regions map onto these two dimensions. The results indicated that because countries are so functionally diverse, they should focus on the emotional or representation dimensions of their brand. Regions and cities, however, which are smaller in scale and more specific in nature, should focus their brand building efforts on the more functional facets (Caldwell & Freire, 2004).

![Figure 2: The Brand Box Model](image)

These emotional or symbolic dimensions of the nation brand are at a higher level of abstraction than the physical attributes of the individual brands. They are not pegged at the level of individual companies, attractions or features, but arise from its people, culture, mentality and styles of doing business (Papadopoulos and Haslop, 2002). Furthermore, Mansfield argued ‘if there exist universal attributes to be considered at the country level then the smaller the perceived destination, the more likely it is that it will be considered by rather specific, non-universal characteristics’ (Mansfield, 1992, p. 415). Conversely, the way citizens of different countries perceive a particular destination country can differ widely, but views regarding a region tend to be more stable and are therefore easier to manage (Mansfield, 1992).

Given the complexity of developing a brand image with ‘parts’ linked through a brand architecture, are there any tools that can help to analyse and diagnose the best arrangement for the architecture of a portfolio of brands? In the following section an approach based on the concept of
brand ‘fit’ is discussed. It draws from the concept of co-branding and discusses how synergistic two brands are. This section defines perceived brand fit, discusses how perceived brand fit has been measured and provides a comprehensive framework of perceived brand fit components.

**Perceived brand fit**

Perceived fit is important because it increases the positive value and reduces the negative outcomes from co-branding (DelVecchio & Smith, 2005). Fit is defined by Aaker and Keller (1990) as when consumers transfer the perceived quality (or other attributes) of a brand from the original brand to a second product and perceive that these two fit together. This paper used definitions of Simonin and Ruth (1998) and DelVecchio and Smith (2005), emphasising perceived fit as a match in products and brand images between two partners, and where some aspects of the brand image from the original brand transfers to and affiliates with the second brand.

A perceived fit model has been proposed by Aaker and Keller (1990) and consists of three dimensions; complementary, substitute and transferability fit. The first complementary dimension describes the extent to which two products are consumed jointly to satisfy a particular need and in order to measure the degree of complementary fit, the products must be evaluated on product features, product concepts or schema, product usage and product goals (Martin & Stewart, 2001). Product feature are evaluated on the similarity of the tangible or physical product characteristics, or the relatedness of two product categories which ‘stretch’ the requirement of one product to another product category; for example, when one brand produces toothpaste and the extended brand produces mouthwash (Herr, et al., 1996). Similarity of product concepts or brand image is when related products share product features. Product usage is not necessarily focused on how the two products features are similar, but on how the two products can be used for different occasions. Thus, product usage is transferred from one product to another; for example, in hotel and restaurant co-branding customers stay in the hotel and use the accommodation for resting and sleeping and the restaurant will also be used as they need a place to eat and be entertained. Lastly, product goal similarity is based on the two products providing pieces of information which are useful and accessible to consumers in specific circumstances. Thus, consumers receiving information about the association of two products infer a common goal affecting the behaviour of their intention, and are then ready to transfer from one to another (Martin & Stewart, 2001, p. 474).

The second dimension of fit ‘substitutability’ is when one product can be used to replace the other and still provide the same level of satisfaction. The third dimension of fit ‘transferability’ is how consumers perceive the link between the skills and assets of two brands, for example, if the quality of the equipment used and skill of employees’ performance in the second brand is of the same quality as the core brand or original brand (Aaker, 1990). These three components allow measurement of the dimensions of overall brand fit which has been found to relate to intention to purchase a co-branded product. Aaker and Keller’s perceived fit model has been used by several researchers including Bottomley and Doyle (1996), Simonin and Ruth (1998) and DelVecchio and Smith (2005) although not in the context of nation or destination brands.

**DISCUSSION**

Since the 1980s, the process of globalization and the introduction of the market system have played an important role in shaping the Chinese national identity. The assertion of nation, as a means to reinforce the common identity of residents of different ethnicities, now also seeks to communicate distinctive, valuable qualities in foreign markets and has thus become not only a political process but also a way to survive in the international market system. The discourse of nation branding in China seeks to obtain a clear and single image of China.

Although the branding of the tourism products and branding of regional tourism destinations has becoming popular in China, branding China in the international market has not been carried out And indeed there has been little discussion regarding this issue. This paper proposed that one dimension of this discussion should consider the development of China’s national brand architecture and in the process that consideration of the concept of brand fit to the discussion of nation branding may be useful. Prior research suggested that China’s nation brand should be at a higher level of abstraction than functional
features of products, culture or destinations. Through developing a brand architecture, China’s nation brand could then be linked to destination brands (in the case of tourism) which depicted more tangible features that ‘fit’ with the nation brand. The extent of fit could then be examined by using the model proposed by Aaker and Keller (1990). More broadly conceptualizing nation or indeed destination branding as co-branding allows application of new tools and models for tourism managers. This appears an area of significant research potential.

Clearly, developing a nation brand is a complex undertaking and can only happen with widespread support. National branding brings a new urgency and new language to old processes such as national identity and nation building. In the case of China, the nation brand is further complicated because of the transition China is experiencing and the special political image China holds. As China is a new player in the international system, politically and in the international market, its national identity and branding are not necessarily easily understood and accepted by international society. The failure of 12 national holiday resorts designed for the international markets in the 1980s and 1990s is an example of the need for ‘fit’ between brand architecture components. It was later found out that the failure was largely due to the image that China, as a socialist country, had in the international world. This image was not consistent with that of a leisure and consumption orientated destination.

Similarly, the presentation and interpretation of heritage sites and development of ethnic tourism may also raise conflicts. Internal factors, such as historical, psychological and political events, play similar important roles in develop national identity and in shaping the development of contemporary Chinese nationalism. The transition to a market economy therefore highlights debates and issues in identification of national identity inside China. The diverse differences in regional experience of the international tourism markets may slow down the process of reaching agreements on national identity and image. It can be seen that although the discourse of national branding seeks to obtain a clear and single image of China this can only happen with widespread political support, thus the challenge remains as to how to construct and present the brand image in order to obtain market preference and also follow the process and traditions of nation building. National branding brings a new urgency and new language to old processes.

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INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS’ IMAGE OF ZHANGJIAJIE, CHINA AS A HOLIDAY DESTINATION: CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TRAVEL BLOGS

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study was to identify Western travellers’ perception of Zhangjiajie as a tourist destination. The travel blogs were applied as an alternative research instrument to understand negative and positive images from travellers’ point of view. The popular travel blog sites were identified through the Google search engine using the keyword, travel blog. Twenty two blogs were collected and seven blogs which did not contain a specific travel experience in Zhangjiajie or were not written by Western travellers were excluded. The remaining 15 travel blogs were placed in a file for qualitative data analysis. NVivo software, a computer software for qualitative data analysis, was used to perform content analysis on the blog data. The findings of this study indicated that generally, Western travellers were impressed by beautiful natural scenery and highly satisfied with nature-based tourism attractions. However, it was found that certain aspects including poor hotel facility, lack of English speaking tour guides and over-crowdedness should be improved to satisfy Western travelers. Travel blogs could be suggested as one of alternative methods to gain a more complete understanding of the dynamics of tourist experience. It has been argued that the particular challenge for the researcher is to construct a research design which maximizes naturalness. Developing creative and effective methods can be a great challenge, which future research need to explore in destination marketing studies.

Keywords: destination image, content analysis, travel blogs, Zhangjiajie

INTRODUCTION

Zhangjiajie, Hunan Province is one of the most popular tourist destinations in China due to the unique natural scenery of narrow sandstone pillars and peaks. Zhangjiajie is also known as China's first national forest park and a World Heritage Site by UNESCO under the title ‘Wulingyuan Scenic and Historic Interest Area’ (WSHIA). As the number of tourist increases, tourism has become the main source of tax revenue and the key industry for economic development of the city of Zhangjiajie. In 2007, Zhangjiajie had over 18 million tourist arrivals, nearly 3 times greater than the figure of 2000 and the total revenue of Zhangjiajie tourism industry reached in USD 13 billion (Zhangjiajie Statistical Yearbook 2008).

In spite of the dramatic increase of Asian tourists, the growth of the Western visitor’s market is relatively slow. The foreign tourist market of Zhangjiajie has heavily relied on Korean tourists.
According to Zhangjiajie Statistical Yearbook (2008), approximately 1.1 million foreign tourist visited Zhangjiajie in 2007 and Statistics showed nine out of ten foreign tourists were from South Korea. The problem is that the Korean market will eventually be saturated since it primarily comprises elderly visitors and that country’s total population is not large (Zhong et al., 2008). Therefore the local government should look for Western tourists as a substitute market segment to expend the foreign market and marketers should know what approaches should be taken to attract and satisfy the Western tourists.

Destination image plays an important role in influencing tourist decision choice and decision making. The previous tourism studies on destination image stress that word-of-mouth or advice from friends and relatives often ranks as the most influential source of pre-purchase information (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Crotts 1999). As a fundamental part of tourism marketing, thus, it is important for marketers in the tourism industry to understand Western tourists’ images of Zhangjiajie as a holiday destination.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Destination image is a valuable concept in understanding the destination selection process of tourists and destination positioning strategy, and so the concept of ‘image’ has received substantial attention by tourism researchers, industry practitioners and destination marketers (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Several studies based on the relationship between destination image and visitation intentions have found that there is a positive correlation between image and behaviour intention. In other words, destinations with strong and positive images are more likely to be considered and chosen in the travel decision process (Milman & Pizam, 1995). The research concluded that images are a crucial basis of destination choice and decision making (Baloglu, 2000; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989).

Due to the importance of destination image in tourism marketing research, numerous destination image studies have been conducted in the last two decades. There has been a strong preference for structured methods in researching destination image (Jenkins, 1999). Researchers using structured methods typically ask an individual to rate a set of the attribute components of destination image. The relevant scales usually include cultural and natural attractions, climate, accommodation and personal safety using standardised rating scales such as Likert and semantic differential response formats. Structured methodologies are easy to administer and suit sophisticated statistical techniques. Nevertheless, there is a danger, if the attributes are not derived from visitor themselves, that only a partial view of destination image is recorded (Pearce, 1988). In addition, different tourists may value the same destination attributes for different reasons. Dann (1996) also argued that the neo-positivist approaches, in which the check list of items in a visitor survey is generated by researchers, might not be capturing the full dynamics and richness of travellers’ destination images.

Some researchers have criticized structured surveys developed from the researchers’ viewpoint and attempted to explore the tourists’ own perspectives on the nature of the tourist destination. For example, a visual simulation approach has been developed. Boterill and Crompton (1989) developed photo-elicitation for investigating tourist experiences from the individual tourists’ perspective. The researchers invited a tourist to explore her thinking about her Mexican vacation using six snapshots she had personally photographed and the tourist was asked to identify how two of the photographs are similar and yet different from the third. The resulting constructs showed her individual perception of Mexico based on her personal experiences.

Markwell (1997) also emphasized the importance of photographs in the travel experience and conducted an empirical study of a nature-based tour experience by analyzing photographs taken by the participants. Twenty Australian university students who joined a tour to East Malaysia participated in the study and they were asked to provide the researcher with their photographs. Based on a data set of 2,680 photographs, the participants’ travel activities and major tourist attractions visited were analyzed. The study found that tourists’ photographs could be interpreted as reflecting, at least in part, their travel motivation as well as travel behaviour while in the tourist destination. In a similar vein, it would be
interesting to explore tourists’ destination images based on multi-faceted image components by analyzing personal photographs that were taken by the tourists.

Another possible qualitative measurement that could be a highly effective method to measure destination image from tourists’ point of view can be the use of tourists’ travel journals. Markwell & Bache (1998) argued that one of the most significant methodological issues for tourism research is the potential problem of reactivity in the research setting. Tourists may be reluctant to participate in studies since they may not want to be disturbed while on holiday. The researchers suggested the use of travel journal to overcome the problem and they argued the value of using personal diaries for an effective method to gain a more complete understanding of the dynamics of tourist experience. Tourists’ travel journals can capture rich tourists’ images of a destination from their perspective since the impressions and feelings about places, people they met and experiences which had some special meaning to the tourists can be recorded.

Due to the easy use of the Internet travel blogs, online travel journals, are becoming more and more popular. Travel blogs play an important role as many websites offer free or inexpensive travel blog formats. From a traveler’s point of view, travel blogs provide a new way to learn about tourist destinations as well as a useful tool which can communicate with other travelers. From the viewpoint of tourism destination marketers, they could be a cost-effective method to understand the strengths and weaknesses of a destination by collecting visitors’ perceptions of the tourist destination (Pan et al., 2007). Therefore, this research paper, as an experimental study, attempts to identify the Western tourists’ image of Zhangjiajie as a holiday destination by using their travel blogs.

METHODOLOGY

The popular travel blog sites were identified through the Google search engine using the keyword, travel blog on March 17, 2008. Twenty two blogs were collected and seven blogs which did not contain a specific travel experience in Zhangjiajie or were not written by Western travellers were excluded. The remaining 15 travel blogs were placed in a file for qualitative data analysis. The text contained in blogs was collected and content analyzed to identify the bloggers’ positive and negative images of Zhangjiajie as a holiday destination. The researcher and her research assistant independently coded the content of the blogs that possessed positive or negative sentences related to the blogger’s travel experience while in Zhangjiajie. To analyse word frequency, the full text of all 15 blogs was aggregated. Certain words commonly used in constructing sentences, stop words, such as “after” the” and “I” and those words that would not contribute to a meaningful interpretation of the results including “hour” “day” “time” were eliminated. Plural and singular words were also merged. NVivo software, a computer software for qualitative data analysis, was used to perform content analysis on the blog data.

FINDINGS

The gender of the sample was skewed with 60% male. The average length of stay in Zhangjiajie was 3 days. The majority of bloggers were likely to be travelling either alone or with one companion. In terms of month and year of visiting Zhangjiajie, nine bloggers travelled in 2008. Western travelers visited throughout the year but there were generally fewer visitors during the winter. The popular months for visiting Zhangjiajie were July and August.

The text of the travel blogs was analysed by word frequency. Table 1 displays most frequently used words on travel blogs for Zhangjiajie. Not surprisingly the image of Zhangjiajie projected by the Western travelers’ blogs appeared to be as a nature-base tourism destination which provides many mountains, rivers, and caves. ‘Zhangjiajie’ ‘park’ ‘mountain’ ‘walk’ were prominent words in their travel blogs. The result indicated that visiting the Zhangjiajie National Forest Park and mountain walking are the most popular travel activities while staying in Zhangjiajie. The frequently used keywords also reflected the main aspects of travel experience including accommodations (e.g., hotel and hostel), dining (e.g., restaurant, dinner, lunch, food and noodle), and transportation (e.g., car, train, airport and bus).
Table 1
Most Frequently Used words in Travel Blogs for Zhangjiajie

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>word</th>
<th>frequency</th>
<th>word</th>
<th>frequency</th>
<th>word</th>
<th>frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bus(es)</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>fog/foggy/haze</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>world</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hotel(s)/hostel</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>steps/stairs</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>breakfast</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walk/walking</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>long</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>car</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>bad</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>restaurant</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>park(s)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>station</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>travel</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhangjiajie</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>taxi</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>hot</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>down</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>cave(s)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>rice</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mountain(s)</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>pictures/photo(s)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>road</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>train</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>river(s)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>ticket(s)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>way</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>top/peak(s)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>map</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>town/village</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>ride</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>natural</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>city</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>group(s)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>beautiful</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guide</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>hike/hiking</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>forest</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tourist(s)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>food</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>new</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>room</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>national</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>climbing</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>place</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>price</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>view(s)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>entrance</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lift/elevator</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>amazing/fantastic</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>small</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>water</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tour</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>monkeys</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, it seems that Western travelers were not quite interested in visiting cultural/historical attractions while in Zhangjiajie. Very few words which are associated with cultural/historical attractions such as folk, museum, minority and art were mentioned. None of them visited either Tujia folk custom park or Zhangjiajie museum and Tujia was mentioned only two times to describe a local tour guide. Therefore, further studies are needed to investigate travel activity preference of Western travellers and their degree of awareness of cultural tourist attractions for a better marketing strategy to attract the market of western tourists.

Positive and Negative Images of Zhangjiajie as a Holiday Destination

To identify Western travellers’ positive image of Zhangjiajie as a holiday destination, good comments in the Western traveller’s blogs were coded. The finding of the content analysis indicated that they had a great impression on Zhangjiajie in terms of offering beautiful nature-based tourism attractions. A few bloggers described how much they appreciated unique natural scenery.

“The area is renown for its magnificent karst landscape, and as you can see from the pictures, it is a truly amazing sight. Some of the solo sandstone peaks dotting the landscape look like they will tumble any second, and especially when viewing them from above the views are very dramatic.”

“Zhangjiajie is located in west of Hunan province China, the natural sceneries are the most beautiful I had ever seen, the serene valleys, steep sandstone peaks, pure stream, dark green lake, magical cave, wonderful waterfall, hot spring, all these make me crazy.”

The content analysis of Western travellers’ blogs also showed that Western travellers were likely to be interested in experiencing and learning wild nature within natural settings, which are not too touristy and tended to travel off the beaten track to get away from the crowds. Since one of the primary reasons people visit a national park is to escape the noise and stresses of urban lifestyle noise pollution in the natural environments can be an environmental stressor. Some bloggers recommended walking off the beaten path to enjoy the beautiful scenery within a quiet and serene setting.
“The only peaceful time we had was after 1700 when the groups had left the mountain and we had the peaks all for ourselves. There were no tourists at all on the whole mountain after the groups had departed, and we cherished these two nights, enjoying the beautiful sunsets with nobody…. Having said that, we did manage to get away from the crowds (who all do a one day hectic tour of all the main sights) by walking in areas that were not marked on our map at all. So if you go to the area, don’t be afraid to walk off the beaten path, it is well worth it.”

The bloggers’ negative image of Zhangjiajie as a holiday destination was also identified. While they had a positive image on unique natural scenery and various nature-based attractions it seemed that they perceived Zhangjiajie as an unfriendly holiday destination to individual Western travelers in terms of lack of English speaking tour guide, communication gap, low quality of accommodation and being over-crowded with Asian group tourists. The bloggers’ positive and negative images of Zhangjiajie are summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Image of Zhangjiajie as a Holiday Destination

Quite a few negative experiences in various occasions were mentioned. The most common theme commented in the Western travellers’ blogs was about episodes which are related to communication problem. When tourists travel to a destination that has different cultural background from their country they might have some communication problem. Especially if people in the host country use different language the problem could be more serious. Majority of the bloggers encountered some difficulties in taking a local bus and ordering dishes at a local restaurant. It was also found that few English tour guides and poor English signpost at tourist attractions influenced negatively on their travel experience in Zhangjiajie.

“The guide changed his mind on the hotel, so it would be a different one each night, but didn’t tell us. He was meant to be able to speak English but didn’t at all. ………We called the people we booked the tour with and once we convinced them our guide didn’t speak English and wasn’t bothering with us we were promised a new guide in the afternoon. After lunch a man approached us and said hello. I said ‘ah…you are our new guide?’”. He looked confused. Guide number one said he was. We now had two guides that didn’t speak English!”

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Another unpleasant experience mentioned often was crowdedness and noise pollution in popular tourist areas. Large numbers of people and conflicts between visitor groups in a natural setting have been found to degrade users’ perceptions of the natural beauty of an environment (Daniel, 1990; Ormsby & Shafer, 2000). The national park of Zhangjiajie is facing the same problem of overcrowdedness during peak holiday season. Half of the bloggers complained that noise from crowds of package group tourists detracted from the quality of their travel experience and some of them even showed antipathy toward Asian group tourists.

“When on the bad side, the whole place was swarming with Chinese tour groups. In all the time we spent in the area, we saw only about a handful of “private” tourist not in a group. We got very crossed with them, as their main enjoyment in the park seemed to consist of making as much noise as possible. On top of that, their tour guides all carried megaphones, of which they made constant use. It was really impossible to enjoy this beautiful landscape with all this noise - have a look at the videos I took to get an impression of the level of noise.”

This finding could be explained by cross-cultural studies of tourist-tourist contact arguing that the level of tolerance of high-density differs across culture. According to the study of Ward et al. (2001), unlike Western groups, Asian groups such as Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans preferred, or at least tolerated group-based and high-density natural settings. Yagi and Pearce’s study (2002) also found that while the Western tourists tended to prefer smaller numbers of people in natural environment settings, such as the rainforest, the Japanese travelers preferred moderate to larger numbers. Based on various cross-cultural studies of tourist-tourist contact, Pearce (2005) concluded that for travellers from more group-oriented cultures such as Asian travellers, being with other travelers is preferred even in natural environment settings and stressed the difference in tourist-tourist encounter reactions between Western groups and Asian travelers (See Figure 2).

Figure 2
Tourist-Tourist Encounter Reactions in Natural Environment Settings
Pearce (2005) p. 119

Another possible explanation is that travel motivation between Western and Asian travellers could be different. Previous research focusing on motivations of visitors to national parks in Western countries found that the primary motivational factors were ‘learning about nature’, ‘stress release/relaxation’ and ‘challenge/adventure’ (Loker-Murphy, 1996; Uysal, et al., 1994). On the other hand, visitors to national parks in Korea were likely to consider the parks to be valuable recreational resources that provide important opportunities to spend quality time with family members as well as appreciate natural resources (Kim et al., 2002). Therefore, it could be possible that compared to Asian tourists Western travelers who seek relaxation as a principle travel motivation are less tolerant of crowdedness and noise pollution in natural environment settings. Another negative comment often mentioned was related to the low quality of accommodation. It was found that majority of the bloggers had unpleasant experience due to the problems related to accommodation while staying in Zhangjiajie. They perceived that the price of hotels was somewhat expensive for the quality of hotel facility and
were not satisfied with cleanliness of room, use of hot water and service quality of staff. In addition, the intrusive touts selling tout products of local travel agencies or hotel rooms at the train station and the overcharging taxi driver made a negative impression. The result of analysis of travel blogs showed that the service quality of people who are engaged in the tourism industry leaves much room for improvement to meet the service quality standard of Western travelers.

DISCUSSIONS

The main purpose of the study was to identify Western travellers’ perception of Zhangjiajie as a tourist destination. The travel blogs were applied as a research instrument to understand negative and positive images from travellers’ point of view. Generally, Western travellers were impressed by beautiful natural scenery and highly satisfied with nature-based tourism attractions. However, it was found that certain aspects should be improved to satisfy Western travelers. The major issues pointed out by bloggers were;

1) Poor hotel facilities
2) Lack of English speaking tour guides
3) Lack of English menu at local restaurants
4) Poor wayfinding and interpretive English signs at major tourist attractions
5) Being overcharged
6) Over-crowdedness in major tourist attractions

Most of Western travellers visit individually in Zhangjiajie. Thus, more tourist-friendly English signs for orientation, direction and information about tourist facilities should be provided so that individual travelers are able to find their way with no trouble and to use the tourist sites more effectively. Another major concern was over-crowdedness in summer, the peak holiday season. As pointed out in the result section, a large number of tourists and noise pollution at a nature-based tourist site such as a national park can detract from the quality of travel experience. To minimize the conflict between tourist groups and to maximize the enjoyment of their Zhangjiajie trip the local government should pay more attention to visitor management including number of tourists, type of tourists, timing of visitation, distribution of tourists and the behaviour of tourists.

The result of this study found that Western tourists’ activities and places visited were very limited. Majority of them visited major tourist attractions only in Wulingyuan county for mountain hiking. However, they were not likely to participate other types of tourist activities such as hot spring bath, drifting in a river and visiting folk museum. Although the local government has promoted the minority culture, the Tujias, the Bais and the Miaos’ culture, as one of major tourism products in Zhangjiajie through official tourist brochures and its tourist website very few Western tourists were interested in visiting cultural attractions. For a better marketing strategy to attract the market of Western tourists, thus, further studies on travel activity preference of Western travellers and their degree of awareness of cultural tourist attractions are needed.

Although the result of the study indicated that travel blogs could be a useful means to understand destination images from tourists’ point of view, limitations need to be identified in using the blog material. One problem is that it is difficult to determine how well each travel story represents the bloggers’ travel experience. In other words, travel blogs might not fully reflect travel experiences. Some travel blogs contained both negative and positive impressions and feelings about places and people they met as well as experiences which had some special meaning to the tourist in detail, while others described simply about travel information of the destination they visited and their travel itinerary. It should be also considered that since a large number of travel blogs are written by younger travelers, elderly travellers’ destination image could not be measured. Despite of these limitations, there is no question that travel blogs can be a useful destination marketing tool which provides valuable tourists’ feedback. Travel blogs could be suggested as one of alternative methods to gain a more complete understanding of the dynamics of tourist experience. It has been argued that the particular challenge for the researcher is to construct a research design which maximizes naturalness (Pearce,
Developing creative and effective methods can be a great challenge, which future research need to explore in destination marketing studies.

REFERENCES


SEGMENTING DESTINATIONS: IN THE EYES OF THE STAKEHOLDERS

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ABSTRACT

Tourism segmentation studies have traditionally developed segmentation approaches on either 1) a review of the tourism literature; and/or 2) secondary data. Researchers have not considered how destination stakeholders are segmenting their tourism markets. Based on stakeholder theory, this paper recommends a two-step approach to destination segmentation that incorporates both the views of multiple stakeholders and tourists. Step one involves understanding how multiple destination stakeholders viewed their market to identify relevant segmentation variables. Step two involves segmenting the destination based on relevant segmentation variables. When compared with segments currently used by the destination marketing organisation, the segments derived from the two-step approach to segmentation capture more of the tourists that are currently visiting the area. Segmentation guides positioning and branding strategies and the proposed two-step approach may assist tourism destination to reach more of the types of tourists who are likely to visit the destination.

Keywords: case study, destination marketing, segmentation, stakeholder theory, cluster analysis

INTRODUCTION

The importance of segmentation in destination marketing is widely acknowledged (e.g. Bieger & Laesser, 2002; Cha, et al., 1995; Dolnicar, 2008; Johns & Gyiothy, 2002; Pike, 2008). Market segmentation can assist researchers to understand the ways that tourists to a destination can be classified most effectively (e.g. Aguas, et al., 2000; Kotler, et al., 2003; Perdue, 1996). The marketing segmentation approach can then be utilised by destination stakeholders to position a destination brand, favourably, in the minds of actual and/or potential tourists (e.g. Pike, 2008). To date, the majority of destination segmentation studies have emphasised building tourism profiles through applying a tourist survey developed from studies in the literature (e.g. Chang, 2006; Kim & Lee, 2002; Lau & McKercher, 2004) or using secondary data (e.g. Jang, 2004; Lee, et al., 2006; Seiler, et al., 2002). Few studies have applied a stakeholder view to destination segmentation, despite several authors promoting the importance of such an approach (e.g. Blain, et al., 2005; Morgan, et al., 2003; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005; Sheehan, et al., 2007). This paper presents a stakeholder approach to destination segmentation that involves two steps. Step one involved understanding how multiple destination stakeholders view their market to identify relevant segmentation variables. Step two involved segmenting the destination based on the variables that were commonly identified by a broad range of destination stakeholders. The segments derived from the proposed two-step approach are then compared and contrasted with the segments currently used by the destination marketing organisation (DMO). The findings from the research are then presented in the conclusions with recommendations for future destination branding and marketing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Developing an effective destination brand that is appealing to potential tourists is a strategy that is of growing importance to destination marketers and managers. Destination branding is a strategy which, as argued by Morgan, et al., (2003, p. 285) to be a “powerful weapon in the marketing armoury of contemporary destination managers, confronted by increasing competition, product parity and substitutability”. However, prior to developing a brand, a key issue that needs to be determined is the approach to be taken when marketing the destination. The concept of stakeholder theory has recently been applied to both destination marketing and branding (e.g. Blain, et al., 2005; Sheehan & Ritchie,
Stakeholder theory is a management theory which argues that the interests of all stakeholders are of intrinsic value (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Freeman, 1984). A stakeholder is “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation’s objectives” (Freeman, 1984, p. 46). Destination stakeholders include hotels, restaurants, attractions, city officials, transportation companies, gas stations, incentive planners, airlines, and/or universities (Blain, et al., 2005). Whilst the DMO is usually responsible for the marketing and branding of a destination, it is rarely an operator of the product (e.g. Pike, 2008). Consequently, a DMO relies on stakeholder support to successfully promote and market the destination.

An issue that has plagued stakeholder theory is how an organisation [or destination] should allocate time, energy and other scarce resources to stakeholders (Freeman, 1984). It has been noted in the literature that whilst there are many stakeholders who may have an interest in the organisation (destination), not all of them are essential to the organisation’s success. Clarkson (1995) aimed to classify stakeholders based on their level of importance and created two stakeholder types: primary or secondary. Clarkson (1995, p. 106) argues that a primary stakeholder is ‘one without whose continuing participation the corporation [or destination] cannot survive as a going concern’. However, secondary stakeholders are defined as those who ‘influence or affect, or are influenced or affected by, the corporation [or destination], but they are not engaged in transactions with the corporation [or destination] and are not essential for its survival’ (Clarkson, 1995, p. 107). Thus, should a primary stakeholder (e.g. a large, well established tour operator) withdraw its support to the marketing of the destination or start promoting an alternate image as a common approach is not being utilised (Clarkson, 1995). For the DMO to guarantee that various stakeholders support destination marketing, it needs to ensure that the collective needs and interests of destination stakeholders are met when firstly selecting target markets (Sheehan, et al., 2007).

Destination stakeholders recognise the importance of effective marketing strategies to their destination’s collective success with tourism. However, academics and practitioners both realise that every tourist is different and it is not possible for destination marketers (e.g. DMOs) to tailor messages for each and every tourist (Dolnicar, 2008). Segmentation is a marketing strategy (Smith, 1956) that helps marketers to effectively market a destination (Dolnicar, 2008; Pike, 2008). A review of the literature revealed that there is not only one correct way to segment a market with a wide variety of approaches used in segmentation research (Beane & Ennis, 1987; Kotler, 1980). Tourism researchers have used one or a combination of the four segmentation bases (e.g. geographic, demographic, psychographic and behavioural) described by Kotler (1980) to segment markets. Tkaczynski, et al., (2009) reviewed 119 academic studies and identified a mixture of the four bases outlined by Kotler to segment markets. They noted that less than 10 percent of these studies used less than two of these bases. Most studies (39 percent) used three bases of segmentation. Further the Tkaczynski, et al., (2009) study noted that very few studies (8 percent) considered destinations stakeholders’ views to market segmentation. This is a limitation, because unless the researcher has a complete understanding of destination stakeholders, some variables that may be relevant to destination stakeholders (e.g. activities sought or accommodation expenditure) may be overlooked.

The variables generated from the literature of secondary data will be guided by the researchers’ own experience and their literature review. Such endeavours may not sufficiently accommodate the variation within a single destination. The review also determined that the destination stakeholders that were considered by researchers (e.g. hotel employees) were not decision makers for marketing purposes. None of the studies that applied stakeholders when segmenting tourists involved more than two types of destination stakeholders. Thus, instead of considering a range of stakeholders relevant to a destination (e.g. DMOs, accommodation providers, tour operators), preference has been given to certain types of stakeholders. The review also identified that the different types of organisations within one stakeholder category (e.g. the different types of tour operators) were not considered in any of the studies. As all destination stakeholder types are critical for the continual operation of a destination, their insights into market segmentation many be useful for destination marketing and branding purposes as they have been found to be knowledgeable about tourism at the destination, their tourism markets, and the promotional message presented in the media (e.g. Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005; Sheehan, et al., 2007).
STEP ONE: UNDERSTANDING SEGMENTATION THROUGH THE EYES OF STAKEHOLDERS

In step one, a case study with semi-structured interviews was used to identify how destination stakeholders segment their market. The case study approach was chosen as it permits researchers to investigate complex issues in some depth (Yin, 2003). A single case study of one Australian regional destination was deemed most appropriate to ensure that an in-depth understanding of market segmentation from a destination stakeholder perspective was obtained (Lee, 1999). The Fraser Coast was selected for this study because it was the best performing region in Queensland (QLD), (outside of Brisbane) in terms of percentage growth (Tourism Queensland, 2007). The Fraser Coast is located approximately 300km or a 45 minute flight, north of Brisbane and roughly 1200km or a one and a half hour flight north of Sydney.

Thirteen semi-structured interviews were held with primary stakeholders as defined earlier by Clarkson (1995). These stakeholders were the local government organisation, DMOs (regional and state), accommodation providers (backpacker resort, caravan park, self-contained unit provider, and a low, a medium, and a high star rating hotel), and tour operators (whale watching operator, a fishing charter operator, an adventure tour operator, and a museum employee). This provided a thorough overview of tourism at the Fraser Coast by considering destination stakeholders in the broadest sense (Sheehan, et al., 2007). Each organisation was a representative of the Fraser Coast Regional Tourism Board. The size of the organisations varied with four organisations having less than three employees (mostly owner operators), three having between three to six employees, and five having greater than six employees.

As a condition of being selected, each of the organisation’s representatives was employed in a managerial role and was knowledgeable about how both the destination and their organisation are marketed to tourists. The destination stakeholders were asked to describe how they segmented their markets. In instances where formal marketing plans were not used, probes were applied to understand whether the market was approached as a whole or in parts. Interviews averaged 40 minutes and were recorded and transcribed for analysis using an open and axial coding scheme as recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1988).

STEP ONE- FINDINGS

Findings for step one are described in detail in Tkaczynski, et al., (2009) and briefly outlined next. Destination stakeholders vary in their organisational size and resources, and as such, their ability to discuss how they segment a market varied. Detailed marketing plans, outlining segments targeted were available for some destination stakeholders. Some smaller destination stakeholders operated without marketing plans. Furthermore, their strategic decision making indicated that they did not approach the market as a whole. For example, tourists from a particular geographic region were targeted by one destination stakeholder through a radio advertisement. Due to the inconsistency of the findings, we aimed to determine the variables considered relevant by the destination stakeholders when segmenting tourists to the Fraser Coast. All four of the segmentation bases (demographic, geographic, psychographic and behavioural) were identified by destination stakeholders. Three used only one base, whereas four destination stakeholders used all four segmentation bases to classify their tourists using their services. Specifically, destination stakeholders deemed the following variables relevant for segmentation purposes. These variables are age, gender, travel party composition (TPC), income, (demographic), location [a tourist’s usual place of residence] (geographic), trip purpose, motivations, activities sought (psychographic), expenditure, number of nights, and purchasing behaviour (behavioural). For each of these variables, categories were provided by the respondents. For example, six common income categories (e.g. under A$40,000, and over A$100,000) were provided. The most popular variables used to describe tourists included age and activities sought (8 responses each), location (7 responses), and trip purpose (6 responses). Segmentation variables that were used less frequently included TPC and purchasing behaviour (2 responses each) and gender (1 response). It was noted that nine destination stakeholders were able to describe one variable as the most important for segmenting their tourists. Origin and activities sought were identified twice whereas age, income, motivations, trip purpose, and purchasing behaviour were chosen once.
STEP TWO: SURVEY TOURISTS AND IDENTIFY SEGMENTS

A tourist survey was then developed based on the description of the variables provided from the semi-structured interviews. Minor modifications were made to a few variables. Purchasing behaviour and expenditure were combined to create three expenditure variables: activities expenditure, food and beverages expenditure, and accommodation expenditure. This modification was required as destination stakeholders knew that tourists spent their money on these items, but were unsure of the amount. These variables represent different aspects of tourists’ expenditure at the destination and, consistent with other studies (e.g. Hong, et al., 2005; Lehto, et al., 2004; Wilson & Thilmany, 2006), they were treated separately. In addition, both push and pull motivations were chosen as they represented destination stakeholders’ responses and also represent different aspects of a tourist’s motivation (Dann, 1981; Yuan & McDonald, 1990). Push motivations represented a tourist’s reason to travel (e.g. to have a holiday, or to rest and relax), whereas pull motivations considered a tourist’s decision to choose the destination to fulfil their need to travel (e.g. the climate, the holiday lifestyle available at the Fraser Coast).

Thirty-nine questions were used for the survey. Activities sought, push motivations, pull motivations and nights were treated as continuous variables based on the interview responses. Eleven push motivations, twelve pull motivations and six activities sought were measured. These variables were measured in a binary yes or no format. This format has been used for psychographic variables (e.g. Dolnicar, 2004; Lee, et al., 2006; Morrison, et al., 2003). For data analysis, the total number of activities sought, push motivations and pull motivations were chosen as the unit of analysis. For this to be achieved, each activity sought, push motivation and pull motivation specified by respondents was added together to create a total for each of these three variables. The variables were converted into continuous variables for data analysis to ensure that each of the thirteen variables was treated equally in the analysis. Having too many variables of one kind may distort the research findings by placing an emphasis on one tourist characteristic (Hair, et al., 2006). For example, almost 60 percent of the variables relate to motivation, and examining all these variables separately would bias the construct of the defined segments, therefore limiting the importance of the other variables (Hair, et al., 2006).

Similar to the literature (e.g. Alipour, et al., 2007; Becken, et al., 2003; Hsu & Kang, 2007), required the respondents to specify the number of nights they had stayed or were planning to stay at the destination. The nine remaining questions were designed as categorical variables, as the stakeholders explained these variables using this method. It was also identified in the review of the 119 destination segmentation studies that categories were commonly used for these variables. For example, in being consistent with previous studies (e.g. Hsu, et al., 2002; Johns & Gyiothy, 2002; Yoo, et al., 2004), six categories were chosen to capture age.

Respondents needed to be at least 18, had or would have spent at least a night at the Fraser Coast, and had to have been travelling for leisure purposes. The data was conducted using a cross-sectional study design over a seven month period from July 2007 to January 2008. This was to ensure that seasonality at the destination was not an issue, as the data was collected during the different seasons. Surveys were collected at a caravan park, a backpacker hostel, a five star resort, a visitor information centre, a bus terminal, a ferry terminal, and an airport. A minimum of eight responses each month was collected from each of these locations to ensure that a specific type of tourist that was most easily accessible did not dominate the reports. In total, 85 percent of tourists approached completed the survey.

The surveys that were collected were then analysed using SPSS Version 15.0. TwoStep cluster analysis using the log likelihood measure was used to reveal natural groupings in the data set using all of the segmentation variables identified in step one. This method was chosen to segment tourists at a destination, as it is considered most appropriate for forming clusters based on both continuous and categorical data (Chiu, et al., 2001; Norusis, 2008). In considering whether to remove missing data or not, the final solution with the lowest Schwarz’s Bayesian information Criterion (BIC) is preferred (Norusis, 2008). Once the clusters were formed, chi-square tests were conducted for categorical variables and student t-tests for continuous variables to examine the importance of individual variables.
in a cluster (Norusis, 2008). If the absolute value of the statistic for a cluster is greater than the critical value, the variable is considered important in distinguishing that cluster from the others (Norusis, 2008).

**STEP TWO- FINDINGS**

A total of 852 tourist surveys were collected over the seven month period. Roughly a third of the cases (n = 283) contained missing data. The solution with missing data removed produced a smaller BIC (14,186.355) than with the cases included (14,280.518). The solution with missing data omitted was, therefore, chosen. Three clusters (segments) were revealed within the tourism data set. Three of the variables, gender, number of activities sought, and trip purpose did not distinguish clusters (segments) and were removed from the analysis. Cluster analysis was performed once again with the remaining ten variables. Student t-tests and chi-square tests confirmed that each of the ten variables varied between segments. A cluster solution with ten segmentation variables was, therefore, accepted as the final solution (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic variables</th>
<th>Wealthy Travellers</th>
<th>Young Europeans</th>
<th>Long-Stay Travellers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>25-54</td>
<td>&lt;35</td>
<td>&gt;55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>&gt;A$80,000</td>
<td>&lt;A$20,000</td>
<td>&lt;A$40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPC</td>
<td>Couple and Family</td>
<td>Adult Group</td>
<td>Couple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Geographic variable    | NSW and Europe     | Europe          | QLD                  |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychographic variables</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of push motivations</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of pull motivations</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioural variables</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily accommodation expenditure</td>
<td>&gt; $100</td>
<td>&lt;$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily activities expenditure</td>
<td>$50-$149</td>
<td>&lt;$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily food and beverages expenditure</td>
<td>$50-$149</td>
<td>&lt;$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nights (number)</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first segment is the largest (41 percent). The majority of people in this segment earn more than A$80,000 a year (67 percent) and travel predominantly from New South Wales (NSW) (35 percent) and Europe (22 percent). These tourists are primarily aged between 25 and 54 (75 percent). They travel as a couple (43 percent) or as a family (34 percent) and their average length of stay is 4 nights. Of the three segments, this segment spends the most on a daily basis, with more than $100 for daily accommodation (79 percent) and $50 to $149 for both daily activities (65 percent) and food and beverages (76 percent) expenditure. This segment has roughly four push motivations and one pull motivation. The most popular push motivations were “to rest and relax (63 percent)”, “to go sightseeing (52 percent)”, and “to go to a place where you have not been before (50 percent)”. “The weather (34 percent)”, “it was recommended by someone (24 percent) and “to experience a relaxed lifestyle (22 percent)” pull tourists most frequently to the destination. The key distinguishing feature of this segment is the higher income and daily expenditure. This segment was labelled wealthy travellers.

The second segment is similar in size (39 percent). This segment is predominantly young with 89 percent being aged under 35. This segment earns the least (38 percent under $20,000 per annum) and almost three quarters (71 percent) of these tourists travel predominantly from Europe. This segment spends less per day when compared with the wealthy traveller segment. However, some of these tourists spend slightly more on daily accommodation and activities than food and beverages, with under $50 being the most popular option for all three expenditure categories. Approximately half of
this segment travel as an adult group (52 percent). This segment stays for 3 to 5 nights and has the most push motivations and the fewest pull motivations of the three segments. “It was recommended by someone (35 percent)”, was the dominant pull motivation and “to go to a place you have not been before (78 percent)”, “to have fun (68 percent)”, “to go sightseeing (63 percent)” and “to see something different (60 percent)” were popular push motivations. The key distinguishing features of this segment is that the tourists are young and travel from Europe. Because of these features, this segment is labelled young Europeans.

The third segment is the smallest. It represents approximately a fifth of the tourism data set. These tourists are older, with more than half being older than 55 (51 percent). The income of this segment was approximately evenly distributed across the six categories. This segment largely comprises domestic travellers, with Queensland the dominant origin (41 percent). These tourists travel as a couple (51 percent) and stay the longest, an average of 17 nights. They have the lowest number of push motivations and the highest number of pull motivations of the three segments. These tourists are motivated to travel “to rest and relax (63 percent)”, “to have fun (36 percent)” and “to escape from your everyday lifestyle (35 percent)” and is pulled by “the weather (46 percent)” and “to experience a relaxed lifestyle (37 percent)”. This segment is distinguishable based on its long length of stay. This segment was labelled long-stay travellers.

COMPARISON TO DMO SEGMENTS

The segments derived from the two-step approach were then compared with the primary Fraser Coast segments that have been identified by the DMO as set out in Table 2 (Tourism Queensland, 2007). According to Tourism Queensland (2007), these segments represent the tourists who have the greatest potential to be converted into visitors to the region and, therefore, a high chance of providing a positive return on investment in marketing activities. Young parents (family) and older tourists (aged 45 and more) with an annual household income of $60,000 dominate the segments that are currently described by the DMO. The DMO also identifies two international markets that are believed to have the most potential to convert into visitors (Tourism Queensland, 2007). No known research has been conducted at the regional level, and these markets are based on information from Tourism Australia, the national tourism organisation. The first segment is classed as the international drive market. This segment travels to fulfil an inner drive to challenge themselves. This group travels from the United Kingdom, Germany, United States, Europe, and New Zealand. The second international market is the youth and backpacker market which travels for the same reasons as seen in the international drive market. This segment travels from the United Kingdom, Germany, United States, and Europe. The youth and backpacker market is considered secondary to the drive market (Tourism Queensland, 2007).

The DMO and state tourism organisation, in partnership with other local destination stakeholders such as the regional council, market the destination to potential tourists (Tourism Queensland, 2007). Destination attributes such as Fraser Island, the warm sunny weather, and a variety of accommodation styles have been utilised by these stakeholders to appeal to potential domestic tourists. Minimal funds are available and have to be allocated carefully. In recent years, one-off campaigns have been used to target both intrastate and interstate tourists. For example, a $400,000 five week integrated ‘nothing compares to nature’ campaign was run in Sydney (NSW) following the introduction of direct flights from Sydney to Hervey Bay (a location in the Fraser Coast) in July 2005. On an international level, the Fraser Coast participates in several marketing initiatives. For example, this includes the Journalists Program for international journalists that showcases the Fraser Coast’s main features to self-drive tourists (Tourism Queensland, 2007).
Table 2  
DMO Segments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment Number</th>
<th>Segment Description</th>
<th>Source Market</th>
<th>Lifestage</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>Travel Party</th>
<th>Transport</th>
<th>Type Of Trip</th>
<th>Size of segment Queensland Preferrers</th>
<th>Fraser Coast Preferrers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>45 years plus*</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>45+</td>
<td>Over $60K</td>
<td>Couples, some family and friends groups</td>
<td>Car, fly</td>
<td>Short break or 1-2 weeks</td>
<td>409,000 (19% of intrastate QLD preferrers)</td>
<td>113,000 (20% of intrastate Fraser Coast preferrers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Young Parents*</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>25-45</td>
<td>Over $60K</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Car, fly</td>
<td>Short break or 1-2 weeks</td>
<td>272,000 (13% of intrastate QLD preferrers)</td>
<td>83,000 (15% of intrastate Fraser Coast preferrers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>45 years plus#</td>
<td>Regional QLD (excl. Brisbane)</td>
<td>45+</td>
<td>Up to $60K</td>
<td>Couples, some family and friends groups</td>
<td>Car, fly</td>
<td>Short break or 1-2 weeks</td>
<td>490,000 (23% of intrastate QLD preferrers)</td>
<td>107,000 (19% of intrastate Fraser Coast preferrers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Young Parents#</td>
<td>Regional QLD (excl. Brisbane)</td>
<td>20-45</td>
<td>Up to $70K</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Car</td>
<td>Short break or 1 week</td>
<td>366,000 (17% of intrastate QLD preferrers)</td>
<td>115,000 (20% of intrastate Fraser Coast preferrers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Young Parents and Midlife Households#</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>25-64</td>
<td>Over $60K</td>
<td>Couples and family, some friends and groups</td>
<td>Car, fly/drive</td>
<td>Short break or 1-3 weeks</td>
<td>847,000 (15% of interstate QLD preferrers)</td>
<td>111,000 (17% of interstate Fraser Coast preferrers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: * primary market, # secondary market, QLD = Queensland  
Source: Tourism Queensland (2007)
In comparing the two-step approach to the DMO segments, several discrepancies were identified. Firstly, the segmentation variables of transport and lifestage were not identified in the two-step approach. Secondly, the expenditure and motivation variables were not used in the DMO segmentation approach. Thirdly, the DMO segmentation approach uses three forms of segmentation, being demographic (lifestage, age, and household income), geographic (source market), and behavioural characteristics (travel party, transport, and type of trip). The segments derived from the proposed two-step approach use all four segmentation bases. Fourthly, while the DMO approach emphasises the lifestage and source market segmentation variables, the cluster solution treats each of the ten segmentation variables equally.

Other than the number of segments (five for the DMO and three for the two-step segmentation approach), the wealthy traveller segment of the DMO approach compares favourably with the DMO segments that travel from Sydney and Brisbane (segments 1, 2, and 5). The wealthy traveller segment has tourists that originate from NSW (whose capital is Sydney) and QLD (whose capital is Brisbane). This segment also comprises those aged between 25 and 54, which are the ages included in these three DMO segments. Wealthy travellers also travel predominantly as a couple or a family and stay for a short break (roughly half a week). In addition, more than 75 percent of the wealthy travellers earn a household income in excess of $60,000 per annum, which is similar to the three segments.

As the DMO does not actively target international tourists, further comparisons between the segmentation approaches were difficult. For example, the young European segment was not described by the DMO. Furthermore, despite representing 20 percent of the tourist market, the long-stay traveller segment was not defined by the DMO. A further point of difference was that the third and fourth segments of the DMO were not identified when the two-step approach to segmentation was applied.

To determine which of the methods captures more of the tourists to the destination, any tourists with distinguishing characteristics not described in the DMO segments were eliminated from the data file to understand how many tourists were not being described by the five DMO segments. This occurred as follows. Firstly, tourists that were not from within QLD or Sydney (NSW) were removed from the data file. This resulted in 625 cases being deleted and produced a data set of 227. This is slightly more than a quarter of the original sample (267 percent). Secondly, tourists that travelled as singles were deleted from the data file as this category was not considered by the DMO when segmenting tourists based on their travel party. This resulted in 13 percent of the remaining cases being deleted, which left a tourist market of 198 tourists. The proposed two-step segmentation method captured 569 of the 852 tourists, which represents 67 percent of the tourism data set, while the segments currently used by the DMO targeted 198 tourists, which represents just 23 percent of the tourists in the study sample. By considering all tourists travelling to the destination, the two-step segmentation approach encompassed more tourists. Approximately two-thirds of the tourists travelling to the destination were cluster analysed in this study whereas the DMO segments focused on less than half the tourists travelling to the destination.

CONCLUSIONS

The importance of developing an effective destination branding and marketing strategy has been identified as increasingly important by a number of academics (e.g. Blain, et al., 2005; Morgan, et al., 2003; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005; Sheehan, et al., 2007). Due to issues such as increased competition from other domestic and international destinations, stakeholders at a destination need to ensure that they develop an effective strategy that will improve their chances of targeting the appropriate tourists with their preferred message. This study considers an alternative approach to segmenting tourists by proposing a two-step approach to segmentation. This approach can then be utilised by destination stakeholders for their destination branding purposes.

Many contributions to the literature and practice were identified from this research that has implications for destination marketers. From a theoretical perspective, the first major contribution is that all four segmentation bases as defined by Kotler (1980) were identified using this approach. In this study, age, income, TPC (demographic), origin (geographic), push motivations, pull motivations...
While surveys were used for both the DMO segments and the proposed two-step approach, the tourist segments that were derived varied considerably. Only one of the segments identified in this paper, wealthy travellers, was comparable with the segments currently defined by the DMO. The other two tourism segments identified from the two-step approach, young Europeans and long-stay travellers, were not considered in the DMO segmentation. These segments represent approximately 60 percent of the usable tourist sample for this study. We contend that the two-step approach may be a more appropriate segmentation method, as it is capable of assisting tourism marketers to target more of the tourists frequenting the destination. Currently, the DMO segments target less than a quarter of the types of tourists visiting the destination. While the emphasis on wealthy travellers is relevant, young Europeans and the long-stay travellers also need to be considered. Young Europeans and the long-stay travellers have different distinguishing characteristics to each other and the wealthy traveller segment (e.g., different ages and travel party compositions). These two segments also represent a large share of the market.

No psychographic variables were applied within the DMO segmentation, but push and pull motivations were clear descriptors for the two-step approach as the number of motivations varied between segments. For each segment, motivations were multidimensional, which confirmed earlier study findings (e.g. Bieger & Laesser, 2002; Kim & Lee, 2002; Yuan & McDonald, 1990). In contrast to previous studies, the method used in this study considers both the number and types of motivations.

A final contribution of this research is the use of three expenditure items that produced findings of primary importance to destination stakeholders. Economic injection is one of the main benefits to destination stakeholders at a destination (Dolnicar, 2008; Kotler, et al., 2003; Pike, 2008). Despite the DMO using income as a characteristic of the five segments, it was identified that higher income did not automatically translate to higher expenditure. This finding confirms previous studies (e.g. Hu & Yu, 2007; Lee, et al., 2006; Petrick, 2005). Tourists with higher incomes do not necessarily spend more while at the Fraser Coast. It was identified that while the long-stay travellers had an annual household income that was generally higher than the young Europeans, their daily expenditure was lower. This study shows that both income and expenditure need to be considered as variables when considering the financial activity of tourists at a destination.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings from this study present many managerial implications for destination marketers and managers. The two step approach to segmentation identified three distinct tourist segments for the destination under study and this has important implications for destination branding. A single destination image or message or one-size fits all approach will not yield the best outcomes for the destination. Some consideration of the different needs and wants of the three distinct tourist groups will allow the destination to achieve the best outcomes in terms of initially attracting and later satisfying tourists who choose to travel to the destination. While the Fraser Coast brand needs to convey rest and relaxation, accommodation and tour options need to cater to a diverse range of tourist needs and wants.

Recent domestic marketing efforts by the DMO currently targeted approximately one quarter of tourists travelling to the Fraser Coast. A major limitation of the current approach is that a substantial segment (young Europeans) was not targeted by the DMO. Whilst this segment is less likely to spend as much on accommodation and food and beverages as the wealthy travellers, this segment spends a considerably greater amount on activities expenditure. Whilst tour operators (e.g. whale watching operators, adventure tour planners) may attract tourists that have different demographics, the different segments of tourists may have similar activity choices and activity expenditure patterns. DMOs need to...
ensure that they focus on this identified segment as it can present financial benefits to the destination such as activities expenditure and occupancy in lower end accommodation.

Use of a two-step approach to segmentation suggests that some funds could be redeployed away from targeting tourists about 45 years old residing in QLD and Sydney toward European travellers. It has been identified from this study, that the targeted segments were not identified in the two-step segmentation approach. As a key element in destination branding is to portray an appropriate appeal to the relevant tourists, it can be concluded that the current destination marketing strategy is not targeting the preferred DMO tourists. Redeployment of funds would assist the DMO to improve return on investment as the funds would be spent in areas where tourist response is more likely. It is argued that because the Fraser Coast is a regional destination that does not have the funds to advertise internationally to the continent of Europe (unlike larger, well established QLD tourist destinations such as Cairns, the Sunshine Coast, or the Gold Coast), funds could be used to target these European tourists in popular Australian tourist destinations such as Cairns, Melbourne, and Sydney. As these tourists tend to spend very little on accommodation, it would be considered appropriate to promote the destination in backpacker hostels at nearby destinations. In addition, as a major pull motivation was “it was recommended by someone”, it may be useful to contact tourist guides in the regions or promote in international traveller guides such as the Lonely Planet.

As the other segment, long-stay travellers, represents tourists that may be considered “grey nomads” defined as “over-55s who travel independently in caravans, motorhomes, campervans or converted buses for between three months and three years” (Robson, 2007), it may be beneficial to promote the destination in caravan parks throughout Australia. This segment spends the least on the three expenditure items on a daily basis, but their length of stay is on average four times the other segments. Accordingly, their overall expenditure is the highest and this makes them a valuable market for the destination. Focusing on this segment also ensures that the issues of seasonality at the destination can be minimised, as these tourists can choose to stay at the destination for long periods during the low peak seasons. As “to rest and relax” (push) and “the weather” and “relaxed lifestyle” (pull) are popular motivations for this segment, these characteristics of the destination need to be considered when promoting to these tourists.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study considered one regional Australian destination. Future research is recommended in a range of alternate destinations to further our understanding of the recommended two-step approach to segmentation. Research should be conducted in urban destinations and other regional destinations. Comparisons can be made between destinations to identify if similar or different approaches have been applied based on the type of destination of location of choice. In addition, researchers could consider the usefulness of the two-step segmentation approach for state- and country-level marketing efforts.

This research was conducted using a cross-sectional research design. Future research should be conducted longitudinally to see if the segments described by the proposed two-step approach are better able to predict the types of tourists travelling to the destination. Another limitation arising in this research is that some of the categories within this research could have been expanded. It was acknowledged that Europe is a large source market, which represents many countries with populations in excess of 20 million, such as the United Kingdom, Spain, France, and Germany. Identifying if the majority of tourists come from one country, region, or state has marketing implications. Designing specific packages for tourists from European countries such as the United Kingdom or Germany may increase the growth of tourism from these countries to this destination. As many wealthy tourists travel from Europe, this could be a financially attractive option.

A further opportunity presented from the findings of this research is to consider a two-step approach for destination positioning and/or branding. Here, stakeholders at a destination can be asked about their thoughts on the current positioning strategy of the destination as presented by the DMO. Additionally, a stakeholder approach to destination branding could be identified. Tourists to a destination could then be approached following a similar method presented here to identify their
perceptions of the destination’s positioning strategy. This approach could present how a destination is positioned by considering a multiple stakeholder approach. Here, it will be identified which destination stakeholders are involved in the design of the positioning message. It will also determine whether destination stakeholders that may be considered primary (Clarkson, 1995) but not involved in the process understand the current positioning strategy and whether they consider it as relevant to the destination. Secondly, it will evaluate how the destination is perceived by tourists that have travelled to the destination. This will identify the image/s and attributes of the destination suggested by destination stakeholders. Lastly, the tourism destination perceptions of the destination stakeholders and the tourists will be compared to identify whether there are any differences in the positioning message. If differences exist, these can be useful for managerial purposes at the destination. This could include determining how to design a positioning message more effectively to tourists. Furthermore, this could contribute to the literature by suggesting that destination stakeholders and tourists perceive a destination’s message differently.

REFERENCES


ABSTRACT

For nearly 30 years London was consistently ranked within the top three cities globally with regards to the number of conferences held per annum. However, since 1997 London has declined and by 2008 was ranked by International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) as the 19th most popular conference city globally. Today, London faces a stark decision to reposition itself within the global conference industry in order to gain its lost market share. This paper analyses the London conference industry, utilising both primary and secondary data. Secondary research of ICCA statistics and a literature review are utilised to plot the positioning of London since 1968 to 2008 in order to identify the rise and fall of London as a conference destination. Primary data was collected through six telephone interviews with UK conference industry experts. Findings identifying that London lacks large, purpose-built conference facilities to accommodate over 3,000 delegates. In response to this an International Conference Centre (ICC) was proposed in 2005. However, due to the current economic climate, London’s hosting of the 2012 Olympic Games and the potential sell off of public assets by the UK government, such plans to build an ICC have been halted. An alternative strategy has therefore been proposed. With an expanded ExCel opening in May 2010, ExCel’s use as London’s ICC is regarded as the best alternative strategy to improvement London’s position as a conference destination, and thus remain competitive within the global conference market.

Keywords: UK Conference Industry, London, Repositioning, ExCel, International Conference Centre

INTRODUCTION

The UK is recognized as one of the world’s leading conference destinations (Weber & Ladkin, 2003; Whitfield, 2005). The British Conference Venues Survey (BCVS) 2008 published by the British Association of Conference Destinations (BACD) showed that in the past three years (2005-2008) the UK conference market was worth £8 million per annum, although this is down from £9.8 million per annum in the previous three years (British Association of Conference Destinations, 2008). London remains the dominant conference destination within the UK due to its capital city status, accessibility, the presence of numerous company headquarters’ and its global acceptance as a leading financial centre (Weber & Ladkin 2003). In the 2008 International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) statistics, London is ranked 19th for its share of international meetings per annum. The nearest UK city behind London is Edinburgh ranked in 28th place (International Congress and Convention Association, 2009). Although “the UK has a diverse product, excellent communication facilities, a rich cultural heritage, and good marketing and media coverage” (Weber & Ladkin, 2003; p.18), with many other countries developing or improving their conference facilities the UK is in need of a strategy that recognizes this increased competition and new challenges brought about as the industry continues to develop (Leask & Spiller, 2002; Weber & Ladkin, 2003). This paper shall provide, through the examination of ICCA statistics over the past two decades, the positioning of the UK and London conference industry. Additionally, this paper will explore the possible strategies to re-position London’s conference industry to increase its competitiveness within the global conference industry.
DESTINATION BRANDING

Strategic marketing through destination branding has increased considerably over the last three decades (Ward, 1998). Extending beyond its time-honored role of attracting leisure tourism, destination branding has now adopted a wider role including attracting new residents, employees and business tourists to a location (Hankinson, 2005). Destination branding may occur over the short-term, such as London’s successful Olympic Games bid, as well as longer-term repositioning strategies as epitomise in the award of European city of culture for 2009 to Vilnius, Lithuania. The applicability of destination branding also extends further down the spatial scale than cities, regions and countries, (Ashworth and Voogt, 1994). In relation to those destinations offering conference facilities, there are over 200 countries worldwide competing for conferences and new destinations are continuing to emerge (Davidson and Rogers, 2006). Destinations are becoming increasing similar, as cities and countries compete to host national and international conferences and meetings. “Places are becoming increasingly substitutable and difficult to differentiate...” (Pike, 2005; p258). This creates issues, challenges and opportunities for those branding and marketing destinations to consumers (Pike, 2004). Consumers assess the key attractors of a destination, which either individually or collectively create a unique selling proposition, in order to identify its attractiveness and ability to contribute to an exciting and memorable experience (Morgan et al, 2004; Carlo et al, 2008). These are: the physiography of the destination – scenery and climate; culture and history of the destination; the range of activities the destination has to offer visitors; the various special events offered; superstructure- highly varied in nature; types of entertainment on offer; and strength of market ties (Brent and Crouch, 2003, p110).

The key attractors above show there are many reasons why people choose destinations, these can relate to physical attributes such as-scenery or attributes such as a range of activities offered. Destinations, including those offering conference venues, should implement brand positioning strategies in order to reinforce positive imagery into consumer’s minds to remain competitive and keep visitors visiting. Influencing the ways in which people perceive certain products is a job for any venue or destination (Davidson and Rogers, 2006). This process is called ‘product positioning’ and it’s important for destinations to establish a clear position and then successfully communicate this with buyers (ibid). Ritchie and Crouch (2003, p.23) describe positioning as “…how the destination is viewed both by the tourism market as a whole and by the specific market segments in terms of the benefits and experiences it is likely to provide vis-a-vis the many competitive destinations from which travellers may choose.” When consumers have a greater choice, it is vital to understand the intrinsic value of the product, and to adopt new positioning strategies in order to monitor and compare the destination against potential competitors and what they are offering, and thus remain competitive within the market (Hsu et al, 2008; Ostaseviciute and Slisbury, 2008). The UK conference industry has become increasingly competitive over the post war period, discussion continues by examining the temporal development of the conference industry.

The growth of the UK conference industry

The growth in the UK conference industry has occurred since the 1950s, and is due to a number of factors on both the supply and demand side. Some of these factors are closely related to those that supported the growth of tourism in general. For example, the increase in disposable income, the greater propensity to travel, increased leisure time, and improvements in transportation and technology have all facilitated the conference industry (Spiller, 2002; p1). Apart from the economic benefits, the industry has several other intangible benefits, including strengthening cultural ties between nations to harmonising business relations, expanding international trade by increasing global business collaborations, enhancement of civic pride within the destination hosting the conference, and political motivations such as a government initiative to rejuvenate an area (Crouch & Louviere, 2004; Weber & Chon, 2002).
Key conference venues with the capital city: London

London has numerous conference venues ranging from hotels, museums, visitor attractions to universities (Visit London, 2009). London also has over 60 visitor attractions offering conference facilities such as the London Dungeons, HMS Belfast and the National History museum (UniquevenuesofLondon, 2009). The majority of conferences in London take place in hotels, which is in line with the general UK trend where 61% of conferences occur in hotels (British Association of Conference Destination 2008). The capital has very few purpose-built venues and no International Conference Centre (ICC). The three main conference venues in London are: The Hilton London Metropole Hotel and The Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre (QEIICC) and ExCel (International Convention Centre Commission, 2005). ExCel is predominantly an exhibition centre, however, it has conference space for up to 1,100 delegates, 65,000m² of exhibition space and 45 break-out rooms. These facilities are currently being expanded, and by 2010 the purpose-built conference space will accommodate up to 5,000 delegates, the exhibition space will be expanded by 32,500m² to be 97,500m², and 20 more break-out rooms will be added (ExCel, 2009). These expansion plans will make ExCel London’s largest conference venue. In addition, ExCel has a self-contained campus area consisting of hotels, bars and restaurants making it convenient for delegates (Visit London, 2009). However, ExCel is located in the docklands area of East London. It is not located in central London, and hence accessibility may be problematic for delegates. ExCel does not market itself solely as a conference venue either, as already mentioned it is primarily an exhibition space and also hosts a variety of other events which will include seven sporting events for the London 2012 Olympic Games (ibid).

The Hilton London Metropole is London’s largest dedicated conference hotel, and one of the largest international conference hotels in Europe (Chetwynd, 2001). It can accommodate up to 3,000 delegates, with the seating capacity of the largest room being up to 1,600 delegates (Hilton London Metropole, 2009). The advantage of holding a conference in a hotel is that accommodation is onsite and hotels will have their own entertainment facilities and food provision. Therefore, delegates receive a complete conference package under one roof (Davidson & Cope 2003). Unlike ExCel, the Hilton Metropole is situated centrally within London and is easily accessible by both road and rail links as well as being only 15 minutes from Heathrow Airport (ibid). The same can be said of QEIICC as it is positioned in Westminster. The advantage that QEIICC and the Hilton Metropole have over ExCel is the ease of access to the venues for delegates once they are inside London.

The QEIICC is the smallest of the three venues; it is a purpose-built venue with the capacity to accommodate up to 1,300 delegates. It does, however, also have over 3,000m² of exhibition space and 22 meeting rooms to accommodate delegates (Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, 2009). Opened in 1986 in Westminster, it was originally designed to host only government conferences but now also hosts private sector conferences. The centre is renowned as one of the most technologically advanced buildings in London (Visit London, 2009). Both the QEIICC and the Hilton Metropole have flat-floored conference rooms, a tiered-amphitheatre is necessary for large conferences (International Convention Centre Commission, 2005). In the 2009 ‘Budget’ statement, the UK Government indicated that it was investigating the privatization of a number of state owned asset in order to raise treasury funds, the QEIICC has been identified as one possible asset to privatize (HM Treasury, 2008).

There are larger capacity venues in the capital. The London conference bureau identifies four such venues as O2, Earls Court, Olympia and Alexandra Palace (Visit London, 2009), however, none of these venues are purpose-built for conferences, rather they are exhibition centres or entertainment centres which can convert their space to accommodate large numbers of delegates. A survey of 300 event planners revealed that 42% said that the city's ability to provide quality and diverse venues were key factors when deciding whether to hold an event in London (Wyatt, 2009). However, until the completion of ExCel’s expansion plans in 2010, at the present time London is limited to what it can offer to accommodate larger conferences whatever the type of venue. Thus, London is a good destination for small or medium-sized conferences but not large conferences which are very valuable
business and could significantly benefit London’s economy (Rogers, 2008; International Convention Centre Commission, 2005).

Is there a need for London to build an international convention centre?

An ICC is “a purpose-built venue designed primarily to host major international conferences and events” (International Convention Centre Commission, 2005, p. 9). The UK is one of a very few countries that does not have an ICC in their capital city. At the present time, “while London can trade on its unique status, not just as UK capital, but as one of the world’s major metropolises, and call on venues both historic and cutting-edge….the fact it doesn’t have a purpose-built conference centre, its prohibitive cost and failure to provide a cohesive city-wide welcome to delegates all mar its potential” (Doyle, 2002; p.42).

In 2004 the London Development Agency commissioned an investigation into the feasibility of an ICC in London. In 2005 the ICC Commission Report was published, supporting the construction of an ICC in London. This Report identified that London’s ICC would have a main tired auditorium to seat at least 3,000-5,000 delegates, at least 10,000m2 of exhibition space, two or three additional meeting spaces for 400-800 people as well as a range of breakout rooms for 50-500 delegates (International Convention Centre Commission, 2005). At the British Tourism Advisory Group’s annual 2003 meeting, the building of an ICC in London was considered the number one priority over any other business tourism issue in the UK. Crucially, this view is shared by global conference organizers as 20% of them are satisfied with the current facilities in London, but 80% would want to hold events in London if there was a larger venue (ibid). As with any significant development plan, however, there are certain issues that must be addressed and dealt with before an ICC can be feasibly built.

Has the Olympic Games 2012 prohibited the construction of an ICC in London?

London will host the 2012 Olympic Games, and like any mega event it can provide economic, environmental and socio-cultural benefits and dis-benefits (Hede, 2007). The Olympic Games can impact positively on the host destinations’ conference tourism (International Convention Centre Commission, 2005). Visit London estimate that “between 50-70% of the net economic benefit of staging the Games measured over a 7-10 year period will accrue through tourism” (VisitBritain, 2006; p.5 cited in Smith & Stevenson, 2009). After investing heavily to globally promote the Games and enhancing the position of London to international markets (Chalip, 2002), it is essential to exploit the potential benefits from hosting such a high-profile event (Cashman, 2002). The London Development Agency (LDA) believes that London will fail to capitalize on the rush of post-Olympic conferences if no ICC is built (Davey, 2005). To stage the Olympic Games requires substantial investment from the public sector (Chalip, 2002). The Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) is the public sector body responsible for the delivery of new venues and the infrastructure required for the London 2012 Games. The ODAs’ budget is drawn entirely from the public sector, funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Greater London Authority, the LDA and the Olympic Lottery Distributor (London2012.com, 2009). With the construction of an ICC in London, it is estimated to cost between £250-350 million (International Convention Centre Commission, 2005), therefore, with public funding concentrated on financing the Games, the ICC is not a priority of the government at the present time. Indeed, even prior to London acquiring the Olympic Games in 2012, the lack of support the government gives to the meetings industry in the UK has been highlighted (Weber & Ladkin, 2005). The ICC Commission suggests collaboration between the public and private sectors to create the ICC in London; however, even £125 million is a significant amount of money to spend away from any Olympic investment. A privately owned ICC could therefore be a more feasible option in the current climate. This could be encouraged by granting planning permission for commercial developments onsite, for example casinos, hotels and retail outlets (London Development Agency, 2004).
The recession

The demand for conferences is dependent upon the vitality of both the national economy and the global economy (Rogers, 2008). The early 1990s recessions had a significant and detrimental impact on the conference industry, as companies restructured and decreased event expenditure (Callan & Hoyes, 2000). This was typified through “shorter lead times, cancellations, decreasing delegate numbers, down-trading of venues and shorter conferences” (English Tourist Board, 1991 cited in Callan & Hoyes, 2000). In 2009, the UK is in economic recession once again. A similar pattern to the 1990’s is seen in the conference industry, with 6% less bookings, shorter-lead times and less residential conferences (British Association of Conference Destinations, 2008). Additionally, recessionary market conditions mean that customers are more price sensitive and expect greater value for money (Robinson & Callan, 2005). Associated with recession in general is the fact that associations and corporations are facing increasingly restricted budgets (Nelson, 1999), with 11% of venues facing pressure from clients with tighter budgets (British Association of Conference Destinations, 2008).

A positive exchange rate for the UK?

In 2007, the pound was worth US$2.11 and London was the second most expensive city globally (Boyle, 2009). “The strength of the pound in recent years has contributed to a lack of growth from European markets. Continuing perceptions of London as an expensive destination, increasing competition from other city destinations and lack of funding.....were posing serious marketing challenges” (Hopper, 2002; p.81). Being considered as an expensive product in a mature market place may pose a challenge in attracting international conferences (Weber & Ladkin, 2005). Indeed, 92% of delegates believe value for money is of great importance when choosing a conference destination (Robinson & Callan, 2005). During 2009, the UK currency has weakened against other major currencies. The Euro is currently worth €1.09 per £1, compared to €1.5 per £1 in 2007. The US$ has recently increased to $1.6 per £1, although this is still less than $1.9 per £1 in preceding years (HM Revenue & Customs, 2009). The weakening of the pound due to the recession may work in London’s favour as it means the cost for delegates and organiser’s will decrease, making London better value for money and therefore likely to win more international conferences (Rogers, 2008).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To establish the historical and current status of the UK conference industry it is necessary to investigate where the UK and London are positioned globally, according to industry statistics. This has been identified by using secondary ICCA data dating from the 1960s, with a focus on growth or decline over the past decade. The ICCA was founded in 1963 and is based in Amsterdam with members across 85 countries. It maintains an extensive database on the location of international meetings, which have to fulfil strict criteria in order to be included. However, “the ICCA does not claim to cover all meetings of all international associations and the figures refer to ICCA members only, usually on a sample basis” (Ladkin & Spiller, 2000 p.9). The meeting definition criteria are that they; Must attract at least 50 participants; Must be organized on a regular basis, therefore one-time meetings are not included; and must be rotated between at least four different countries (International Congress & Convention Association, 2008).

The findings from the secondary data led the researchers to carry out 6 telephone interviews in July 2009 with industry experts with extensive knowledge of the UK and London conference industry. The 6 interviewees were asked the same 15 questions, which were divided into five categories; UK conference industry, London facilities, Olympic impacts, the International Convention Centre and alternative options. These 6 interviewees consisted of a representative from Eventia, London Development Agency, Visit London, ExCel, Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre and the Hilton Metropole Hotel. They were chosen due to their expert knowledge on the UK or London conference industry. Before the analysis could begin, the data had to be transcribed into the same format to be compatible for analysis (Denscombe, 2003). During data collection, all the interviews were recorded.
and notes were made by the interviewer. After the interviews were completed the recordings were all transcribed into a text format so that they could all be scanned for recurring themes and concepts (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The transcripts were then re-read and notes written or comments made to add any detail that may have been missed. Once the categories had been developed, they were analysed together as it is essential to “compare across the categories to discover connections between themes” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; p. 226).

FINDINGS

The repositioning of the UK conference market

Over the past decade, the UK has consistently been in the top five countries for number of meetings held per annum, alongside the USA, Germany, Spain and France, as shown in Table 1 (Appendix A). Table 1 also identifies, from ICCA data, the peaks and troughs of the UK conference industry. Between 1997 and 2000, the UK’s ranking remained stable within the top 3. However, from 2001 the UK’s ranking has fluctuated, dropping to fifth in 2001, 2004 and in 2008. In between these years the UK rose to second in 2003, as well as third in 2005 and 2006. (International Congress and Convention Association, 2009). These rankings identify that the UK remains a popular destination for hosting conferences, with the ICCA statistics including more and more meetings each year indicating that globally conference tourism is still growing (International Congress and Convention Association, 2009). Indeed, the number of conferences has not declined in London, in 2008 the UK increased the number of meetings by forty (International Convention Centre Commission, 2005; International Congress and Convention Association, 2009). This suggests that although the UK has experienced an increase in the absolute numbers of meetings, for the UK to fall in the rankings, other countries must be increasing the number of meetings over and above the UK.

With regards to London, Table 2 (Appendix A) shows that from 1968-1997 the capital was ranked in the top three cities globally for the number of meetings held per annum. However, according to ICCA data, since then London has declined dramatically, and was not in the top 15 cities globally in 2004. In 2007 London received 15.3 million international visitors, of which 24% were for business, ranking London at 17th (International Congress & Convention Association, 2008; London Development Agency, 2009; Visit London, 2009). In 2008 London declined to become the 19th most popular city for meetings. Yet despite this decline, as with the UK overall, the actual number of meetings in London has not declined significantly. London has remained fairly stable over the last decade. Even in 2004 (where London is no longer in top 15 cities globally) the number of meetings met London’s average. In 1997 London held around 62 association conferences and approximately 69 in 2006, with the exception of the year 2000 which saw a peak of 80 association conferences, the years in between have all hosted between 55-72 conferences (International Conference Centre, 2005). However, London remains a popular city to visit, and many organisations like to conduct business meetings in the capital. It is consequently vital to investigate why London is experiencing a downturn in its conference business when it still remains an important international business centre. Dan Ritterbrand, the London Mayors campaign manager concedes that; “we [London] are not so hot on business tourism and the primary reason is that we don’t have an International Convention Centre” (O’Connor, 2009).

Respondents were questioned about the decline in conference bookings and international market share of meetings that the UK and London are experiencing. This aimed to identify the underlying rationale for the UK conference industry’s decline, and in particular London’s decline. All six interviewees believed the current economic climate to be the major reason for the decline in conference bookings in the UK as a whole. However, it should be noted that the UK and London have been declining according to ICCA statistics for the past decade (International Congress and Convention Association, 2009), so there must be other reasons too. The recession is affecting the economies of other countries also, therefore it cannot be the sole reason the UK has declined because other countries would be declining also.
Another reason for the decline may have been the historical strength of the British pound against other economies making the UK, and London, an expensive conference destination. Indeed, all interviewees cited this as a reason London has declined. The recession and the exchange rate were both highlighted as potential issues in the literature review, which could also affect the building of an ICC in London. This cements further the potential problems the economy and the strength of the pound could have upon an ICC as it is apparent from the interviewees responses that these are issues they perceive to affect conference bookings in the capital already. It is important to recognize that although it has been the case that the strength of the pound in recent years has made the UK and London expensive places to visit, at present the pound is worth US$1.5 making London a far less expensive destination (Boyle, 2009). Again, this needs to be brought into a strategic marketing campaign to rebrand London as a lower cost conference destination when compared to those countries using the Euro currency. However, due to lead times involved in booking conferences, the positive impact of a weaker pound on London’s conference industry may not be realized for at least 18 months to 4 years.

Two interviewees also emphasised the importance of not relying on ICCA statistics to be completely comprehensive indicators of London’s positioning as a conference destination due to ICCA’s reliance on feedback from members in gaining their data. ICCA receives its data through Visit London who collects data from association members, but it is reliant upon members submitting their data voluntarily. One interviewee from Visit London stated that “the past two years has seen a poor response rate from venues”, with regards to the information about their association conferences. It should be noted that each city included in the ICCA statistics faces the same problems that Visit London does in collecting the data so it is questionable as to whether London’s decline in ICCA statistics can be attributed to a lack of conferences to report, particularly since the recession will affect the entire industry, and not specifically London. In fact, the same interviewee said that “London is doing ok. Enquiry levels through Visit London have improved year-to-date in terms of number of enquiries, the value of these enquiries and the confirmation of the enquiries.” This finding may indicate that other countries may have better data collection methods. So Visit London must inform respondents that by supplying accurate data will help the UK as a viable conference destination. After all, it is in the respondents’ best interests to give Visit London the data because conference organizers will be aware of ICCA rankings, so the greater the ranking in ICCA statistics, the greater level of business London is likely to receive. If the response rate is such a problem then they need to promote this and make a marketing campaign of it. Visit London, as London’s conference bureau, must campaign to ICCA members to encourage submittal of data to improve London’s status in ICCA league tables. This needs to be done through a marketing campaign stressing the positive effects that are increasing within the ICCA rankings will have on their conference bookings as a consequence of the publicity London will receive from improving.

**London conference facilities**

Respondents were subsequently questioned regarding London’s conference facilities with the purpose of identifying the infrastructure London currently has in place, what conference packages are available, and to explore any limitations with the conference facilities on offer there. The experts all agreed that the availability and standards of conference hotels in London is high. The only drawback mentioned is that hotels are subject to size because they can only accommodate smaller scale conferences. The interviewee from LDA stated that “overall London has a very strong hotel offering for smaller conventions. Added to this is a very high standard of accommodation for all budgets. The hotel package definitely adds to London’s offering.” So clearly London’s hotels provide a high standard of facilities and services for smaller scale conferences. With regards to the visitor attractions, many of the experts noted that there are very few destinations with the diversity of product that London can offer. The KPMG ‘Demand Assessment’, authorised by the LDA, identified a strong demand for a larger purpose built conference venue in London, with an estimated demand to host 332 conferences per year (International Convention Centre Commission, 2005). This is almost one conference per day per annum and would result in extra delegates visiting the capital, with their associated expenditure, job.
creation and potentially re-positioning London as a leading conference destination for larger conferences.

In response to the question ‘do you believe London’s conference package can be improved in anyway?’ A key theme from respondents was that London lacks a really large conference centre. Interviewees stated “for large events London is not considered, due to the lack of certain infrastructure”, and “London needs a proper conference centre, because not having one has put London off the radar”. So either the building of a purpose-built center, or the expansion of an already existing venue would vastly improve the conference package. The ICC Commissions assessment of conference demand, the ICCA rankings and five of the six interviewees believe there is enough demand for larger facilities in London. The expansion plans of ExCel were unanimously supported, these plans include a main auditorium for up to 5000 delegates. Whether these expansion plans will negate the need for an ICC was a question that the panel could only be answered once the new ExCel was operational. However, sentiment indicated that if Excel’s expansion is successful, a separate ICC may be unnecessary. Most notably, ExCel may take away the demand for any more large conference facilities in London, and if the demand is not there then an ICC would not be viable.

Interviewees identified that London’s conference packages were identified as having poor marketing strategies to promote London as a conference destination. Additionally, the experts believe that there is a lack of incentive packages available in London. The experts also stated that London must promote heavily what it can offer delegates other than the conference venues themselves, and that it would be beneficial to incorporate some of the city’s offerings as part of incentive packages to entice more delegates to the capital. Interviewees identified that London offers limited incentive packages as part of its conference products. This is deemed to be negative because the experts believe incentives will attract more delegates to the city due to London’s perception as an expensive location. All six of the experts mentioned that what London has to offer as a city in general is excellent, hence its popularity as a leisure tourism destination. Therefore, London can use its leisure and cultural offerings to work in collaboration with the conference offerings to really provide a complete conference package with incentives. If it is the strategy of integrating incentive packages into London’s conference, it should strengthen the overall positioning of the London conference industry.

The Olympic Games

In terms of conferences held within a country, the Olympics Games has been shown to have a positive effect on the host nation. From Table 2 (Appendix A) ICCA statistics identify that Sydney was ranked outside the top 15 global destinations in terms of meeting held annually, in 1999 it was ranked 10th and in 2000, the year that Sydney hosted the Olympic Games it was ranked 8th. In the post Olympic year its ranking fell to 13th and in 2002 Sydney was again ranked outside the top 15 destinations for meetings. The specific effects of hosting the Olympic Games on positioning a destination’s conference tourism were identified in the literature review. Respondents were questioned regarding their views on whether London has the infrastructure and strategy in place to take advantage of hosting the 2012 Olympic Games. This will assist in meeting the aim of highlighting any issues London has as a conference destination and how these may affect the building of an ICC, with particular reference to the Olympic Games.

The experts believe London has the infrastructure to satisfy the demand for conference tourism that the Olympics may potentially bring to the capital. The Olympics are approximately 2.5 years away, and the interviewee from Visit London declared that already “there has been an influx in business since London won their Olympic bid, and another surge is expected after the Winter Games in Vancouver”. So it is necessary to ensure London has contingencies in place to take advantage of this extra business. Additionally, large spaces traditionally used for conferences have already been earmarked for Olympic sports, and example being Olympic sports is at Excel. As such no conference will take place at the ExCel venue during the Olympic period. Indeed, if ExCel continues to be used for events such as the Olympic Games, and was not used exclusively as a conference venue then its
availability will be more restricted than that of a purpose-built conference venue. The ICC Commission report (2005) indicated there would be potentially 325,000 delegates and 332 conventions per year at a purpose-built ICC, so if ExCel is unavailable at certain times then there is still potentially more demand for larger conferences than ExCel can accommodate for. Thus, an ICC may still be necessary to stop business being taken out of the capital.

Transport was highlighted by respondents as an area needing improvements to ease the travelling for the extra delegates attracted to London during the Olympic Games. Current improvements to the Crossrail network and a new train station in Stratford will help delegates’ accessibility within London. Such improvements in transport around London driven by the Olympics will benefit the city as a whole, as East London will be much more accessible from other parts of London, and in the UK. However, the transport plans are due to be completed in time for the Olympics in 2012, but ExCel refurbishments opens in May 2010 so these transport improvements may not have the immediate desired effect. The interviewee from Eventia perceives this to be a problem because he mentioned the problem with transport getting to ExCel during the World Travel Market in 2008, when due to rail closure thousands of delegates could not get to the venue. This cannot happen when Excel is the ICC as it is representing London as its premier venue and to establish return custom delegates must be satisfied with the service they receive, even before they get to the venue.

In terms of strategies to take advantage of the extra conference tourism predicted during the Olympics, the interviewees mentioned that a fair pricing agreement has been agreed because “there is a recognition among leading UK event managers, producers, suppliers and venues that over-inflated pricing and/or inappropriate trading practices during the period of time surrounding the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games in 2012, risk doing long-term damage to the international reputation of London in particular as an event host city, to the UK as a host destination and to the UK event industry in terms of its international competitiveness” (Visit London 2009; online). A fair pricing agreement will ensure that venues do not charge unjust prices which will help to protect the city’s legacy. This policy is being championed by Visit London and Visit Britain in order to: Get rid of existing negative perceptions of the cost and logistical issues of holding an event, particularly in London; A desire to highlight the industry's skills, creativity and expertise as leaders in our field to the rest of the world; and present a unified approach to ensure all business events taking place up to and during 2012 reflect the values and aspirations of the stakeholders (Visit London 2009).

In addition, these hotels have agreed to guarantee the allocation of bed nights for delegates which currently they do not do. In 2008 London’s hotel occupancy was 80.8%, the highest in Europe (Deloitte, 2008), results which are in line with previous years. Historically, due to such high occupancy rates, London hotels have not block booked rooms for large conferences because they do not need to secure the business. This is not ideal for delegates because they would like to secure their accommodation in advance, or would like their accommodation organized by the conference organizer so they do not have to do it themselves. However, London hotels agreeing to block book is very important because it means delegates can book their accommodation in advance alongside the conference venue, even if the conference is not taking place in the hotel, providing more flexibility than at present. Both the fair pricing strategy and the promise of bed nights to delegates will help to maintain London’s legacy after the Games because they offer more flexibility to delegates and conference organizers and provide a service promise and price guarantee. This will help ensure that the extra business accrued through the Games remains in the city (International Congress and Convention Association, 2009).

An international convention centre (ICC)

Interviewees were questioned regarding the creation of an ICC in London. With virtually no opportunities to host conferences with more than 3,000 delegates, it is vital that London does something to change this situation. All interviewees believe that an ICC will benefit London, and all would like an ICC in London. Part of the reason for this is due to the perceived demand the
interviewees believe is there for larger facilities, so an ICC would naturally satisfy such demand. It is important to note however, that the interviewee from ExCel is only in favour of an ICC if it is part of ExCel. ExCel opposed the initial plans for an ICC in London due to the competition it would bring to their business (International Convention Centre Commission, 2005). This is not surprising since ExCel were cited by the experts as the venue that would be most affected by the opening of a new ICC, primarily because it is the only venue that could compete in terms of size so an ICC and ExCel would be competing for the same business. However, the interviewee from ExCel confirmed that ExCel will be expansion in May 2010, after which they will market themselves as London’s ICC. Therefore, in 2010 London will have an ICC in the form of ExCel, although it will not be the purpose-built venue the ICC Commission (2005) had planned for.

ExCel’s expansion plans differ from the criteria the ICC Commission suggested for an ICC in London. One such difference, frequently mentioned by the experts, is its location in East London rather than central London. Whilst research has shown centrally located venues are preferred (Mair & Thompson, 2009; International Convention Centre Commission, 2005), the majority of interviewees highlighted that transport to East London is going to be improved for the Olympics with the development of Crossrail and Stratford stations. Furthermore, the issue with ExCel not having its own entertainment, restaurant and shopping facilities can be overcome because it will be located in close proximity to the new Olympic park and the entertainment facilities created. It is already in close proximity to the O2 arena, so conference delegates will have the amenities they require in close proximity to ExCel.

CONCLUSION

ICCA statistics identified that London has declined from being the 3rd most popular destination to hold meetings, to that of 19th. This paper identifies that in order to reverse this decline, and to improve London’s positioning within the global conference market, strategies must be implemented. In 2004 the LDA commissioned an investigation into the feasibility of an ICC in London, and in 2005 the ICC Commission Report supported the construction of such a venue in London. In 2005 London won its bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games. However, with the economic downturn, a new London mayor in office, the selling off of public assets, such as QEIIICC, and the lack of public funding due to financial commitments associated with the London’s successful 2012 Olympics Games bid has resulted in the plans for an ICC being halted. Additionally, ExCel was granted permission to expand its facilities and included in these plans are larger conference facilities. The interviewee from ExCel stated ExCel is to be promoted as London’s ICC in conjunction with the Mayoral Office. Once the venue has been enlarged, it will offer a capacity to accommodate up to 5,000 delegates in its main auditorium. The use of ExCel as London’s ICC is regarded as the best alternative to a brand new purpose-built ICC. This may be considered a compromise in terms of a strategy to create an ICC, as ExCel is not a dedicated conference centre, but due to the present economic climate it is London’s only option to enable them to have an ICC available at the commencement of the London Olympics Games in 2012. This was supported by all interviewees and thus London’s strategy to improve its positioning within the global conference industry is to support the expansion plans of ExCel and to work collaboratively to market ExCel as London’s ICC. Strategies are place to encourage more conference tourism to the city, not only during the Olympics, but also for the years following the Games in the form of promised bed allocation, a fair pricing agreement and incentive packages. Conference delegates will also benefit from the huge improvements to the transport structures both in and around London created as a result of the 2012 Olympics Games. Overall, implementing these strategies successfully may ultimately result in an improvement in London’s position as a conference destination and thus remain competitive within the global conference market.
### Table 1
Number of meetings per country

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*Source: International Congress & Convention Association, 2009*
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THE IMPERATIVE OF CASINO SERVICE IN GAMING DESTINATIONS: DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF CASERV

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Institute For Tourism Studies, Macao

Hoi In Veronica Fong  
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Abstract

Gaming destinations, such as Macao and Las Vegas, rely heavily on gaming revenues. The success of gaming operators, however, depends on many marketing and organizational factors such as human resources, marketing efforts, and management styles. One particularly important area in this increasingly competitive industry is service differentiation. Yet, literature provides little, if any, research on service measures for this market. This paper fills the research gap by investigating service factors in casino operations. Exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis were employed. Four factors emerged – service environment, service delivery, game service, and food service - as key components for casino service evaluation criteria. The result indicates a need for casino management to place more emphasis on these four service dimensions. Theoretical and other managerial discussions about the findings are also presented.

Keywords: Casino gambling, Macao, service environment, service delivery, game service, food service

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary service economies, consumers have increasingly demanded for better services in the service exchange (Seiders, Voss, Godfrey, & Grewal, 2007; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Gaming destinations, such as Macao and Las Vegas, have put a great endeavor to improve their casino services. However, as competitions kick up, astute casino operators are searching for means to increase their competitive advantage over rivalries. The extent of the literature has consistently revealed that tangible and intangible services are key drivers to consumer decisions and behaviors (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996) as well as firm profitability (Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser Jr, & Schlesinger, 1994; Xu & van der Heijden, 2005). Casino practitioners also acknowledge the strategic imperative of services in their operations. Although some researchers have responded by studying service offerings in gaming establishments (Gu & Siu, 2008; Hirsch, 1995; Johnson, 2002; Johnson, Mayer, & Champaner, 2004; Lucas, 2003; Mayer & Johnson, 2003; McCain, Jang, & Hu, 2005; Suh & Erdem, 2009), a comprehensive and formally validated measure of casino services remains missing. Successful casino operations depend on many service factors, such as game service, customer service, physical environment, and food service. Astute casino operators have strived hard to warrant service excellence in these areas, and as a consequence they are rewarded by higher customer share and loyalty (Huang, Chen McCain, & Tie, 2008; Stutz, 2009). A particular area that practitioners and scholars used to gauge success is how well services offered meet the needs of the customers. Yet, service measures from popular journals are generic and lack context (Cronin & Taylor, 1994; Hightower, 2003).

A second issue in the literature is that predominant services measurements are developed in the western context. For example, Lucas (2003), and Mayer and Johnson (2003) developed multiple gaming service related scales in the context of Las Vegas casinos, but whether these scales could be applicable to the Asian market is still unknown. These voids in the literature not only could lead to invalid and unreliable measures, but could also raise challenges in data collection in the field. In addition, current measures of casino services are inclusive as they primarily assess one or two aspects of the service offerings in the casino service encounter. No study to our knowledge has yet to provide a comprehensive measure of the multitude of the services provided by casino operators. The present
research intends to address these literature voids by developing a casino services scale in the context of Macao casinos among Chinese non-VIP gamblers.

In sum, the importance of casino service measures and the dearth of empirical research examining gamblers’ perceptions of casino service offerings motive the present study. Based on the work from prior service research particularly the service quality framework proposed by Rust and Oliver (1994); see also Bardy & Cronin, (2001), we conceptualize casino services – CASERV - as a second-order construct, which assesses four facets of service offerings: employee service delivery, service environment, game service, and food services. The proposed CASERV scale, which provides a comprehensive instrument of casino services measure, is constructed through an empirical scale development and validation process. The findings follow and implications for practitioners and scholars are drawn. The paper concludes with a discussion of future research direction.

Conceptual background for casino service

A wide extent of the literature has indicated a strong linkage between service quality and customer behaviors. The seminal work from Parasuraman and colleagues (Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1991; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; Zeithaml & Parasuraman, 2004) defines service quality (i.e., SERVQUAL) as a five-dimension construct, which views quality of service as the gap between customer expectation and perception of the service provided. The proposed five quality dimensions measure: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangible characteristics of a service experience. However, critics argue that both the conceptual and measurement models of SERVQUAL are inconsistent and inconclusive in defining quality of service experience (Cronin & Taylor, 1994; Smith, 1995). For example, Cronin and Taylor (1994) suggest that measuring the discrepancy between customer perception and expectation is unnecessary, while Brady and Cronin (2001, p. 36) exclaim that the SERVQUAL does not measure “what should be reliable, responsive, empathic, assured, and tangible if service excellence is to be ensured”.

Rust and Oliver (1994), and Brady and Cronin (2001) propose a three-component service quality unified model that addresses these calls. The model views customers’ evaluation of service quality provided by the service encounter in three aspects: service product (technical quality or outcome quality), service delivery (or functional quality), and service environment (or physical environment quality). Service product represents the technical aspect of a service encounter, which includes the core or actual services consumers receive (Rust & Oliver, 1994), such as table and slot games in a casino, rooms in a hotel, and the availability of such service (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 2006; McCain, et al., 2005).

Service environment defines the tangible attributes of a service encounter. This quality aspect differs from service product as it is concerned with the servicescape (Bitner, 1992) of the built environment. Service delivery represents the interactions between the service provider, particularly front-line employees, and service patrons (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Rust & Oliver, 1994). These interpersonal interactions have been identified as the employee-customer interface (Hartline & Ferrell, 1996) or moment of truth that is encountered by customers during a service exchange (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2006). The significance of the interaction process may explain why much service research has found that customers gauge their service experience primarily based on employee attitude and behaviors (e.g., personal attention, employee friendliness, and service promptness) (Hartline & Ferrell, 1996; Homburg, Wieseke, & Hoyer, 2009; Mittal & Lassar, 1996). Similar findings have also been report in gaming studies (Gu & Siu, 2008; McCain, et al., 2005; Suh & Erdem, 2009).

METHOD

We employed both qualitative and quantitative methods in exploring the dimensionality of services in a casino setting. Following the conventional scale development paradigm discussed in the literature (Churchill, 1979; DeVellis, 2003; Walsh & Beatty, 2007), we elaborate the scale development process in three phases: scale generation and initial purification, scale refinement and
validation, and scale cross-validation. The scale development effort was conducted in a newly built Las Vegas-style casino in Macao, the world gaming capital. Details of three phases are discussed below.

Scale generation and initial purification

We build the casino service scale based on Rust and Oliver’s (1994) service quality framework (see also Brady & Cronin, 2001); we extend it through both qualitative and quantitative inquiries. Before we generate items pertaining to casino services, we interviewed a panel of managers and front-line employees in the aforementioned casino to identify dimensions that are important to casino service management. We transcribed the responses and organized them into themes. These themes generally pertain to the casino service environment, service delivery, game service, and food service. The second qualitative study, which consisted with 30 casino players, was conducted to explore items that were important to casino services from the consumer perspective. The procedure was necessary in order to ensure that casino service perceptions of the providers and the consumers were congruent (Netemeyer, Burton, & Lichtenstein, 1995). We used a discussion guide and then approached the respondents with open-ended statements as follows:

- How do you like the services here and why?
- Explain the factors are important to your evaluation of casino services.
- How do these factors influence your decision?

All informants were able to articulate the criteria of casino services. We transcribed and then coded their responses into themes. Consistent with the first qualitative study discussed above, four themes were emerged and a total of 20 items were developed based on these responses. Next, we purified this initial set of items by asking the aforementioned casino managers to rate these items. Only 13 items remained as a result. Finally, we looked into the literature to develop the actual questions used for the next phase of the study. Each item was measured in a five-point Likert scale anchored by 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree).

We collected data from patrons of the aforementioned casino by means of person-administrated quota sampling with equal number of male and female customers. The decision was based on the casino management. Respondents were intercepted outside of the casino while they exited the venue. A total of 238 responses completed the questionnaire, which represented a 79% response rate. Of the respondents, half were men and the other half were women; 42% were between the age of 26 and 35; half of them were mainland Chinese and 30% were Chinese from Hong Kong.

FINDINGS

To assess the scale validity, we followed the recommendation from the literature (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006; Schumacker & Lomax, 2004): spitted the dataset into two samples, conducted principal component analysis on the first sample, and performed confirmatory factor analysis on the second sample. Results from the Principal Component Analysis (with Promax oblique rotation) reveal that one item should be removed and the items can be reduced into four factors. The four-factor solution was able to account for 73% of variation. The Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin is .83 indicate an adequate measure of sampling adequacy. All remaining items have primary loading greater than .50 and secondary loading less than .30 (see Table 1). Coefficient alpha for each scale is greater than .70, indicating internal consistency is intact (Nunnally, 1978).

Each factor includes three items, and we label the four factors, service environment, service delivery, game service, and food service. Service delivery has the highest eigenvalue (4.85) and is able to explain 40% of the variance of casino services; the results suggest that it is the most important component in customers’ service evaluation of casinos. On the other hand, game service has the lowest eigenvalue (1.09) and is able to account for 9% of variance; the results make intuitive sense as many table and slot games are fairly standardized in the industry.
Next, we examined the aforementioned four-factor solution identified through confirmatory factor analysis. The confirmatory measurement model was estimated using maximum likelihood method in LISREL 8.80. The measurement fit for each construct was excellent with comparative fit index (CFI) = 1.00, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) ≤ .04, and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) ≤ .01. The average variance extracted for each factor was .50 or above, indicating adequate convergence (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In addition, composite reliability for each scale is beyond the .70 threshold (see Table 1).

To assess the nomological validity of the casino service (CASERV) scale, we examined the inter-factor correlations among the four service constructs. The results reveal high association among the constructs with Pearson’s correlation (r) between .42 and .55, p < .001. We first tested predictive validity of CASERV by examining the correlations of the four factors with overall customer satisfaction (see Table 2). We operationalized the CASERV scale as a second-order construct with casino service environment, service delivery, game service, and food service modeled as first-order constructs as Figure 1 shows. The results indicate that the model has good fit with CFI = .97, RMSEA = .06, and SRMR = .07; χ²(61) = 79.18, p < 0.10; χ²/df = 1.30. The standardized path coefficient between CASERV and overall customer satisfaction is .71 (p < .001) and the coefficient of determinant is relatively high (R² = .51). In sum, the analyses conducted in the first two phases of the study warrant strong content validity, construct validity (i.e., convergent and discriminant validities), nomological validity, and scale reliability (Hair, et al., 2006).

Scale cross-validation

Scale cross validation can be achieved by examining the measurement models of two different samples drawn from the same population. Hair et al. (2006) suggest that this could be accomplished by splitting a dataset into two samples. If factor loadings of the two samples were equivalent, full metric invariance is achieved. In addition, Hair et al. (2006) also recommend researchers to assess scalar invariance, which could be examined by two theoretical distinct groups (e.g., male vs. female customers). Strong factorial invariance could result if both full metric invariance and full scalar invariance were achieved.

To assess full metric invariance, we used the aforementioned two samples (sample 1 and 2) and model CASERV as a second order construct as discussed above. We then constrained the loading estimates to be equal between the two samples. The results indicate that the measurement model is invariant (Δχ²(11) = 2.25, p = .99); hence, full metric invariance is established. To assess full scalar invariance, we first split the dataset into two groups by gender. This selection criterion is based on the literature as much research suggests that male and female casino gamblers are different in their gaming behaviors (Fong & Ozorio, 2005; Tang, Wu, & Tang, 2007). The findings suggest that the measurement model is also invariant (Δχ²(11) = 6.52, p = .84); hence, full scalar invariance is demonstrated. Results of the two invariance tests confirm a strong factorial invariance of the CASERV scale.

DISCUSSION

The first of its kind! Macao’s “dragon head” gaming industry has been attracting tens of millions Chinese visitors to this small town with only 29 square kilometers of land. As the city devours billions of dollars from visitors, a string of casinos have been lined up for this spectacular business opportunity. There is no doubt that competition will intensify. Yet, it remains unclear how casino operators are going to compete for market share and customer share. One may speculate that American-based gaming operators would benchmark their Vegas-style casinos and compete at the services level. The full-fledged Wynn, Venetian, and Grand MGM are some examples. With increasing importance of services this industry, there is a need to develop an instrument that could aid local and international gaming companies to better gauge their service offerings.
The present research addresses the literature void by providing a parsimonious casino services (CASERV) scale. Based on a rigorous empirical validation process, the scale pertains both strong validity (i.e., content, convergent, discriminant, and nomological validity) and reliability. CASERV contains four dimensions: service environment, service delivery, game service, and food service. These facets represent four major aspects of service offering that are prudent to customer’s casino service evaluation. Both the services and gaming literature could greatly benefit from the study as it extends service quality scale development into the context of casino industry in a non-western environment. We believe that this emit approach (Jahoda, 1977; Katigbak, Church, & Akamine, 1996) is important in understanding consumer behaviors in culturally diverse locales, such as Macao and Singapore.

The findings could also provide a vantage point to gaming practitioners. Being able to accurately measure casino service performance and/or benchmark local or international competitors could greatly enhance a firm’s strategic position. In addition, understanding strengths and weaknesses of the aforementioned three dimensions of casino services could aid the management to better craft the desired service environment, game offering, and hospitality. Astute casino marketing managers could utilize their service strengths to better promote and tailor-make specific offerings to targeted customers. Future research could extend this study by exploring how various casino service dimensions affect customer satisfaction and loyalty intention. In addition, scholars could also examine how casino brand equity and customer type influence patrons’ service quality perceptions.

REFERENCE


THE IMPACT OF TOURIST RISK PERCEPTION OF DESTINATION FOOD SAFETY RISK ON DESTINATION CHOICE

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ABSTRACT

Despite the many efforts that have been made to promote a particular destination, people often divide cities/countries into ‘safe’ and ‘dangerous’ due to the potential risk. So, understanding risk perception is a critical element of destination risk management and communication, both for the regulator and for the travel industry. With the increase of food poisoning relating to overseas travel, the level of perceived travel risk also rises and this in turn may change future travel intention. This study attempts to identify the variables for measuring risk perception, their effects on destination food safety risk and destination choice, as well as to develop an empirical model of tourist perception of destination food safety risk. Macao was chosen as the study context as it is a popular city among the Asian countries. Using Structural Equation Modeling technique, the study reveals that the likelihood of occurrence significantly and positively affected the destination risk of food-related illness, and, in turn, negatively impacted the willingness to go. However, there was no relationship between consequence of occurrence and destination risk or destination choice. Though the findings are limited to the context of food safety risk at, the model provides a quantitative basis for developing, implementing and evaluating destination risk management for the travel industry and government. Further studies are recommended to explore other destination risks, such as robbery, natural disasters, and what other factors, such as information search etc may lead to risk perception and/or risk reduction.

Key words: Food safety risk, risk perception, destination risk, destination choice, Structural Equation Modeling

INTRODUCTION

Despite many efforts to promote a destination with the help of its past history, inherited names and so forth, some environmental factors, such as food-borne infection, robbery, earthquakes, tsunamis and diseases appear to restrict tourist choice to visit that place (WTTC, 2007). People often divide cities/countries into ‘safe’ and ‘dangerous’ due to the potential risk. For example, some regions are stated to have ‘no-go’ areas where travelers may be robbed (Carter, 1998), whilst others are labeled as ‘risky’ because of high infection rate of illness. Perception of high risk, associated with the destination, certainly increases even after an isolated incident, for example the bombings at two nightclubs in Bali that caused a large loss in international tourism revenue (Reisinger and Mavondo, 2005). Slovic (1993) showed that negative information remains longer than positive information in the memory, so the effect of negative destination image cannot be underestimated. Understanding risk perception is a critical element of destination risk management and communication, both for the regulator and for the travel industry.

Reports show that approximately one third of visitors to Asia, Africa and Latin America suffered diarrhea or other food-borne illnesses (JHHI, 2002), and at least one-tenth of travelers are affected by food-borne illness yearly when traveling overseas (MacLaurin, MacLaurin and Loi, 2000). In view of the frequent reports of food-borne illness on vacation, poor food safety becomes one of the main risks associated with a destination (Reichel, Fuchs and Uriely, 2007). According to the literature of consumer behavior, people are more likely to be affected by the psychological aspect of risk rather than
technical risk (Cox, 1967). Risk perception affects the attractiveness and evaluation of the destination choices (Sonmez and Graefe, 1998a). Many travelers would consider the food safety reputation of an overseas destination when they plan their travel itinerary (MacLaurin, Loi and MacLaurin, 2000). As food poisoning increases in relation to overseas travel, so this raises the level of perceived travel risk and, in turn, may change future travel intention (Sonmez and Graefe, 1998b). This is one area where more research is justified.

This study attempts to identify the variables for measuring risk perception, and their effects on destination food safety risk and destination choice, as well as to develop an empirical model of tourist perception for destination food safety risk. Macao is chosen as the study context for it is a popular city among the Asian countries. Also visitors are increasing year by year, with visitor numbers reaching 22,907,724 in 2008 (MGTO, 2009). The perceived destination food safety risk would possibly cause an impact on the travel industry in Macao.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Risk perception in multi-dimensions

Since its introduction by Bauer (1967) the concept of risk perception is widely adopted by many researchers from different disciplines. Risk perception is defined as “the individual judgment of the likelihood that a consequent loss could occur and the seriousness of its likely consequences” for food safety risk (Yeung and Morris, 2001). The definition indicates two dimensions of risk perception, namely the likelihood of a loss occurring and the consequence of the loss once it has occurred. The earlier marketing scholars measured risk either in scalar quantities of low through to high (for example, Cox 1967), or used a 7-point Likert-like scale anchored at the ends with the terms ‘very unlikely’ and ‘very likely’ for the likelihood, and ‘not at all’ and ‘very much’ for consequence (Cunningham, 1967). Researchers discovered that risk perception is multi-dimensional with overall risk sub-divided into various loss outcomes. Multi-dimensional analysis improves the understanding of risk perception. From the earliest marketing literature, Roselius (1971) suggests four types of potential loss, namely hazard which is dangerous to health, money, time wasted for replacing the product and loss of ego or self-esteem when the product fails. Researchers from other fields, such as the travel and tourism industry, further developed the model by including other losses in their studies, varying from physical to psychological, and from functional to emotional (e.g., Fuchs and Reichel 2004, 2006; Lepp and Gibson 2003; Mansfeld 1996; Pizam and Sussmann, 1995; Reisinger and Mavondo 2005; Roehl and Fesenmaier 1992; Sönmez and Graefe, 1998a, 1998b). For example, the enjoyment of a holiday is spoilt even if a tourist has a stomach upset while travelling (Cartwright, 2000). Several types of perceived loss outcome, physical / health loss (inflicting illness or injury), financial loss (wasting or losing money if the service goes wrong), functional (not delivering benefits to customers as promised), time loss (wasting time and/or taking too much time), social loss (losing personal and/or social status), psychological loss (a feeling of anxiety and/or fear of negative consequences), and satisfaction loss (not delivering satisfaction) has been identified. These loss components of risk perception provide a useful framework for assessing tourist risk perception on food-borne infection when they evaluate travel destinations.

Risk perception, destination risk and destination choice

A number of risks, such as disease, food safety, taste, and quality of facilities are associated with a chosen destination (Reichel, Fuchs and Uriely, 2007). Some risks are found to be controllable, such as food poisoning, robbery, street crime, and some uncontrollable, such as tsunamis, earthquakes at the destination (Yeung, 2009). Some destinations are viewed as more risky than others (Lepp and Gibson, 2003). For example, Asia is likely to be associated with food poisoning, while Africa with infectious diseases (Carter, 1998). People are likely to avoid those places that are perceived to be risky, though perceived risk somehow differs from the actual risk incurred (Slovic, 1987). Fischhoff et al. (2004) comment that food safety related risk ranked higher than other risks. Previous research also shows that health-related risk has the highest mean score among all controllable risks (Lepp and Gibson, 2003). Health scares become obvious during a period of safety concern, for example the outbreak of plague in India in 1994 (Clift and Page, 1996). As a food risk outbreak started at a destination, the destination is
perceived to be unsafe to visit (MacLaurin, 2003). The destination would become undesirable or eliminated from selection if it is perceived to be risky (Crompton, 1992; Sonmez and Graefe, 1998a). As a matter of fact, tourists tend to avoid travelling to a destination where they perceived a likelihood of risk occurrence and the threat of severe consequences (Sonmez and Graefe, 1998b).

A negative relationship between risk perception and consumer purchase likelihood is found in the context of food safety risk for a general purchase (Yeung and Yee, 2004; Yeung and Morris, 2006), and Reisinger and Mavondo (2005) obtained similar results in their study of perceived safety risk in international travel. Bauer (1967) proposes that it is not the technical aspect of risk, but the psychological impressions of it that affect consumer behaviour, even if consumers could apparently estimate the risk involved; he found that negative perception on a destination has greater effect than a positive outlook. Hence, the following hypotheses are generated:

H1a: Risk perception in the dimension of “likelihood of occurrence” has a positive relationship with destination food safety risk.

H1b: Risk perception in the dimension of “consequence of occurrence” has a positive relationship with destination food safety risk.

H2: Destination food safety risk has a negative relationship with destination choice.

METHODOLOGY

The underlying purpose of the research is to investigate how tourist perception on food safety risk is associated with a destination, and their effects on the choice for a particular destination, such as . A set of 19 items, in which 14 items for risk perception, 1 for destination food safety risk associated with , and 4 for destination choice was generated from past literature. The measurement scales were adapted from the work of Yeung and Morris (2006), in order to provide reliability and validity (Stone, 1978). The items were in the form of statements on a seven-point Likert-like scale, anchored at the ends with the term ‘very unlikely’ and ‘very likely’ for the likelihood of occurrence, and ‘not at all’ and ‘very much’ for the consequence of occurrence. A convenience sample of 659 respondents were recruited and requested to score the 19 statements in a self-administrative questionnaire that best reflects how much they agree with each statement. An intercept survey technique was used during different daytime periods in various tourist spots in , such as Senado Square, Ruins of St. Paul, hotel and border gate, as well as the ferry terminal, where many tourists were contacted in October and early November, 2008.

The research involved a process of identifying items to measure risk perception as exogenous (independent) constructs, and how these were linked with a mediating (intermediate) construct of destination food safety risk, and, how the latter affected destination choice as the endogenous (dependent) construct. The two-dimension model of risk perception, “likelihood of occurrence” and “consequence of occurrence” was used to reflect risk perception. The destination risk was measured by food-related illness at the destination. By adopting the measurement scale of Morgan and Hunt (1994) for self-reported intention, destination choice was measured by a weighted average of the four items, namely, irrespective of the incident (4 times), travel 1 month after the incident (3 times), travel 6 month after the incident (2 times), and clear of the risk (1 time).

The data were subject to LISREL VIII for statistical analysis to test the properties of the items of the four constructs in the proposed model. That is, A confirmatory factor analysis was performed to specify the posited relations of the observed items to the underlying construct, i.e. risk perception (Sethi and King, 1994). The parameters, was examined to evaluate the convergent validity of the constructs (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The measure unidimensionality for the two constructs of risk perception was checked, so that the items, which have not work out as planned, were deleted to preserve the convergent validity (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). Based on the modification index provided by LISREL VIII, two items, [LDISAPP] and [LSPOIL], and two items, [SVALUE] and [SSHORT] were removed from the constructs of “likelihood of occurrence” and “consequence of occurrence” respectively. A path diagram was constructed, and the parameters were estimated using maximum likelihood (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1998). The structural model and path coefficient estimates of the effect
of the two constructs of risk perception on the risk, associated with destination and destination choice, were tested by examining the overall model fit.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As shown in Table 1, 659 respondents were interviewed, 54.8% being female, about half (49.2%) with age below 35, over one-third (34.7%) with an annual income between USD15,000 and USD30,000, and 42.7% from Asia and Pacific. Table 2 show the items included in the two constructs of risk perception and their derived coefficients, together with t-statistics obtained from the Confirmatory Factor Analysis utilizing LISREL VIII. The t-values (minimum t = 9.95) indicate that the items significantly measured the two constructs. Analysis of Cronbach alpha indicates that the constructs exhibited an acceptable reliability of estimation (0.72 for “likelihood of occurrence” and 0.68 for “consequence of occurrence”) (Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black, 1998). The overall fit of the measurement model was acceptable with $\chi^2(34) = 298.80 \ (p < 0.001)$, GFI = 0.93, AGFI = 0.88, RMSEA = 0.100.

The structural model was then tested using LISREL VIII. The overall fit of the structural model was acceptable with $\chi^2(52) = 472.42 \ (p < 0.001)$, GFI = 0.91, AGFI = 0.87, RMSEA = 0.099. The model shows the path of the two constructs of risk perception, the exogenous construct linking to destination risk of food relation illness and the mediating construct, which then linked to destination choice, the endogenous construct. The estimated coefficients for the pathways through the structural model are shown in Table 3. The hypothesized positive relationship between risk perception in the dimension of “likelihood of occurrence” and destination food safety risk, and the hypothesized negative relationship between the latter and destination choice in terms of willingness to go were supported at the 0.01 significance level (Table 3). However, the hypothesized positive relationship between the other construct of risk perception, namely “consequence of occurrence” was not supported.

As shown in Figure 1, among the measurement items explained by the construct of “likelihood of occurrence”, the possibility of cutting short the travel due to food related illness has the highest item loading of 0.79, followed by the possibility of being sick and discomfort while travelling at the destination (with item loadings of 0.72), the possibility of no value for money spent for the travel, the possibility of wasting time in seeking medical treatment (0.44), and the possibility of feeling stressful about an infecting food related illness (0.43). The finding reflects that perceived risk of shortening the holiday and being sick are most important when infecting the food relation illness at the destination. Correspondingly, the construct of “consequence of occurrence” captures the seriousness of being sick at the travel destination (0.39), the seriousness of wasting time in seeking medical treatment (0.41), the seriousness of the disapproval of the destination choice by friends or relatives (0.52), the seriousness of feeling stressful about infecting food related illness (0.70), and the seriousness of spoiling the entire vacation experience due to food related illness (0.82). This indicates that people perceive that spoiling the entire vacation experience is the most important factor in relation to the destination risk of food related illness. Feeling stressful also increase the risk of affecting food related illness at the destination. However, the non-significance of this factor differs from past research that the more people perceive the seriousness of their holiday being spoilt and feeling stressful, the more the destination risk of the food related illness to the tourists (e.g. Cartwright, 2000) which warrants further investigation.

Comparatively, the constructs of “likelihood of occurrence” with a coefficient of 0.23 has a higher effect on destination risk than “consequence of occurrence” with a coefficient of 0.04. The higher positive impact of “likelihood of occurrence” on destination risk of food related illness in this study could be explained by the frequent reports of food poisoning at the travel destination which increased the perceived likelihood of occurrence. Another reason is that people are likely to perceive that the consequence of infecting the food related illness may not be too serious. A negative significant impact (with a coefficient of -0.13) of the food-related illness on destination choice was found. In other words, tourists have been discouraged to visit the destination to some extent due to food related illness at the destination. So, it is important to maintain the food safety standard and a good destination image.
Table 1
CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>54.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 26</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56-65</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 65</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below USD15,000</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USD15,000-29,999</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USD30,000-49,999</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USD50,000-79,999</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USD80,000 or over</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnical Origin</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia &amp; Pacific</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
FACTORS WITH ITEM LOADINGS – DESTINATION RISK MODEL RELATING TO PERCEIVED RISK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item Loading</th>
<th>t-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Likelihood of Occurrence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could be sick [LSICK]</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>19.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not provide value for money [LVALUE]</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>11.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste time for medical treatment [LWTIME]</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>22.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut short the travel [LSHORT]</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>17.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel stressful [LSTRESS]</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seriousness of Consequence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could be sick [SSICK]</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>9.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste time for medical treatment [SWTIME]</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>10.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapproved by friends [SDISAPP]</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>13.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel stressful [SSTRESS]</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>18.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could spoil the vacation [SSPOIL]</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>22.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Likelihood of Occurrence</strong></td>
<td><strong>Factor loading</strong></td>
<td><strong>Impact on destination risk</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could be sick [LSICK]</td>
<td>0.72**</td>
<td>0.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not provide value for money [LVALUE]</td>
<td>0.44**</td>
<td>(4.97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste time for medical treatment [LWTIME]</td>
<td>0.79**</td>
<td>(-2.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut short the travel [LSHORT]</td>
<td>0.64**</td>
<td>(11.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel stressful [LSTRESS]</td>
<td>0.43**</td>
<td>(19.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consequence of Occurrence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could be sick [SSICK]</td>
<td>0.39**</td>
<td>(0.86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste time for medical treatment [SWTIME]</td>
<td>0.41**</td>
<td>(9.97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapproved by friends [SDISAPP]</td>
<td>0.52**</td>
<td>(13.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel stressful [SSTRESS]</td>
<td>0.70**</td>
<td>(10.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could spoil the vacation [SSPOIL]</td>
<td>0.82**</td>
<td>(18.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Destination risk</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food related illness [FDILL]</td>
<td>0.89**</td>
<td>(22.13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes: (_) is the t-value; ** Significant level at p < 0.01

**CONCLUSION**

This study integrated the two-dimensions model of risk perception into the theory of travel and tourism, and destination choice, and confirmed that there are relationships between risk perception, destination food safety risk and destination choice. The results confirmed that likelihood of occurrence significantly and positively affected the destination risk of food-related illness, and in turn has negatively impacted on the willingness to go. On the other hand, the result does not support a relationship between consequence of occurrence and destination risk and destination choice; this warrants further study by including a larger sample size and using a random sampling method. The findings are limited to the context of food safety risk at Macao, and it might not be generalized to general populations since only tourists who have travelled were sampled. However, the model of risk perception linking food safety risk associated with overseas destination and destination choice provides a quantitative basis for developing, implementing and evaluating destination risk management by the travel industry and government. It is important for those managing and communicating risk to take account of how tourists perceive food safety risk at the overseas destination. Further studies are recommended to explore other destination risks, such as robbery, natural disasters, and what other factors, such as information search etc. may lead to risk perception and/or risk reduction.
Figure 1
AN EMPIRICAL CAUSAL MODEL OF RISK PERCEPTION TO DESTINATION CHOICE

Note:
- f1 = Risk perception in the dimension of likelihood of occurrence
- f2 = Risk perception in the dimension of consequence of occurrence
- f3 = Destination food safety risk
- f4 = Destination choice
REFERENCE


AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON SHANGHAI RESIDENTS PROSPECTIVE PERCEPTIONS OF THE CHINA 2010 SHANGHAI WORLD EXPO IMPACT

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ABSTRACT

With the coming of the 41st 2010 Shanghai World Expo, all kinds of preparing work are in process systematically while the factor of “harmony of human” in the MICE destination is becoming more and more important. On the base of impact perception on World Expo by local residents in Shanghai, this study set up a model of residents’ classification so as to nail down the inner segmentation groups from the view of “interior marketing”. The results of this study could be used as references for the effective promotion and theoretical marketing of the image of Shanghai World Expo, so as to better realize “mobilization of all mass”, better manage Shanghai World Expo and promote the development and advancement of Shanghai World Expo.

Keywords: 2010 World Expo, residents of community, tourist image perception

INTRODUCTION

As an economic and financial center in China as well as a city with explicit image and developed tourism industry, Shanghai has held a series of large-scale exhibitions, conventions and events, for example, the 32nd International Business Conference, FORTUNE Global Forum, Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit and Tennis Masters Cup. The development of exhibition industry has brought up a significant increase in economic and social benefits. Meanwhile, it is closely related with the community residents of Shanghai. The community residents have overall and profound experiences for the impression and impact of the exhibition industry in Shanghai, which provides an objective condition for this empirical study. In 2010, Shanghai will hold the World Expo. The support and understanding of community residents will become a vital link for the successful hosting of World Expo. This study conducted a research on the public opinions of prospective perceptions regarding the Shanghai World Expo. The results of this study could be used as references for the effective promotion and theoretical marketing of Shanghai World Expo’s image so as to better realize “mobilization of all mass” and better manage 2010 Shanghai World Expo and promote the development and advancement of Shanghai World Expo. Furthermore, it can contribute to the sustainable development of the exhibition industry in Shanghai.

LITERATURE REVIEW

With respect to the residents’ perception on the exhibition impact, many studies have mainly focused on the multi-type and inter-time comparative studies concerning the mega-event tourism, especially the impact perception pre-and post the exhibition can help to investigate the change laws of
the residents’ perceptions and attitudes in exhibition destination. It provided an evidence for predicting the attitude changes on exhibition events so as to make pertinent marketing measures, but compared with the foreign studies in this field, the domestic studies were scarce, and generally the studies regarding the community impact perception and attitude evaluation of the exhibition destination were still at initial stage, which needed to be further expanded.

Moreover, in terms of the tourism impact perception on the residents, many foreign studies have mainly focused on five aspects which were termed as: the types of residents’ perception on the tourism impacts, the residents’ perception and attitude on special tourism products, the impact factors and relative theories regarding the residents’ perception and attitude, the cluster analysis based on the tourism perception and attitude differences. As to the theory, there were social exchange theory (Ap, 1992), social representation theory (Pearce, 1996), resort life cycle theory (Doxey & Butler, 1980), social bearing capacity (Lawson, 1998) and Maslow need-hierarchy theory (Renata, 2000); as to the method, there were both the quantitative and qualitative method; as to the technology, there were one-factor analysis and multi-factor analysis, and some of them adopted the structured equation model; as to the region being studied, there were not only the perception research on domestic tourism impact, but also the perception study on tourism impact of multi-national destinations. As to the research results, they were objective used for putting forward positioning strategy for the promotion and marketing management of the tourism departments and firms. On the other hand, when it comes to the domestic community residents’ perception on tourism impact, as to the research direction, the studies were mainly conclusive on the regional tourism destination and descriptive on the residents’ perception; as to the research theory, most of them drew lessons from the foreign theoretical framework to conduct native analysis; as to the research method, the majority of them were subjective analysis and the objective analysis were at initial stage because the applicability of mathematical method and model method has been strengthened; as to the research area, the studies were limited in the perception analysis on the domestic and regional tourism impact; as to research result, most of them stayed on perception evaluation of regional tourism destination impact aiming to put forward suggestions and countermeasures for the specific departments and local governments.

METHOD

Combining with the relative content in the foreign and domestic literatures, this study designed the first questionnaire and then conducted in-depth interviews with the governmental officials in Shanghai Travel Bureau and administers in the auspice department of World Expo. According to the feedbacks of interviews, the questionnaire was revised and adjusted. The questionnaire set up many impact indexes of World Expo and the respondents were required to make judgments from the 5 – point Likert scale ranging from the “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” (“1” means “strongly disagree” and “5” means “strongly agree”); on the other hand, the questionnaire included the questions relative to the demographic background. Before carrying out the major survey, this study conducted a pilot study on the World Tourism Exhibition held in Shanghai Exhibition Center and the questionnaires were distributed to fifty participators randomly, who were all residents of Shanghai. Based on the feedbacks of this pilot survey, the questionnaire was modified partly to eliminate the fuzziness in description and finally the questionnaire was determined.

Firstly, the subjects in this survey were the community residents in Shanghai whose age ranged from 14 to 75. These people were able to make correct judgments on their tourism behavior and experiences. Besides, this study selected the Huangpu district, Luwan district, Xuhui district, Yangpu district, Changning district, Jing’an district, Putuo district, Zhaobei district, Hongkou district and Pudong district as the survey area. The number of people in these districts accounted for over 50 percent of the overall population. Although these regions can not represent the whole Shanghai, they involved different groups after all, especially the residents of urban and suburb areas, the hosting region and non-hosting region. At last, in terms of the sample capacity, due to the data would be used for the factor analysis, Tabachnick & Fidell (2001) put forward that the minimum number of the samples for the factor analysis should reach 300, and Charreire & Durieux (2001) also thought that the greater the sample capacity was, the better the results would be. Given the accuracy of statistical
accuracy required by the data analysis, 500 questionnaires were planned to be distributed. In order to save time, cut cost and manage easily (DeVellis, 1999), this study adopted random sampling method. 500 questionnaires were distributed and finally 493 were collected. In the end, 484 out of the 493 were usable. The recovery rate and the validity of the questionnaires were 98.6 percent and 96.8 percent, which well conformed to the condition of conducting the data statistics. The result of data collection showed that the male occupied 51.4 percent of all the respondents, and the age between 36 and 45 accounted for the 26.2 percent. Meanwhile the respondents with college background were 35.3 percent, the family income among the 1000 and 1999 occupied 22.9 percent and the professionals were 12.6 percent.

RESULTS

Based on the literature summary, this study mainly referred to the perception scale of the social and economic impact of exhibition organizers (Gursoy, Kim, & Uysal, 2004) and the community reaction scale of exhibition and event (Fredline & Faulkner, 2000), which were supplemented by the other tourism impact scales when building the impact items. Through the collection and generalization of the literature results, this study put forward 36 items regarding the 2010 Shanghai World Expo impact regarding the economy, society, culture, environment and life. These items reflected the residents’ perception and evaluation on World Expo impact factors, but it was a little complicated to analyze these items one by one in the practical study. In order to obtain the evaluation mode on the life quality components of the destination residents, it was necessary to employ the factor analysis to summarize the perception items specifically (Table 1).

Before the factor analysis, 36 items regarding 2010 Shanghai World Expo impact were tested by the KMO and Bartlett’s test of sphericity to check their reliability. The result showed that the value of approx. Chi-Squar was 11889.90 and P-value was 0.000, which was smaller than 0.001, that is to say, the data could be adopted the factor analysis. The value of KMO was 0.941, indicating the factors were correlated significantly. This study adopted the components factor analysis to extract the initial factors, then they were rotated using Virmax Rotation to remain the enginevalue bigger or equal with 1 and the factor loading greater than 0.4. Finally the six component impact factors explained 66.522 percent of cumulative variance and the reliability alpha was between 0.8120 and 0.9208, higher than the 0.5 (Nunnally, 1987), indicating the study results were highly reliable.

The first factor had strong comprehensiveness, but its factor loading was high with respect to the social image of Shanghai and increase the commercial opportunities, so this factor can be called the public economy benefits. The community evaluated highest on this factor in World Expo, bigger than 3.9, among which the impact item “let the world learn more about China” was the highest (M=4.37), indicating the residents had the highest expectation on this aspect of the 2010 World Expo. The mean ranking secondly was the item “increasing the social image” with the mean 4.24, showing that the community residents thought that World Expo would contribute conspicuously to the public economy development. Besides, “improving the social image” (M=4.21) and “enhancing new infrastructures construction” (M=4.20) have obtained high cognition, indicating that Shanghai community residents were confident at shaping the important status and improving the hardware level of Shanghai through the 2010 World Expo.

The second factor investigated the negative impact degree of the 2010 World Expo on the residents and can be name as “social cost”. As to the impact perception factor on social cost of 2010 World Expo, the respondents had the lowest evaluation, showing that the host of World Expo caused evident negative impact perception for the society. The mean of “not increasing the traffic crowd degree” merely reached 2.96, which is the lowest in all items, indicating that the residents believe that the 2010 World Expo would definitely generate traffic congestions in general. At the same time, the standard deviation of this item was the highest among all the items (1.318), indicating the respondents had great variances on this issue and the reasons lying in this question may be that different communities have different distances away from the venue area of World Expo which lead to the different perspective traffic condition of residents.
Table 1
Factor Analysis on the Impact of 2010 Shanghai World Expo (N=484)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact variables of World Expo</th>
<th>Factor loading</th>
<th>Variance %</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>F1 Public economy benefits</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>17.435</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring economy benefits for municipal construction</td>
<td>0.664</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>1.002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase more commercial opportunities</td>
<td>0.778</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>0.948</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve social image</td>
<td>0.790</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>0.975</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct sense of social proud</td>
<td>0.720</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>0.981</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help to conserve and promote the Chinese culture</td>
<td>0.667</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>1.030</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce more about China to the world</td>
<td>0.761</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>0.912</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase job opportunities</td>
<td>0.488</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>1.117</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote the construction of new infrastructures in destination</td>
<td>0.616</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>0.970</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer more tourism entertainment opportunity</td>
<td>0.651</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>1.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attract more tourists to the local place</td>
<td>0.705</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand the publicity of Shanghai and China, and promote the trade</td>
<td>0.469</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>0.942</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F2 Social cost</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>12.604</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not increase transport congestion</td>
<td>0.763</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>1.318</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not increase the pressure on service facilities (e.g., fire alarms and roads)</td>
<td>0.802</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.290</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not increase the criminal rate</td>
<td>0.786</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>1.258</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not disturb the plain life of the local residents</td>
<td>0.849</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.265</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not increase the local price level</td>
<td>0.811</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.306</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not increase the deterioration of environment</td>
<td>0.765</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.247</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F3 Culture cognition development</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>12.426</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the tourism culture knowledge of various places</td>
<td>0.611</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>1.051</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn about the rich tourism resources of World Expo</td>
<td>0.683</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>1.007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience the different customs and cultures</td>
<td>0.763</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>1.069</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience the different tourism resources in foreign countries</td>
<td>0.741</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.036</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy the new tourism experience</td>
<td>0.721</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>1.062</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a chance to watch many performances of World Expo</td>
<td>0.601</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>0.980</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience the culture and tourism charms of the tourism scenic spots</td>
<td>0.663</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>1.038</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F4 Enhance the family relationships</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.502</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve family harmony</td>
<td>0.742</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>1.217</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share the happy time with the family</td>
<td>0.806</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>1.131</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivate the same hobbies with the family</td>
<td>0.783</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>1.148</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn more about the tourism resources with the family</td>
<td>0.671</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>1.163</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F5 Relax and slow life</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.324</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be able to escape from the daily trifles</td>
<td>0.740</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.207</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be able to relieve annoyance</td>
<td>0.824</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>1.182</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be able to adjust the tempo of ordinary life</td>
<td>0.750</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>1.139</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be able to alleviate the pressure of daily life</td>
<td>0.745</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.167</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F6 Promote the progress of community</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.230</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve the living level of local residents</td>
<td>0.662</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>1.200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide entertainments for the local residents’ family</td>
<td>0.613</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.027</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help to enhance the relationships between the residents, exhibitors and tourists</td>
<td>0.591</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>1.034</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be able to educate the local residents</td>
<td>0.499</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>1.130</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total variance % 66.522

Notes: Extraction method: Principal Components Analysis; Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
The third factor mainly concerned about the culture experience and cognition development brought up by the 2010 World Expo, which was termed as “culture cognition development”. With respect to the culture knowledge, the respondents expressed their agreements generally, for instance, the cognition degree of the items in “having a chance to enjoy the various performances of World Expo” (M=4.02) and “being able to experience the culture and tourism charms in the scenic spots” (M=4.04), explaining that the residents admired highly on the knowledge gains of 2010 World Expo and hoped to obtain different culture experiences in the participation process. The fourth factor focused on enhancing close family relationships and enjoying sharing the happy time with the family in participation, so it is called “enhancing the family relationships”. The fifth factor had relatively high factor loading on touching the trifles in the daily life and was called “relaxation and slowing the life”. As to improving the family relationships and relieving the mind, the evaluation of community was average, showing that the item “learning more about the tourism resources in different places with the family” and “alleviating ordinary life pressure” were all the reflections that the community residents believed that the World Expo would bring positive impacts on the family relationships and personal life. The fifth factor reflected the improvement in social life the 2010 World Expo might generate and was named as “promoting the community progress”. In terms of the items relevant to promote the community progress, the perception level of community residents tended to be medium, while the “helping to intensify the relationships between residents, exhibitors and tourists” (M=3.75) and “being able to educate the local residents” (M=3.75) gained a relatively high perception level. But the community residents in Shanghai had an average cognition on the factor “improving the living level of the local residents”, which was supposed to be the most important one.

In conclusion, the determination of factor structure dimension intensified the understanding of the impact perception system of community residents in Shanghai. Therefore, a segmentation analysis based on the different perception types of community residents can be carried out to better explore the group characteristics.

Impact perception clustering of Shanghai 2010 World Expo

Based on the six impact perception factors of World Expo, this study separated the community residents’ perception of 2010 World Expo employing the cluster analysis to pave a way for the promoting and marketing the World Expo pertinently. This study adopted K-mean cluster analysis to classify the perception into four clusters. Under the statistical test, the cluster analysis indicated that the 4-cluster method was the most appropriate for the classification of the impact perceptions. The results of ANOVA showed that the significance level of F tests was below 0.01, so there were significant differences between the four clusters. To sum up, all the six factors were conducive to distinguish the four perception clusters.

Table 2
Cluster Analysis on the Community Residents’ Perception Classification of 2010 World Expo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cluster 1</th>
<th>Cluster 2</th>
<th>Cluster 3</th>
<th>Cluster 4</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F1: Econ</td>
<td>.19950(E)</td>
<td>.35775(D)</td>
<td>-.146898(A)</td>
<td>.75786(B)</td>
<td>229.272</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2: Soc</td>
<td>.41546(C)</td>
<td>-.26116(E)</td>
<td>-.10171(F)</td>
<td>-.47887(C)</td>
<td>23.629</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3: Cogn</td>
<td>.45588(B)</td>
<td>.53908(C)</td>
<td>-.43457(B)</td>
<td>-.110310(A)</td>
<td>112.105</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F4: Fam</td>
<td>-.16285(F)</td>
<td>.72885(B)</td>
<td>-.28013(C)</td>
<td>-.16988(F)</td>
<td>26.947</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F5: Rel</td>
<td>.48787(A)</td>
<td>-.94600(A)</td>
<td>-.19580(D)</td>
<td>.23650(E)</td>
<td>69.362</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F6: Prom</td>
<td>.33519(D)</td>
<td>-.09446(F)</td>
<td>-.14095(E)</td>
<td>-.45322(D)</td>
<td>15.729</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: p<0.001

It was noteworthy that, in the six component factors, culture cognition development factor ranked secondly (B), thirdly (C), secondly (B) and first (A) in the four perception clusters respectively, which were much higher than other factors. It indicated that this factor had gained more attention than...
the others and the community residents had a conspicuous impact perception on the cognition improvement of World Expo, which was the most expected thing that the residents wanted to obtain through the World Expo.

**Market segmentation characteristics of community residents based on the perception impact cluster of Shanghai 2010 World Expo**

The cluster analysis classified the six perception factors into four different perception types which termed as: multiple-concern cluster, leisure-concern cluster ($A=-.94600$ (F5)), benefit-concern cluster ($A=-1.46898$ (F1)) and knowledge-concern cluster ($A=-1.10310$ (F3)) (Table 3). According to the result of cluster analysis, the respondents can be divided into four types, which are multiple-concern group, leisure-concern group, benefit-concern group and knowledge-concern group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3</th>
<th>Community Residents’ Perception Classification of Shanghai 2010 World Expo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cluster name</td>
<td>Cluster 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest score</td>
<td>Multiple-concern group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Few differences among factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of residents (total population %)</td>
<td>193 (39.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Being the first group, multiple-concern group involved 193 respondents, which was the largest group in the samples (39.9%). And the number of male was bigger than that of female. The majority of these people were well-educated young people with family income per month between 4000 and 6000, whose occupation were mainly the teachers, professionals and sales men. The distribution of career corresponded with the diversification of World Expo’s impact perception in a certain extent; The second group, which was the leisure-concern group, included 102 respondents accounting for 21.2 percent of the samples. The number of male was equal with that of female with the income level between 1000 and 1999 and between 2000 and 2999. It was noteworthy that these residents were between the age of 36 and 45, most of whom were governmental officials, sales men and household women, corresponding with the perception of obtaining leisure and relaxation beyond the ordinary life by participating in the 2010 World Expo; The third group was the benefit-concern cluster, which comprised 98 respondents accounting for 20.2 percent of total respondents. The number of male was greater than that of female. Most of residents in this group were between the age of 36 and 55 with junior college background. Their income level was relatively lower, and they mainly worked in sales and service industry, which basically corresponded with the perception classification; The fourth cluster was the knowledge-concern group, including 91 respondents accounting for 18.8 percent of the whole samples. Males were little more than the females and the age between 14 and 25, 36 and 45 are the majorities. The respondents were mainly students having high school and college background and the income level was below 2000.

**CONCLUSION**

This study explored the relative impact perception characteristics of 2010 World Expo, which were of significant importance to guide the tourism impact perception of the residents and improved their support attitude towards tourism development. The community residents’ perception of 2010 World Expo can be divided into six factors which were “public economic benefits”, “social cost”, “culture cognition development”, “enhancing family relationships”, “relaxing and slowing the daily life” and “promoting the society progress”. Among the factors, the “public economy benefits” became the most important impact perception factor due to its variance explanatory degree was biggest. Meanwhile, it was also one of the World Expo impacts being perceived strongly by the community.
residents. The following factor was “culture cognition development”, while the community residents perceived commonly on the factors which were closely relevant to their life, for instance, enhancing the family relationships, relaxation and slowing the life and promoting community progresses. The perception on the social cost of World Expo was the lowest. Consequently, the intensification of public benefits and avoidance of social cost, outstanding the culture and knowledge and consideration to the improvement of economy, society and living impact should be highly regarded in the preparatory work. The determination of factor structure can help the relative departments to better learn about the systematical structure of the impact perception of 2010 World Expo.

The six perception factors were then clustered into four perception classification termed as multiple-concern cluster, leisure-concern cluster, benefit-concern cluster and knowledge-concern cluster. The culture cognition development had a high cognition degree in all the four types. The construction of perception classification has paved a way for the relative departments to promote and market the World Expo. Corresponding with the cluster analysis, the respondents can be divided into multiple-concern group, leisure-concern group, benefit-concern group and knowledge-concern group. The relative departments of World Expo should enhance the understanding of market segmentation of community residents and the publicity work of 2010 World Expo. Combined with occupation characteristics of community residents, it is advisable to come up with a World Expo image with high economy benefits, more knowledge interests and easy participation and experiences to attract the young people who were well educated and had strong impact perception of World Expo. Only by emphasizing the marketing activities on improving the community residents’ interests and confidence at the World Expo can utmost the support and cooperation from the local residents. As a major part in a region and the main body in the exhibition development, their perception and attitudes on the regional exhibition development is directly related with the sustainable development of regional exhibition development. So it is necessary for the local administers to fully consider the impact factor regarding the perception and do the guide and education work well to give full play to the participation mechanism to promote the exhibition industry in Shanghai develop forward continuously.

REFERENCES


ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Branding nations as tourism destinations has developed into a multi-million dollar business and has attracted a lot of academic attention (Morgan, Pritchard, Pride 2004), not the least in conjunction with the previous Destination Branding conferences in Macao in 2005 and 2007 (Cai, 2009). Whereas cultures and civilizations have a long history sometimes spanning several millenniums, nations as “imagined communities” are only an invention of the 19th and 20th century (Anderson, 1983) and may well disappear again during the run of the 21st century. The development of national identities has been a long and complicated process for those areas which started this development rather early. Still it gave these nations (like France, the USA or Brazil) enough leeway to enter the “nation as tourism destination branding” game of semiotics with a rather fixed set of – albeit mostly invented (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) – national traditions and self-definitions. The process of tourism destination branding for decolonized young nations however has proven to be an even more challenging issue. The political boarders of numerous countries especially in Asia and Africa do not match the ethno-cultural division lines. At the same time the historic and archeological spaces often extend across the newly defined national boarders and the modern ethno-cultural spaces. Multicultural nations, like India and Malaysia have succeeded to brand themselves as supra-identities (Incredible India, Malaysia – Truly Asia), while young nations with unique historic cultures like Egypt or with a clearly defined form of tourism like the Seychelles have succeeded to brand themselves through the uniqueness of the Pharaoh monuments or the a-historical beauty of their beaches.

The Kingdom of Jordan belongs to the group of countries, whose territories were cross-roads of ancient and modern histories. Jordan is located in the very heart of the modern Arab and Muslim worlds and has historically been an important transit route; however, unlike Damascus, Cairo, Baghdad, Qairouan, Granada, Mecca, Samarkand etc. it has never been the center of an important Arab or a Muslim ruling dynasty. It is a part of the Roman, Byzantine and Christian spatial-cultural heritages, but again not a major historic centre of them like Alexandria, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Nazareth, Damascus etc. Jordan can boast that Amman is one of the oldest cities in the world, that in Jerash one of the biggest roman cities is preserved, that it is home to the place where Jesus Christ is supposed to have been baptized and that the Crusaders left several castles behind. But Jordan always is the stage for just a part of the story and never the place where the crucial moments of that story occur. Even the most famous archeological monument of the country, namely the city of Petra, is part of a greater Nabatean territory that extended from today’s Saudi Arabia in the south to Syria in the north. Likewise, the demographic fabric of the modern Jordanian society presents groups of various cultural-geographic backgrounds including Arab Palestinians, Arab East-Jordanians, Arab Bedouins, Armenians, Cherkesians, Chechenians etc. With Palestinians making up more than half the population and the fate of the West Bank, part of Jordan until 1988, still in limbo, any invention of “typical” Jordanian food, music, architecture or costumes would alienate the majority of the inhabitants. Even the Royal family is originally from Hedjaz; a province in modern Saudi Arabia and regarded Amman originally as a transit point on its way to ascend the throne in Damascus (Salibi, 1998).

This “richness” of histories, cultures, archeological sites and ethnicities presents a major challenge for the destination branding of the country. As Jordan as a historic-cultural space tells only parts of major stories, the most obvious solution would be to try to brand the nation as a part of the wider region in the different historical contexts. This however would necessitate the – currently very unlikely – active cooperation between a number of tourism authorities including Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and Saudi-Arabia.
This note therefore raises the special problems and presents some solutions for the destination branding of a nation that houses only parts of greater heritages. Jordan is just a part of the whole story, but still needs to be branded successfully to gain a bigger share in a region with booming tourism industries.
EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING: A THEORETICAL MODEL FOR DESTINATION MARKETING

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Keywords: destination marketing, experiential marketing, tourism experience, experience realms, experience types, experience providers

Tourism businesses, for example, hotels, restaurants, travel agents are planned and conceived their advertisements or brochures focusing on excitement and pleasure of their services. Because enjoyment, fun, entertainment, amusement, pleasure feelings attract tourists to buy, so that tourism businesses for being successful to market the products, they have to understand the tourist behavior and tourism product buying process. Nowadays researchers emphasize the importance of experiential marketing, customer experience, experience realms, customer feelings about the product. In the buying process of tourism; feelings, emotions, and pleasures about the tourism destinations or hotels are important in tourism consumption. The aim of the study is to offer experiential marketing based musts for successful destination marketing by focusing on the experience realms, experience types and experience providers which influence on consumers decision-making-process when visiting a destination. Because customer needs have changed and on the other hand customers take care not only their needs but also their feelings when they want to buy a tourism services. To market tourism services and destinations, successful tourism businesses and destinations must understand the tourism consumption behavior. The aim of the article is to offer experience based musts for successful destination marketing by focusing on the experience realms and experience providers which influence on consumers decision-making-process when visiting a destination. So the main purpose of the study is to provide an understanding of the potentials of experiential marketing for the tourism destinations and tourism industry. More specifically, the study aimed to achieve the following research objectives:

- To determine the potentials of the experiential marketing in tourism industry.
- To determine the experiential marketing strategies in the tourism industry.
- To determine the experience realms, types, pyramid and providers.
- To offer an experiential marketing model as a marketing strategy for tourism destinations.

First an overview of the various definitions of experiential marketing, experience providers, realms, pyramid and its types is provided. The study concludes with an experiential marketing model according to the needs, challenges and opportunities faced in marketing tourism destinations by experiential marketing. The study is organized as follows. In section one, the new society, new tourism, and new sectors are determined. In section two, experience, experience pyramid, experience realms, experience providers, and experience types are determined. Section three presents experiential tourism and in section four offers experiential marketing model for the tourism destinations. Conclusions are summarized in the last section.

Unlike traditional marketing which is largely focused on functional features and benefits, which lacks a fundamental basis and insightful understanding of customers, experiential marketing is mainly focused on sensory, affective, experiences, actions and relations. In other words, experiential marketing is grounded on psychological (Lin; 2006:26). Experiential tourism marketing differs from traditional marketing focusing on features and benefits in four major ways. These are: 1) focus on customer experiences, 2) examining the consumption situation, 3) customers are rational and emotional animals, 4) methods and tools are eclectic (Schmitt, 1999). Schmitt (1999) proposed the definition of experiential marketing: any consumer experiences some stimulations result from direct observation and/or participation in events, in which generates motivation, cognitive consensus, and purchase behavior (Lin, 2006). Experiential marketing can be used beneficially for destinations in many
situations including: 1) to turn around a declining destination brand, 2) to differentiate a destination from competition, 3) to create an image and identity for a destination, 4) to promote innovations, and 5) to induce trial, purchase and, most important, loyal consumption (Schmitt, 1999; Lin, 2006). Experiential marketing is important for the destinations because experiences cannot be replicated, removes the price barriers, is memorable, creates repeat visits, and differentiates the destinations and products. Experience must have uniqueness, immersion, personal/customized, transforming.

It appears that the value of a tourism experience is an amalgam of different value dimensions. While the functional (utility) value elements of the tour are important components, the social-psychological dimensions also emerged strongly from the groups. Tourism services must design according to customers’ value, if not, marketers could not be successful. Future researchers must focus on the experiential value dimensions and businesses must apply these dimensions to the products.

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DESTINATION BRANDING VERSUS PLACE BRANDING: CONCEPTUAL AND PRAGMATIC CHALLENGES

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Destination branding as an emerging field of academic inquiry has made a substantial progress since the early 2000s. There have been numerous special issues of journals, books, and conferences dedicated to the subject. Notably, Macau’s Institute For Tourism Studies and its partners have organized two consecutive bi-annual conferences bearing destination branding in its theme. The academic interest in the subject has been largely inspired by the industrial phenomenon of creating destination brands with sensational slogans. However, there has yet to be strong evidence that the practice by the destination industry has significantly benefited from the knowledge accumulated in the academic circle. Little overlap exists between the concept of destination branding as preached and that as practiced. Adding to the misalignment is the concept of place branding that has become an alternative and interchangeable term for destination branding in and outside of the tourism literature. A recent review by Hanna and Rowley (2008) of articles on place branding revealed that the term “place brand” was used to represent the business sector of a place in 65.2% of the cases; while it referred to a place as destination for tourists in 34.8% of the cases. Further, they showed that the terms “place” and “destination” in branding literature were used to describe all the geographical scopes of places from the country- to town-level branding. Such conceptual confusion in academic inquiry is unproductive in itself, and at the same time increases its irrelevancy to the destination industry that is in critical need for guidance to get out of the bandwagon of creative advertising. The current study proposed a branding model, Tourism Branding Cube, which delineates the concepts of destination and place branding and bridges the gap between the two.

The Tourism Branding Cube

In the Tourism Branding Cube as illustrated in Figure 1, destination branding and place branding are examined against three dimensions, with tourism branding as a reconciling concept that bridges the two. First, demand-related dimension indicates the breadths and depths of the proposed brand experience of the tourists. Second, supply-related dimension includes different scopes of stakeholders and related branding activities. Third, geographic perspective reveals diverse spatial scales that should be considered in branding places.

Destination branding is the narrowest concept with the simplest scope of stakeholders and tourists. Destination marketing organizations are the key actors of the brand management (Blain, Levy, & Ritchie, 2005) and customers are generally confined to tourists. Destination branding aims to create unique selling propositions, to maximize the perceived values and satisfactions from the tourists, and eventually to enhance destination brand equity. Extant literature on destination branding is strongly influenced by destination image research that seeks the understanding of tourist perceptions of a destination. It is demand-driven. Although Cai (2002) pioneered a branding model that moves branding research outside the domain of destination image, his work and other studies that have followed remain focused on a market orientation as practiced by individual business. Place branding is not confined to promoting a place as a tourist destination. It aims to contribute to the development of a place as a whole by building competitive identity of regions, especially cities and nations (Anholt, 2005, 2007). Customers of a place brand do not necessarily seek tourism experiences. They seek a broader scope of experiences including investment and other business activities. Branding in this demand context requires the involvement of the widest spectrum of stakeholders. For example, Palsdottirs’ (2008) Fully-Inclusive Stakeholder (FIST) approach shows the complex nature of stakeholders. FIST consists of three components: citizens, private sectors, and public sectors. Citizens include non-profit
organizations, leaders, and other communities and groups. Private sector organizations incorporate private trade associations and chambers of commerce. Public sectors span from tourism boards and inward investment agencies to economic development agencies.

Figure 1
Tourism Branding Cube

Tourism branding expands the concept of destination branding in the experiential level of tourists and the scope of stakeholders. At the same time, it brings place branding to focus on one of its targeted groups of audience – tourists. Tourism branding, as originally proposed by Cai (2007), does both by adopting a sociological definition of destination. While business-oriented views interpret destinations as the spots in which cooperation in the tourism industry is involved, sociological views emphasize social interactions among the actors (Framke, 2002). The sociological views are also linked to the systems perspectives (Scott, Baggio & Cooper, 2008; Scott & Cooper, 2007), which interpret a destination as a network of agents. Tourism branding is a paradigm that interprets destination as a system operated by social actors rather than the distribution channel of tourism products. This paradigm differentiates from traditional destination branding. It goes beyond one-way communications from marketers to tourists and the limited goals of maximizing revenue in a short time period. It focuses on managing the tourism sector of a place as a part of regional development and incorporates tourist-resident interactions as part of their experiences at the destination. Therefore, stakeholders in tourism branding are expanded beyond Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) to include tourists, tourism businesses and residents, among others (Cai, 2007).

This study proposed the Tourism Branding Cube as a model to study and practice branding a place as tourist destination. The model consists of three dimensions. The demand-related dimension addresses the experiences of tourists. The supply-related dimension deals with the scope of stakeholders in the branding process. The geographic perspective considers the spatial scale of a place being branded. Tourism branding is presented as bridging the gap between the two existing concepts of destination and place branding. In the proposed model, tourism branding optimally accommodates each of the three dimensions. First, it complements destination branding by emphasizing interactions among the extended scope of stakeholders. By involving residents in branding a place as destination, tourism is more likely to be embraced by the host community and the development of it is more sustainable. Second, it overcomes the limitation of the generic nature of place branding. Anholt (2005) points out that it is hard to brand a place as a whole because promotional messages tend to be vague and should be managed by multiple agents with different target markets and objectives. Tourism-related brands can be efficient communication tools for attracting not only tourists but also investors and would-be-residents (Kotler et al., 2004). In this aspect, tourism branding can be a core motivator of branding a place. Tourism has a powerful impact on image formation of the targeted groups of branding audience including tourists (Anholt, 2007).
The Tourism Branding Cube provides an integrated approach to building a destination identity that should not only appeal to and resonate with tourists but also be embraced by the community whose quality of life can be significantly improved by tourism. By including an optimal number of stakeholders in the brand development, tourism branding has a better chance to result in the appreciation of tourists truly as guests to and by the community at large. A more affective experience of tourists leads to their emotional attachment to the community. A greater amount of the equity of destination brand can then be achieved with a higher level of tourist loyalty.

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TOURIST LIFETIME VALUE: APPLYING CUSTOMER LIFETIME VALUE TO TOURISM MARKETING

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Keywords: tourism, marketing, customer lifetime value, national tourism organizations

Tourism marketing, like general marketing, used to be essentially about attracting tourists to a destination (or attracting customers to a business in a general marketing perspective). For many years the marketing we have learned, taught and practiced was focused on acquiring new customers (or visitors when dealing with a tourist destination). But things are changing; now marketing is focusing more and more on keeping, retaining and developing the actual customers of a business (Blattberg et al., 2001). We can see this change in the marketing paradigm by comparing the 1984 and 2004 American Marketing Association (AMA) definitions of what marketing is (Keefe, 2004). What is different and new in the 2004 definition is the reference to “creating customer relationships” as one of the main objectives of marketing. Why? Because today marketing is more about creating long-term relationships with your customers than about focusing all your resources on attracting new customers. One consequence of this trend is the growing relevance and application of tools designed to evaluate the effect of creating long-term customer relationships on the firm’s profitability. The best known and most widely used of these tools is the Customer Lifetime Value (CLV).

While the focus on long-term relationships is a general trend in many industries and organizations, research shows that “public tourism organizations” (i.e., national and regional tourism organizations responsible for branding, marketing and promoting a tourist destination), are still at the beginning stages of this relationship marketing trend (Fyall, et al. 2003). As a consequence, most national and regional tourism and destination marketing organizations (to simplify our discussion we will refer to these organizations as National Tourism Organizations, abbreviated as NTOs) are still focused on measuring how many visitors they are attracting instead of trying to measure the real long-term value of those visitors. One reason is that these organizations maintain a short-term view of relationship marketing due to a very limited application of tools and metrics, however, CLV that would help them to understand the true long-term value of tourists. This article examines the value of applying the CLV tool in the tourism industry, namely to NTOs. The objective is to help shift the focus of the NTOs towards adopting a long-term tourist value orientation by applying one of the most powerful analytical tools that marketing has generated in the last ten years – the Customer Lifetime Value perspective (Berger and Nasr, 1998).

This study begins with an introduction to Customer Lifetime Value by illustrating how marketing has changed in the last years towards creating long-term customer relationships instead of focusing on single transactions. Based on a review of the literature and presentation of various examples, it is shown that many industries today recognize the need to 1) invest marketing resources into creating long-term relationships with the customers, and 2) to measure the long-term economic value of their individual customers. For example, studies have shown that it is more expensive to attract a new customer than to keep an existing one, and that even a slight increase in customer retention lead to large gains in profitability (Heskett, et al 1994). This general trend towards customer relationships has been fuelled by the use of powerful databases and electronic data networks that are allowing companies to collect information about the buying patterns of their customers as well as the development of metrics on individual customer profitability. The most popular of these metrics is called Customer Lifetime Value (CLV) and is defined by Kotler and Keller (2006) as the net present value of the stream of future profits expected over the customer’s lifetime purchases. Some of the benefits from using CLV are: understanding the potential value of customers, segmenting customers by levels of CLV, developing optimal marketing strategies for different segments of customers, customizing different marketing strategies for the same customer depending on the stage of the relationship, and deciding on the marketing investment necessary to obtain a positive CLV with different segments of customers (Berger and Nasr, 1998).
The second section of the study analyzes the lack of utilization of CLV with NTOs. We have not found evidence in the tourism marketing literature of any NTO using CLV as an analysis tool. This lack of use may in fact be a consequence of the lack of research studies analyzing the applicability of CLV specifically to the public tourism marketing sector. In fact, our preliminary research and literature review failed to find any published studies applying CLV at the tourist level within NTOs. This study’s objective is to fill this void in the research. We believe there is an opportunity both from an academic and practitioner perspective to apply CLV in the tourism marketing area to NTOs which would enable us 1) to improve our understanding of the true value of long-term relationships with tourists, and 2) to provide NTOs with improved tools and insights regarding how to most effectively evaluate, measure and segment visitors to their destinations.

The third section of the article is an empirical application of CLV in a NTOs – what we call the “Tourist Lifetime Value”. Using data from the Spanish National Tourism Organization (Tourspain), initial insights are presented regarding the application of CLV to destination marketing by using data on average tourist spending, tourist retention rates, and tourist acquisition costs. This first-ever attempt to calculate the Tourist Lifetime Value provides us with some interesting learnings on the applicability of the tool in the tourism marketing field. Following the empirical application, the article highlights the contribution of this research by explaining how this application of CLV opens a new line of research in the tourism marketing area, creates a bridge between the tourism marketing and the customer lifetime value disciplines, and fills a gap in the existing research literature in the tourism marketing area. Finally, in the paper’s conclusion, a presentation is made of the managerial implications for the tourism marketing sector, the research limitations are discussed, and suggestions for future research are presented.

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INFLUENCE OF URBAN MARKETING AND CITY BRANDING ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNING ECONOMIC UNITS IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

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In times of economic slowdown, there is a large quantity of data and proofs suggesting that it is not a good idea to reduce marketing efforts during recession with the objective of realizing some not very significant short-term goals such as limitation of expenditure and other expenses without considering long-term consequences. Inexistence of city marketing, lack of understanding of city brand will leave “ordinary” cities and classical local authorities in an uncompetitive position once the market recovers. We define a brand as a name, an expression, a sign, a symbol or design or a combination of these with the intention of differentiating a particular product from the same or similar competitors’ products or services. By offering a brand, producers also offer the promise that they will actually and at all times supply their customers with specific products of specific characteristics, benefits, and additional services, which in its totality represents the producer’s quality warranty. According to Kotler and Gertner (2002), a brand or a trademark has two primary functions – to differentiate the product and to offer the promised value of the product. Branding as a process of creation of tangible and intangible features of products or services has become one of basic elements of business, for both small companies to multinational companies, for cities and countries. This is the reason why the strength of a given brand is the stimulus that guarantees good reception of products or services on any type of market. If we consider the process of branding and creating brands from the aspect of countries or cities, we have to go back to the introductory premise that both cities and countries have to recognize desires and needs of all their customers-stakeholders. Only then may city or country branding, a complex process of coordinating numerous interests of various interest groups and potential clients, become real and realizable. Considering the fact that today's world is considerably moulded in globalisation processes, there are new economic and political subjects who want to and can be branded in order to become more competitive.

Tough market competition to gain limited resources, economic investments, tourists and attractive personnel force countries and cities to consider the process of branding and turning themselves into a brand to secure recognizability and loyalty of potential users of services. City brand will make the overall city identity measurable, palpable and communicating (Aronczyk, 2009, Sun 2009). Branding and urban marketing undoubtedly have to serve cities as generators of competitive advantages, as creators of values and generators of transformation of values of the brand into certain financial benefits (Bancyzk, 2006). As the terms of local economic development are changing faster, modern municipal authorities and city fathers have to embrace pro-market thinking and understanding of business environment. Development of local economy from the standpoint of towns is defined as the process of developing the local economy from the standpoint of community that includes local self-government- cities and municipalities, local entrepreneurs, local craftsmen and citizens in the construction of joint urban economic potential and manners used in its achievement. It should mobilize public and private resources of the city in the realization of development vision necessary for the creation of a favourable entrepreneurial climate that will encourage local entrepreneurs to expand the existing and open new companies, to expand capacities and strengthen their own town competitiveness.

After the establishment of proactive urban marketing thinking and implementation of the concept of urban marketing, there is the need to initiate processes of creating the own city brand. Their objective will be the realization of indispensable elements through political ambitions and programmes - elementary preconditions for the development of local companies and industry, stimulation of local production at the city level with progressive stimulation of city export programme and positive effect on city environment by making connections with other local governments aimed at securing sufficient finances that will eventually secure pleasant life for all inhabitants of a local community. The worst
possible approach to urban marketing and branding from the aspect of a city is announcing the
beginning of creation of a brand of a city when the overall work is actually only based on promotional
and “designer’s” activities, creation of the sign, the slogan and the promotional campaign. A city with a
developed brand and recognizability actually possesses firm rational and emotional advantages. It may
happen that at times of recession the city loses part of its customers (tourists, potential investors, and
potential inhabitants) forced to postpone their investments, arrival or something else for these reasons,
but it is almost certain that a large share of tourist turnover and direct investments will actually be
retained. Besides, there is a firm basis and great chance, even assertion that even the lost customers-
users of city services will actually be back once the crisis is over because they have a clear image of the
city-brand and they know what they want.

The methodology for the valuation of trademarks and city brands is based on the premise that
brands are long-term assets and that they will create future revenues for their owners-companies-cities
over a particular economic life. The stronger the connection between customers of the city brand, the
more probable is the longer period of creating future revenues. There are many methods used in
evaluating value and influence of brands on the value of company assets, method of difference in gross
revenue, royalty relief and similar (Laboy, 2009 Sinclair, 2004). However, in using all these methods,
one should never forget about related risks and the role of methods in the estimate of future revenues
and market trends. Unlike companies with clearly definable incomes, where the market is clear, the
influence of brand and marketing urban concepts on cities is much more complex. In the first place,
city brand encompasses a much wider range of services and incomes, some of which-like culture and
social care are very expense driven and cannot be considered through the prism of previously
mentioned methods. For this reason, we have proposed the combination and the premise that the
growth of local economy development through a combination of three premises, namely export, foreign
investments, and tourism contributes to recognizability and increase of the value of city assets through
its brand and vice versa. The more visited and more renowned the city, the more expensive it becomes,
the value of real estate grows for the simple reason that large numbers of visitors generate larger
demand for scarce assets-apartments, houses and land for sale. Foreign investors may and want to
invest and stimulate investments in growth and development of a successful city because of their
employees, the financial possibilities of the city, its openness for collaboration and its marketing
concept.

When we create a city brand, we create a success story and strengthen local economy. Success
and recognizability produce newly created value and new value of local development for all inhabitants
of a particular city brand. As a matter of fact, in order to provide a financial estimate of incomes a city
creates as a consequence of implementing concepts of urban marketing and city branding, we have to
know the share of income the city realizes. This particular income is considered a part of new city
value expressed in money with positive influence on the development of local economy. Incomes
realized by the city that are most related to its image and perception, or its brand communication, most
probably include revenue from city exports, size of foreign investments and revenue from tourism.
These potentials are actually part of local economy and their incomes and work stimulate growth and
have great development effects. The preliminary model presented in this study actually indicates a
certain connection and interaction between the implementation of urban marketing concept and the
development of city brand with the development of local economy. Future research should demonstrate
the operativeness of proposed measurements and calculations, their applicability and their positive
influence on local development.

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THE SPONSOR-GLOBAL EVENT RELATIONSHIP: CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF A BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS TOURISM MARKETING RELATIONSHIP

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This note outlines our study’s aim to conceptually develop the business-to-business (B2B) tourism marketing relationship that is growing in influence as sponsorship and mega-events expand their reach and influence globally (Lee & Taylor, 2005). These are the sponsor-global event relationships (e.g., Visa and the Olympic Games; Budweiser and Super Bowl; Gatorade and Ironman Triathlon, etc.) in which sponsors are investing millions of dollars in events that subsequently enable those sponsors’ messages to reach millions, if not billions, of people. Specifically, this abstract assesses the most prominent of sponsor-global event relationships as an illustration: the TOP Sponsor-Olympic Games relationship.

B2B marketing is estimated to be approximately ten times the size of business-to-consumer (B2C) marketing on most metrics (Doua & Chou, 2002). However, it often receives less attention in the marketing literature (Lichtenthal & Mummaliani, 2009). Similarly, the sport industry, where the majority of sponsorship is invested, has evolved into a global business where business-to-business marketing is important (Farrelly & Quester, 2005). Within the sport industry, organizations are often clearly distinguished on the basis of their profit orientation (i.e. profit or not-for-profit), where, typically, not-for-profit organizations are involved with Olympic and/or grassroots sport, normally administering and implementing the sporting activity itself (e.g. events, mega-events, festivals, national teams, clubs, and leagues). Conversely, professional sport is the usual domain for profit organizations. The most important business-to-business relationship for not-for-profit sport organizations (to some extent, profit sport organizations) involves attracting and servicing the event sponsors that provide a vital source of financial support and in-kind products/services that enable the event to occur, or the organization to function and achieve its objectives without incurring any, or only minimal, debt.

A sponsorship relationship involves one organization (the sponsor) committing resources to another organization (the sponsee) that, in turn, provides promotional value back to the sponsor. This is a business-to-business relationship where the sponsor is the buyer and the sponsee, often an event organizer, is the seller. The sponsor engages in the relationship in order to achieve some value. This value is usually delivered through the attitudinal and behavioral responses of the event attendees or spectators (i.e. media viewers). The sponsor is usually promised and/or anticipates realizing higher consumer awareness and intention to purchase its products. The marketing literature supports the hypothesis that when sponsorships are successful, these organizational relationships endure, and sponsors become loyal to their sponsees (Farrelly & Quester, 2005). In international events, this organizational loyalty is sought after by sponsees and sponsors alike, and has resulted in the increasing importance of exclusivity, leveraging, reach and anti-ambush techniques, where the sponsor is typically trying to implement an international brand management strategy through a global network that the sponsee allows it to reach (Seguin & O’Reilly, 2008). Of particular interest is the use of mega-event sponsorship (e.g., Olympic Games) to reach markets in emerging and developing economies (Pels, Brodie & Johnston, 2004).
To better understand the role of business-to-business marketing in the context of not-for-profit sport organizations (sponsees), the following model is proposed, which focuses on Olympic sponsorship, where approximately $866 million (IOC, 2006) was expected to be spent by thirteen sponsors on sponsorship fees in the 2004-2008 period leading up to, and including, the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, China. The paper posits the model presented in Figure 1 to articulate the business-to-business relationship between an Olympic TOP sponsor, the rights-holder (International Olympic Committee), and the local organizing committee (e.g., BOCOG, who organized the 2008 Olympic Summer Games). The figure describes the flow of ‘value’ (whether cash, product/service, or marketing value) between the organizations involved (B2B) and the global consumers (B2C).

Figure 1

TOP OLYMPIC SPONSORSHIP: VALUE FLOW

Buyer/Sponsor
e.g. Panasonic, Omega

Resources ($ and/or in-kind)

Promotional Rights/Inventory

Seller/Sponsee
International Olympic Committee
Local Organizing Committee

Value is derived through the customer (buying intentions)

Association
Olympic Games TOP Program

Sponsor Images Event Images TV Contracts Internet Attendees

Global Consumer

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TOURISM ORGANIZATIONS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ‘TOURISM MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS’ IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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Research on tourism destination management of countries of the MENA (Middle East & North Africa) region is scarce. Most popular destinations of the region have structured their tourism models on available best-practices to suit local environment successfully. Reviewing literature on tourist destinations, several explanations can be observed that attempt to elucidate the nature of the tourism destination. Hu and Ritchie (1993) conceptualized it as “a package of tourism facilities and services, which like any other consumer product, is composed of a number of multi-dimensional attributes”. There also are effective arguments available on demand side perspectives on destination, defining it as a set of products, services, and attractions having potential to draw tourists to a specific place (Leiper 1995), while there are arguments to view destinations as a supply system correlated with a specific area (Tamma 2002).

Eric Laws (1995) believes that, “every destination has a unique mix of characteristics which are determined by its geographical location, culture and history”. Developing a destination system model, Laws concluded that “the general destination system is concerned with the processes whereby the many elements or subsystems such as accommodation, entertainment and transport, transforms the inputs into outputs”. Cooper et al. (1998) consider that destinations are ‘amalgams’ and ‘cultural appraisals’ while being inseparable and having multiple users. Buhalis, (2000) also maintains that ‘Destinations are amalgams of tourism products, offering an integrated experience to consumers’. These ideas seem an extension of various models of tourism development drawn by Pearce (1992). It seems quite reasonable to accept destinations as an amalgam of products and services available in one location that can draw visitors from beyond its spatial confines. The Ritchie/Crouch model of destination competitiveness (2003) differentiates the destination infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, etc.) from the destination superstructure (tourist services such as hotels, restaurants, information centers, etc.) both of which are important to the concept of the destination. With several inherent attributes of a tourism destination having accepted it is natural to perceive a management organization to oversee the variety of functions within a destination. The innate corollary is a tourism destination organization.

The political and economic system in a particular country largely influences its official tourism organization. In countries which have a unitary constitution, or centralized government, as in the case of Spain and some other European countries and a few developing countries, tourism is controlled by the central government. On the other hand, in countries with a federal constitutional form, the tourist organization comprises one or more cooperative bodies at the national level and individual provinces enjoy a great deal of freedom in tourism matters. However, even in countries with a federal system e.g. Mexico, tourism is central and subordinate only to the central government. Some countries have two parallel systems - one central system and several state or regional tourist organizations, which may be subordinate only to state authorities, forming a provincial or local network, or both may be subordinate to the central government and the local authorities, for example Japan and Egypt (Sharma, 1999). A national tourism organization (NTO) is the designated organization and remains the focal point of destination management and it can be assumed that an NTO is actually the major Destination Management Organization (DMO) in a country or region. World Tourism Organization in 2004 attempted to clarify the ambiguity surrounding the nature of NTOs and defined it as a DMO that is generally responsible for management and marketing of destinations. It classified DMOs as National, Provincial and Local tourism organizations. The same WTO report highlights the important role of the public sector in destination management and marketing. It further advocates, based on the survey, of DMOs around the world the need of public private partnership to promote and organize destinations. There was also a very high level of agreement amongst participating DMOs, the
report notes, that tourism development, management, marketing and promotion should be managed within an integrated structure (World Tourism Organization, 2004).

In the complex global scenario that exists today the DMO has become the fulcrum of all developmental activities of a destination. DMOs are becoming more prominent by acting as catalysts and facilitators for the realization of tourism developments. There is a definite shift recognizing that the role of the DMO goes well beyond marketing to include other activities that are important to the success of tourism in a destination from a competitive and sustainable perspective (Presenza et al., 2005). It has now been accepted that the DMO plays a greater role in destination management then merely being a marketing organization. Swarbrooke (2001) in one of his illustrations effectively sums up the range of activities for destination management. This illustration includes ‘planning & development’, ‘local impact management’, ‘operational issues & quality control’, and ‘marketing’ within the scope of Destination Management.

The area commonly referred to as the Middle East is the mid-lands between the two perceived halves of the world the East and the West. Since Thomas Cook’s Tours, the region has been one of the first to experience organized tourism and over the past 50 years substantive part of the region has been engaged with essentially modernist project of leisure tourism. Most of this tourism is identified with a few of the well known historical destinations, be it the Petra or the Pyramids. Discussion of tourism in the Middle East continues to fall between a number of extremes: persistent and pervasive orientalist conceptions or peoples and places, somewhat disjunctive notions of massive post modernist spatial transformations and configurations of the region as a series of ‘no-go’ areas due to military and political instability. In the recent past, though the Middle East has seen infrastructural development of international standards to support tourism and leisure. In reality today, this mid-land of the world has come up as the melting pot of the West and the Orient (Robinson 2006).

This study is an attempt to investigate and analyze the nature, structure and compulsions of the organizational set-up of the tourism sector in the Middle East. It intends to examine the conceptual and theoretical constructs of various organizations which are involved in the promotion and development of tourism. The paper also examines the role of state in developing and nurturing such tourism organizations. A comparative analysis of various NTOs/DMOs is carried out to evaluate the political, economic & social-cultural implications of these organizations in the growth of tourism of the destination. With review of relevant literature, critical analysis of several NTOs, and formal and informal interactions with destination managers, this paper reaches its conclusion that ‘tourism achieves its perceived success in a country within a framework of a defined organization at the highest level for taking meaningful policy decisions’ and ‘the tourism sector in the Middle East region is experimenting with several frameworks to organize its tourism wherein the process to achieve stability of purpose still remains an intention’. The study notes that political, economic and cultural environment of a country plays major role in management of tourism. Even the nature of political structure has an implication. A federation like UAE has a diversified structure of tourism management and each state unit is responsible for its own development while Jordan has a centralized Tourism Board. The official position of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on tourism is for development of ‘domestic’ tourism to preserve the unique values, traditions and identity of Saudi society (Burns 2006).

The focus of this study remained only on central organizations of the public sector and in the process other tourism organizations having interest in tourism especially private sector services organizations and their role in destination management could not be evaluated that provides scope for further research. The comparative analysis of NTOs of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Oman and the UAE substantiated one of the conclusions drawn by 2004 UNWTO survey that most of the NTOs are either a department of National Government or an agency accountable to National Government. The paper has also developed a Tourism Management Organization (TMO) model suitable for application in most of the countries of the Middle East.
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MARKETING EVENT TOURISM: EXPLORE TOURISTS’ DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES

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Keywords: event tourism, Macao, China, demographic differences

Event tourism has emerged as a new field of study by its own right. Mature event destinations have developed a prestigious reputation in hosting various kinds of events. Developing event destinations, on the other hand, are less competitive and therefore have been trying to tout event tourists through various tourism offerings. These pull motivational appeals are studied in this research in the context of a newly developing event locale in China, namely Macao. Data were obtained based on a convenience sample of over three hundred international event tourists in Macao. Eight core event and destination travel motives were identified. The findings indicate that event tourists are primarily attracted by food offerings and are least attracted by nightlife entertainment. Base on mean analyses using ANOVA, the results indicate demographic differences among gender, education level, age, and place-of-origin. The present case study could greatly help tourism policy makers to better understand the implications of destination offerings on event tourists. The results should particular be beneficial to destination authorities and event planners in developing event regions where entertainment (e.g. gaming and nightlife activities), cultural heritage, and food offerings are of prime interest. Theoretical implications are also drawn in advancing event tourism studies.

Event tourism has emerged as a new field of study by its own right. One of the reasons that event tourism attracts much interest steaming from the fact that event tourists have a higher yield than other types of tourists (Jago, 2003). Mature event destinations (e.g., Hong Kong, Las Vegas, and Sydney) have developed a prestigious reputation in hosting various kinds of events (Getz, 2008). These destinations have well-developed event and tourism infrastructures that could host virtually any international events (Allen, O’Ttoole, Harris, & McDonell, 2008). Developing event destinations, on the other hand, are less competitive and therefore have been trying to tout event tourists through various tourism offerings (Getz, 2007). These pull motivational appeals are studied in this research in the context of a newly developing event locale in China, namely Macao. Getz (2008) suggests that there is a great need for practitioners and scholars to better understand the implications of tourism and event. Gaining a vantage point on tourist evaluations on event tourism criteria could greatly enhance event planners and policy makers in formulating the “right” decision and be able to achieve the best return on investment. Making the right decision is particularly imperative during the current financial turmoil when many of the international corporations and countries are facing financial burden like never before. This study aims to extend the literature by exploring pull travel motives as incentives for event participation. The role of demographics on these pull motivational event incentives is explored.

Event tourism refers to a phenomenon that tourists travel to destinations to participate in planned events (Getz, 2008). Although planned events are major attractions to tourists (Getz & Andersson, 2008; Li & Petrick, 2006; Schofield & Thompson, 2007), tourism studies commonly acknowledge that event participation is one of the many underlying drivers that motivate visitors (Getz, 2007; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2003; Riley & Van Doren, 1992). Indeed, literature has revealed that tourists have multiple motives for their excursion (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996; Crompton, 1979; Pearce & Lee, 2005). As a result, although planned events are important travel incentives, tourism planners and destination authorities must understand and then provide offerings that could differentiate the destination and attract tourists (Getz, 2008).

Prior to data collection, a series of in-depth interviews on event tourists in Macao were conducted in order to understand how destination offerings (i.e., pull motives) attracted tourists to attend various planned events. Responses were transcribed and coded into themes. Eight themes

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emerged as most tenable, and they include cost of travel, cost of event, travel convenience, accommodations, casinos, food, cultural heritage, and nightlife entertainment. These eight themes were then posed into questions using a semantic differential scale anchored by 0 (not important) and 10 (very important). The wordings of the eight items were refined based upon the motivation literature (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2003; Schofield & Thompson, 2007). Data were obtained based on a convenience sample of international event tourists participated in major events in Macao. These events were identified based on the event calendar between 2008 and 2009 provided by the Macau Government Tourism Organization. The questionnaire was available in both Chinese and English and the survey was conducted by well-trained interviewers. Respondents were invited to participate the survey after they exited the event venue. A total of 358 complete surveys were collected. To explore demographic differences on the dependent event incentive variables, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used.

Of the respondents, 54% were male and 46% were female; the majority held a bachelor degree (51%), and 20% were high school graduates; 43% were between the age of 21 and 30 while 31% were between 31 and 40; 23% were from Hong Kong, 19% were from Guangdong, 18% were from other parts of mainland China, and the rest were from Taiwan (11%), other parts of Asia (14%), and western countries (i.e., Europe, U.S., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand; 15%). In general, respondents were primarily attracted by Macao’s food offerings (M = 7.34), but were least attracted by its nightlife entertainments (M = 5.29). To seek demographic differences of the eight proposed destination specific motives, a series of analysis of variance tests were used to examine mean differences on tourists’ gender, education, age, and place-of-origin. The results reveal significant demographic differences among gender, education level, age, and place-of-origin. For example, male event attendees are more interested in casino and nightlife entertainment than their female counterparts. Elder event attendees are more price-sensitive and are more concerned about cost associated to event and travel expenses; and they are less likely to be attracted by a destination’s nightlife entertainment. In addition, highly educated event patrons are more likely to be intrigued by cultural offerings but are less likely to enjoy nightlife and casino entertainments during their event visit.

This research extends the literature by exploring the demographic differences on destination pull motives in the context of event tourism. The findings suggest that gender and education discrepancies are acute in regard to leisure related motives: casino, food, cultural heritage, and nightlife entertainment; however, the age discrepancies are only apparent to value related motives: cost, convenience, and accommodation. For example, males view entertainments more important to their event travel, while females perceive food and heritage more critical to their travel decision. In addition, this study also reveals differences on tourists’ place-of-origin. For example, convenience is particularly prudent to Chinese tourists while cost of travel and events are important criteria particular to western event visitors. The results could assist event and tourism scholars to clarify inconsistent findings in the literature.

The present case study could greatly help tourism policy makers to better understand the implications of destination offerings on event tourists. The results should particular be beneficial to destination authorities and event planners in developing event regions where entertainment (e.g. gaming and nightlife activities), cultural heritage, and food offerings are of prime interest. With the decline of the global economic condition, it is important for developing event destinations to emphasize their low cost competitive advantage over mature markets. Hence, effective marketing communication and promotional packages that offer event customers, especially older patrons, superior perceived values (e.g., accommodation and food) in both attending an event and traveling to the hosting community are imperative to nurturing event tourism.

REFERENCES


A STUDY ON THE DEVELOPING THE CULTURAL TOURISM PRODUCTS FOR THE 2010 SHANGHAI WORLD EXPO

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World Expo is always known as the “Economic Olympic Feast” which has become the boosters of upgrading the local tourism image and promoting local economic development. All countries attach great importance to the World Expo and marketing-driven, organizational management and theme marketing related to cultural tourism products. The Expo with the regional cultural tourism product development characteristics is an important lever for enhancing its international image and promoting economic development, and all cities attach great importance to the World Expo with the national characteristics of cultural tourism product development. The significance of this study lies in: first, researches of cultural tourism product development are the starting point of hosting successful Shanghai World Expo. The in-depth study on cultural tourism product development of Shanghai World Expo will enable the Shanghai World Expo to upgrade the Shanghai cultural tourism product quality and cultural tourism product brand on the basis of building exhibition hall cultural tourism products, which will be beneficial to host successful Shanghai World Expo and further enhance the destination image of this city across the world. Second, researches of cultural tourism product development can contribute to attracting more tourists to visit the Shanghai World Expo. The in-depth study on cultural tourism product development of Shanghai World Expo will help 2010 Shanghai World Expo take the road of commercial operation, create various of cultural tourism product with distinct features, superior quality, marketable channels according to the characteristics and preferences of visitors for the Shanghai World Expo, which will greatly appeal to the tourists. Third, researches related to cultural tourism product development are the basis of studying the image of a city and national marketing strategies. The in-depth study on cultural tourism product development of Shanghai World Expo will further promote the integration and development of products of exhibition hall cultural tourism, Shanghai cultural tourism, regional cultural tourism, national culture tourism and global cultural tourism, which is the scientific basis for establishing the image of city and nation and its marketing strategies.

The empirical study is on cultural tourism product development for the Olympic Games and World Expo. The abroad study has mainly focused on major sports events (such as the Sydney Olympic Games, Korea and Japan World Cup); studies on the characteristics of different sub-groups through sample market research of the exhibitors, organizers, residents and etc. Lee (2005) used Korea-Japan World Cup as a case to study the impacts of cultural tourism product development on the Korean image. Gursoy & Kendall (2006) pointed that cultural tourism product development in large-scale activities will affect support level of residents. Roche (1992) used the Barcelona Olympics as a case to study the cultural tourism product development impact for the Olympic Games host city on the planning, political, environmental, non-rational decision-making and other aspects. Researches related to the cultural tourism product development impacts for the Olympic Games and World Expo. There are three main types: the first one is to study the cultural tourism product development impact on the local economic and social environment for hosting Olympic Games and World Expo, like Baloglu (2005) discussed the effects of cultural tourism product development to host the Olympic Games and the World Expo in the economic, social and environmental aspects. The second one is to study the perceptions of visitors to
Marketing strategies for the cultural tourism products of Shanghai World Expo is as follows. First, the sequence and principles of developing the cultural tourism products related to Shanghai World Expo. The principle of cultural tourism product development content related to Shanghai World Expo is: the implementation of cultural tourism product strategy, the Shanghai World Expo will focus on developing high quality cultural tourism product, launching the cultural tourism product lines, thereby enhancing the quality and visibility of cultural tourism products related to Shanghai World Expo, and further enhancing the international appealing and competitive ability. The consequence of cultural tourism product development related to Shanghai World Expo is: first, from priority to general; second, it’s proper to make changes in portfolio about cultural tourism product development in terms of market demand. Relying on 2010 Shanghai World Expo, the strategies should focus on restructuring and upgrading of cultural tourism product development. On the basis of cultural tourism products of improving city tour, the development strategies should focus on culture holiday tourism products of urban leisure, cultural tourism products of religious pilgrimage, cultural tourism products of modern urban culture, cultural tourism products of city education, cultural tourism products of city industry, cultural tourism products of city shopping and cultural tourism products of meeting and striving to run large-scale cultural tourism festivals. Relying on 2010 Shanghai World Expo, the strategies should further optimize and enrich Shanghai World Expo according to all kinds of cultural tourism products to make it more participatory and interesting.

Second, focus classic lines in form of cultural tourism products development related to Shanghai World Expo. Relying on 2010 Shanghai World Expo and its cultural tourism products of exhibition hall, it is proper to utilize Shanghai’s unique urban culture as the background of displaying the scenery of tourism products, promote regional cooperation with the Yangtze River Delta in a larger context of the Shanghai World Expo. Based on various cultural tourism products lines of distinctive Shanghai characteristics, it is proper to orient to domestic and international market and then focus on the development of the following four cultural tourism product lines: first, focusing on market demand of domestic and abroad, all the strategies should focus on actively developing the following 10 forms of cultural tourism lines: (1) eco-cultural tourism product line, (2) sight-seeing cultural tourism product line, (3) world heritage cultural tourism product line, (4) urban scenery cultural tourism product line; (5) shopping and dining cultural tourism product line, (6) special industries cultural tourism product line, (7) entertainment and health cultural tourism product line, (8) red visiting cultural tourism product line, (9) festivals and celebration cultural tourism product line, (10) culture and tourism business conference and exhibition product line. Second, focusing on the international tourist market demand of Shanghai World Expo, it is necessary to actively develop the following three forms of cultural tourism resource lines: (1) facing Northeast Asia markets of Shanghai World Expo, the line could be launched as Expo -- Shanghai - Suzhou - Hangzhou - Wuxi - Nanjing and other classics of cultural tourism product lines, Expo - Shanghai - Jiangsu - China – Fujian Riverside cultural tourism product lines, Shanghai - Expo - Beijing – Jilin and other religious and cultural tourism product lines, at the same time, cultural tourism products could be launched in terms of ecology culture, urban cultural, folk culture, and other distinctive products of Shanghai World Expo cultural features. (2) facing Hong Kong, Macao and the Southeast Asian markets of Shanghai World Expo, the line could be launched as Expo - Shanghai - Jiangsu and Zhejiang- Beijing -Dalian and other cities cultural tourism product lines, at the same time, culture tourism products could be launched together with Shanghai urban cultural, religious cultural pilgrims, riverside cultural
tours, former places of residence and other distinctive products of Shanghai World Expo cultural features. (3) facing Europe, the United States and Macao markets, the line could be launched as Expo - Shanghai - Jiangsu and Zhejiang - Sichuan – Yunnan and other ecological and cultural tourism product lines, the World Heritage cultural tourism product line, at the same time, cultural tourism products could be introduced in terms of eco-tourism expedition, history culture and other distinctive products of Shanghai World Expo cultural features.

Third, public policy in the cultural tourism product development mode related to Shanghai World Expo. According to the laws of the market and Shanghai’s economic development, especially Shanghai World Expo market demand, public policy in the cultural tourism product development mode related to Shanghai World Expo is relied on a modern three-dimensional transport network and based on good urban environment and rich cultural products, the policy should highlight the six major characteristics of cultural tourism products, paint a good picture for World Expo city cultural tourism products, organize Expo Tourism Festivals of nice cultural products, initiate features of cultural tourism product, enlarge ecological tours of Expo cultural tourism products, connect industry line of Expo cultural tourism products and deepen commercial ways for Expo cultural tourism products; implementation of classic famous projects of Shanghai World Expo cultural tourism products, launching the boutique lines of Shanghai World Expo cultural tourism products, and combine the above two in advantage aspects and construct a three-dimensional pattern for cultural tourism product development related to Shanghai World Expo in terms of the quality of leading classic culture tourism product, the focus of brand-name cultural tourism products, the trunk line of Shanghai-class brand cultural tourism products, the linkage of Yangtze River Delta cultural tourism products, the backbone of regional cultural tourism products, the orientation of national culture tourism products and the background of global cultural tourism products.

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AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE TOURIST IMPACT PERCEPTION AND TOURIST MOTIVATION OF 2008 BEIJING OLYMPIC GAMES

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Being a major sports event in the world, Olympic Games have drawn global attention. The 29th Olympic Games will be held in Beijing, the capital of China, in 2008. Holding such a sports mega-event in the old eastern capital is significant and profound as Olympics will greatly promote the development of economy and society in the host country (Tu, 2007). Meanwhile, the Olympic Games have gained the domestic support from all walks of life in China. Due to the significance of Olympic Games, its host will make every effort to attract visitors to participate in it. The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games has brought out a certain extent of impact on the society, which refers to the various perspectives in society. This study is a research on the participation motivation of the Olympic Games, which includes eight aspects (i.e., social communication, increasing cultural knowledge, enhancing social members’ emotion, pursuing novelty, escaping form the routine/recovering from psychological and physical health/relaxation, the attraction of Olympics, and souvenirs of Olympics). Furthermore, this study attempts to analyze the correlation between the impact perception and the participation motivation of the Olympic Games to discuss the specific aspects of impact stimulation which is accepted by the Olympic Games participators who all hold different motivations. These can help to publicize pertinently in the marketing of the Olympic Games.

Many studies have focused on the tourism motivation regarding the tourists. As a key link in the behavior decision of tourists, the tourism motivation has attracted many scholars and experts’ concern (Kim, 1998; Iso-Ahola, 1982; Lee, et al., 2004; Jang & Wu, 2006; McGehee, et al., 2007). The tourism motivation of visitors is affected by multiple factors, and the relative literatures are principally focused on the following two aspects. The first aspect is the demographic characteristics’ impact on tourism motivation. Being an important factor in market segmentation, the demographic characteristics have always been the concerns for the scholars, especially in China. Zhao et al. (2006) thought that although the tourism motivation was affected by various factors, there existed certain tendency and regularity. Furthermore, the factors of demographic characteristics, e.g. age and gender, were proven to generate different effects on tourism motivations by empirical study. There were many other evidences supporting the sport tourism motivation that was different among people regarding sex, age, occupation, education background, residential location and income level. The other aspect is the impact of expected perception on tourism motivation. Whether the visitors can form motivation or not is also affected by the extent of simulation from external influence. In terms of tourism decision, people are affected by many factors in tourism industry. Before the visitors put their decisions into action, these impacts will bring a certain degree of perception to visitors. The relative literatures could be divided into the following aspects: (i) environment perception’s impact on tourism motivation; Environment factor of tourism destination is one of the factors correlating the tourism motivation and many scholars have discussed on this aspect. In
this field, the attitude-behavior psychology cognition mode was used to analyze the relationship between the environment attitude and tourism motivation (Kotchen & Reiling, 2000). Ballantyne, et al. (2000), Kyle, et al. (2004), and Kim, et al. (2006) did a research on environment perception’s impact on tourism motivation that emphasized the importance of environment friendly degree in a destination. (ii) impact of culture perception on tourism motivation. Being a factor closely related with an individual, culture plays an important role in pushing the visitors to generate motivation. As a result, it is very necessary to study the influence of impact perception on motivation from the perspective of culture perception (Kim, 1998; Funk & Bruun, 2007; Maoz, 2007). On one hand, the novelty for alien culture is one of the reasons that stimulates the tourism motivations of visitors (Chang, et al., 2006); one the other hand, culture identification may also play a part in the formation of tourism motivation, but the studies in this aspect were scare; (iii) impact of image perception on tourism motivation. The image promotion of tourism destination is a key link in the marketing and it is also the key point for visitors. To combine the image of tourism destination with tourism motivation, it can be found out that the correlation between the two factors was positive (Beerl & Martín, 2004). Severt, et al. (2007) studied the relationship between the participation motivation and perception image through the research on convention tourism. Thirdly, there are some studies concentrating on the participation motivation analysis on sport games, including the analysis on participation motivation of sport games in different scales. For example, Gibson, et al. (2003) studied the small-sized sport games; Kim & Chalip (2004) discussed some issues regarding the specific sport events (e.g. FIFA). In conclusion, the impact perception and the participation motivation are correlated. However, the correlation degree changes with the differences of the impact perception and participation motivation.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts, which were impact perception and participation motive respectively. The impact perception included 37 specific items rated on the Likert seven-scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. The questionnaires were filled by unregistered respondents. Adopting stratified sampling, the survey was conducted on a national scale, including the east, the middle and the west with the residents in cities and countries of various sizes in order to ensure the questionnaire sampling representative. 800 questionnaires were expected to be distributed to guarantee the adequacy of sample size. The survey was carried out by household interviews and street intervening investigations so that the questionnaires were able to be recovered. The data obtained by the questionnaires was then analyzed using the SPSS method. This study employed the Principal Components Analysis (PCA) and correlative degree analysis. The PCA was used to further extract the factors regarding the impact perception of 2008 Beijing Olympics to explicit the principal aspects of the impact perception. The correlative degree analysis was adopted to analyze the correlative degree between the impact perception and participation motive to define whether the correlation is positive or not and whether the relationship strength is high or not.

Beijing Olympics has drawn many people’s attention. With respect to the motivation to participate in Olympics, this study made an analysis from different perspectives. The questionnaire survey enumerated 33 motives to be selected by respondents. The data collected were first tested using KMO and Bartlett’s test of sphericity to check its reliability for factor analysis. According to the test results, the partial correlation of KMO among variables was 0.91, which exceeded 0.9, so there was little variance in correlative degree among the variables and the data were appropriate to be conducted a factor analysis; the result of Bartlett’s test of sphericity showed that the indexes were not independent but correlated, which was also an evidence that factor analysis could be adopted. As a sports event involving social culture, sports and tourism, the host of Olympics provides the participators a large variety of opportunities. Different participators have different motivations, so eight principal factors were selected through the principal components extraction (i.e., exploring novelty and seeking difference motive, culture experience motive, relaxation and escape motive, family relationship motive, sport participation motive, Fuwa attraction motive, Olympics experience motive and making friends motive). The eigenvalue of exploring novelty and seeking difference motive factor was 10.11, and the following was that of culture experience motive, 2.07. The eigenvalues of other six factors were above 1, indicating that the eight factors adequately described the participation motivations of Beijing Olympics. In terms of total variable explanatory degree, the eight factors could explain 61.57 percent of the participation motive, which proved that the data was adequate and reliable for analyzing the Olympics motives (Only the exploring novelty and seeking difference motive factor accounted for 30.64 percent of the variance).
Among all the motivation items, the mean of sports participation motive was the highest (3.81), followed by culture experience motivation (3.68) and Olympics experience motivation (3.68). Family relationship motivation was also given high attention (mean was 3.49), and the means of other four motivations were all greater than 3. With respect to the correlation analysis, people participated in the Olympics for multiple motivations rather than to satisfy a certain motivation (the mean of each motivation all ranged from 3 to 4, indicating that the respondents did not differ greatly on the selection of these motivation items); on the other hand, being a sports event, Beijing Olympics has strong attraction for the visitors and provides an opportunity to experience culture and sports.

In terms of specific motivations, among the exploring novelty and seeking difference motivation, participating in Olympics aims to satisfy individual curiosity. The Olympics are held every four years, which is distinctive enough to stimulate the novelty. Culture experience has become one of important motivations for visitors, for participating in Beijing Olympics can provide a good opportunity to learn the culture in Beijing and to get in touch with the culture in different places around the world to accomplish a culture journey. Relaxation and escape motivation has also been one of the reasons to participate in the Olympics. Olympics enable individuals to escape from the trifles and to adapt the tempo of ordinary life as well as to alleviate the routine presses. Besides, the Olympics was believed to be a good opportunity to enhance family relationships and help the family members to learn more about the sports resources. Meanwhile, the family can share the happiness during this mega-event. Besides, the essence of Olympics is still a sport event, the most attractive parts to the participators are the athletic sport performances (mean=4.00) and meeting new friends with the same interests. Fuwa, a spotlight of Beijing Olympics, is a souvenir of Chinese characteristics, which has become one of motivations for people to participate in the Olympics. Beijing Olympics was perceived to be a distinctive sports game, which stimulates people’s experience motivation expecting to feel the special atmosphere and hosting significance. Moreover, the Olympics will offer a platform for participators to making new friends through stimulating the motive of meeting new friends of potential participators.

According to this study, the following conclusions can be obtained. First, a correlation exists between impact perception and participation motivations. However, specific strengths of correlation vary from the differences between impact perception and participation motivations. Therefore, in marketing the Beijing Olympic Games, the impact perceptions having a close relationship with participation motivations should be intensified to attract enough tourists. Secondly, people participate in the Olympic Games because of different motivations which include exploring novelty and seeking difference motive, culture experience motive, relaxing and escape motive, family relationship motive, sport participation motive, Fuwa attraction motive, Olympics experience motive and making friends motive. It indicates that the holding of the Olympic Games offers different kinds of opportunities to satisfy participators’ needs. This study is merely an analysis on the correlation between impact perception and participation motivations of Beijing Olympics based on data. The participation motivation is affected by different factors which should be studied more intensively and extensively in further researches.

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