



RESEARCH PAPERS

Critical success factors in destination marketing

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ABSTRACT *As a consequence of globalisation, the marketing of places has grown in importance as countries, regions and individual destinations compete with one another to attract investment and visitors. In order to compete effectively, it is essential to identify the critical success factors (CSFs) and ensure these are incorporated into one's strategic planning. An extensive review of the literature covering place and destination marketing indicates that image and identity play an important role in differentiating between objectively similar alternatives. Accordingly, the branding of destinations has become of major importance and is analysed in depth. Thirty-three factors are identified, clustered into four categories, that may be considered CSFs to be taken into account when developing tourism strategies and plans.*

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KEYWORDS tourism planning, place and destination marketing, branding, literature review, critical success factors

INTRODUCTION

The marketing of places has received increased interest and become accordingly more sophisticated over the last three decades (Deffner and Metaxas, 2005). This is in part due to the growing number of transactions across international borders, which has repercussions for the competitiveness of places. Indeed, as competition for inward investment, residents and revenue from tourism has rapidly increased, the application of marketing techniques to places has also increased.

Place marketing is defined by Kotler *et al.* (1999) as

‘...a place planning procedure concerning the satisfaction of the needs of target markets. It could be successful when it satisfies two main parameters: a) The enterprises’ and the residents’ satisfaction from the purchase of goods and services that the place provides, b) the satisfaction of the expectations of potential target markets (enterprises and visitors), as long as the goods and the services that the place provides to them are those that they wish to get’.

In essence this requires the satisfaction of both internal and external stakeholders and involves four primary activities: designing the right mix of community features and services;

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setting attractive incentives for the current and potential buyers and users of its goods and services; delivering a place's products and services in an efficient, accessible way; promoting the place's values and image so that potential users are fully aware of the place's distinctive advantages (Kotler *et al.*, 1993: 18). Six generic strategies are suggested to achieve this:

- Attracting tourist and business visitors
- Attracting businesses from elsewhere
- Retaining and expanding existing businesses
- Promoting small business expansion and fostering new business start-ups
- Expanding exports and outside investments
- Expanding the population or changing the mix of residents (*Ibid.*).

Intuitively, these would appear to be ranked in some kind of ascending order with the attraction of visitors leading to business, and social and economic development. While each of these might be regarded as a different market 'segment' their interdependence and interrela-

tionship are illustrated in Kotler *et al.*'s (2002) framework 'Levels of place marketing' (Figure 1).

Clearly, place marketing is not only limited to increasing tourist arrivals but also plays an important role in regional/urban development, country positioning in international relations and economic development (Deffner and Metaxas, 2005; Papadopoulos, 2004). Indeed, according to Ashworth and Goodall (1988) in Howie (2003: 145), tourism is '...one function within the multi-functional place to be managed on the basis of professionally determined norms and political decisions about the role it should play in the wider spatial setting for the attainment of municipal goals'. Howie uses Silicon Valley in California, which is an area promoted as the ideal location for companies developing new technology, as an example of an alternative use of a place and the differing objectives that may occur among the various internal stakeholders.

Hence, tourism should be integral to place marketing as it 'supports and leads the development of a place brand' by creating 'celebrity'

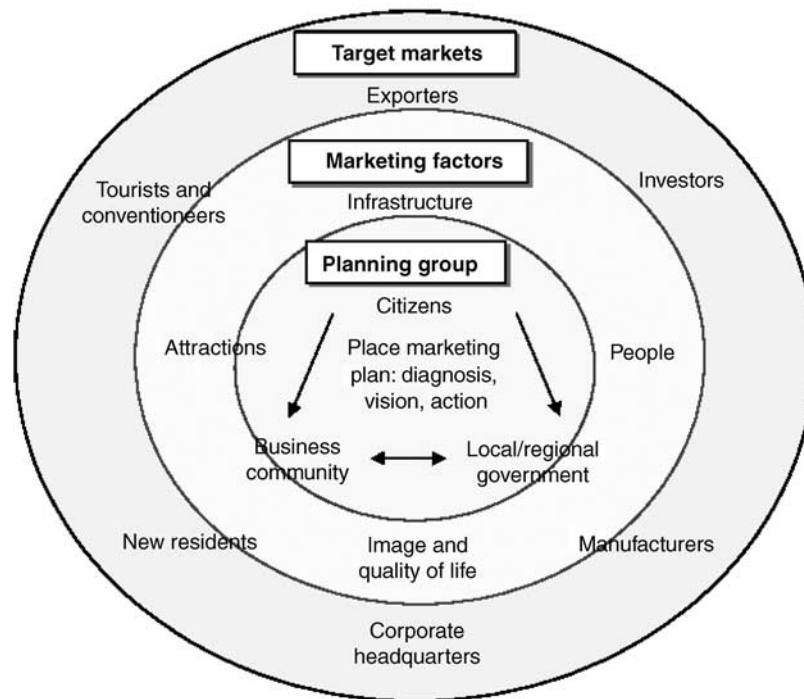


Figure 1 Levels of place marketing Source: Kotler *et al.* (2002: 46)

and 'emotional' appeal that other organisations can use when communicating to potential residents, businesses and investors and that the whole economy will therefore benefit from (Morgan, 2004: 19). Morgan uses New Zealand as an example of a place that started with a tourism-led marketing initiative, and that is at the leading edge of destination marketing, which now uses its website to promote business as well as travel opportunities. Tourism frequently acts as a catalyst for other development while also contributing significantly to the economies of many countries. For example, worldwide earnings on international tourism reached US\$623bn in 2004, with the United Kingdom earning US\$27bn of this (WTO, 2005). Thus, the development of tourism can benefit the economy as a whole. Consequently, the marketing of places as destinations has become increasingly competitive in recent years as it has become well established that such a 'large, complex and special entity as a destination' is able to be marketed in much the same way as a product (Howie, 2003).

Against this background, our purpose is to explore the nature of destination marketing and identify factors associated with its successful planning and execution. To achieve this we begin by defining destination marketing and reviewing evidence from both academic and practitioner studies that spell out some of the key considerations that need to be taken into account. Foremost among these is the need for effective planning. As with other competitive situations however, strategic planning tends to achieve parity with one's competitors rather than a sustainable competitive advantage. Increasingly, this elusive property calls for a value proposition based on subjective rather than objective factors that are encapsulated in a 'brand'. In recognition of this we first define branding as a generic practice and then its application to destinations. In turn this leads us to consider what is involved in brand building and the challenges faced in brand development. Finally, based on our review we identify 33 critical success factors that are associated with

the development of a successful marketing strategy for a destination.

DESTINATION MARKETING

A destination is a place that attracts visitors for a temporary stay, including continents, countries, states, cities, villages and purpose-built resort areas (Pike, 2004), and thus is an amalgam of all the tourism services and experiences offered to consumers (Buhalis, 2000). According to the WTO (2004: 10):

'...destination marketing covers all the activities and processes to bring buyers and sellers together; focuses on responding to consumer demands and competitive positioning; is a continuous coordinated set of activities associated with efficient distribution of products to high potential markets; and involves making decisions about the product, branding, price, market segmentation, promotion and distribution'.

Additionally, Horner and Swarbrooke (1996) argue that destination marketing involves using tourism as a means to an end rather than an end in itself for reasons including: improving the image of an area to attract industrialists; increasing the range of facilities and amenities available to the local community; giving local residents more pride in their local area; providing a rationale and funding for improvements to the local environment; and trying to make the destination politically more acceptable to outsiders.

While it is widely acknowledged that marketing contributes greatly to destination development (see eg Cooper *et al.*, 1998; Howie, 2003; Prideaux and Cooper, 2002), the process is not always straightforward or well understood and is a particularly challenging form of the marketing art (Bennett, 1999). These challenges are related to the complexity of the tourism product and the number of stakeholders involved in destination marketing.

As the definitions of both place and destination marketing indicate, a major challenge is the fragmentation of ownership. There is no single product over which the producer has total control, instead the tourism product is comprised of organisations of varying sizes,

government and the natural environment, and the image of a destination can be affected by uncontrollable external events (Bennett, 1999). Thus there are many different stakeholders involved in the process, including both public and private organisations and local residents, all of whom, individually, have little control over the marketing of the destination product. This lack of control over the tourism product has led many destination marketing organisations to focus primarily on the promotional aspect of the marketing mix (Horner and Swarbrooke, 1996).

In addition, the definitions suggest that destination marketing must satisfy the needs of all these stakeholders as well as target segments. Thus, Prideaux and Cooper (2002) argue that destination marketing should occur not only on the demand side to increase visitor numbers, but also on the supply side to market the destination to intermediaries and to increase the numbers of sellers through investment in accommodation, entertainment and infrastructure, etc. The authors, however, note that the supply side of destination marketing is an under-researched area, as opposed to demand side marketing. Moreover, Buhalis (2000) proposes that destination marketing be used as a strategic mechanism in coordination with planning and management to provide suitable gains to all stakeholders, and not simply as a promotional tool. Buhalis further suggests that in order to fulfil this aim, the most successful and competitive destinations will be those that impose effective human resource training, cooperate with competing and complementary destinations to learn from them, undertake innovative, research-led marketing using new technologies and fulfil the four key generic strategic objectives listed in Table 1.

Buhalis (2000) argues that the implementation of these objectives will depend on the relationships between, and the dynamics of, the different destination stakeholders that are represented in Buhalis's (2000) dynamic wheel of tourism stakeholders as illustrated in Figure 2.

Table 1: Strategic marketing objectives for destinations

1. Enhance the long-term prosperity of local people
2. Delight visitors by maximising their satisfaction
3. Maximise profitability of local enterprises and maximise multiplier effects
4. Optimise tourism impacts by ensuring a sustainable balance between economic benefits and socio-cultural and environmental costs

Source: Buhalis (2000).

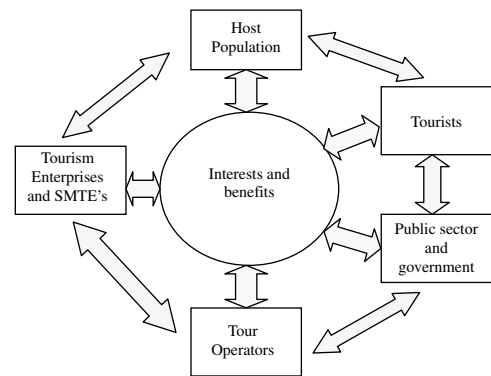


Figure 2 The dynamic wheel of tourism stakeholders

Source: Buhalis (2000)

Similarly, Ritchie and Ritchie (2002) suggest the need for a move from promotion-oriented destination marketing to a more holistic, strategic approach in order to attain sustainable competitive advantage. Their study illustrates the process by which the tourism industry in Alberta, Canada enhanced its competitiveness as a travel destination through the development of a research and intelligence collection framework that could be used as guidelines for other destinations in implementing a destination marketing information system (DMIS). The authors argue that as research is increasingly important for an effective marketing mix, comprehensive DMISs can underpin the promotional efforts of destination marketing organisations (DMOs) and ensure a strategic perspective.

A further problem in destination marketing is often the lack of proficiency, resources and flexibility in public sector DMOs or NTOs, which can be 'self-serving bureaucracies, which are not nimble nor fleet of foot' (Bennett, 1999). Thus, considering this and the need to satisfy the needs of all destination stakeholders, cooperation between public and private sectors is important. Prideaux and Cooper (2002), for example, investigate the relationship between destination growth and destination marketing by examining the relationship between DMOs and local government authorities in the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia. They note that destination marketing can be undertaken in several ways, including membership-based organisations; local or national government-funded promotional organisations; bodies formed through a mix of private and public sector funding; or occasionally competing organisations each attempting to represent either the whole destination or areas within the destination. Their findings, however, highlight that the growth of destinations is influenced by public-private relationships, with the role of local government being particularly important.

Correspondingly, Palmer and Bejou (1995) argue that the challenges and complexities of destinations and the marketing of them and the interdependency among stakeholders — for example, increasing tourist visits benefits, the social objectives of the public sector as well as the economic objectives of the private sector — has resulted in the development of local tourism marketing alliances between public and private sectors. The authors further stress the need for such alliances, claiming that the alternative — a 'free market' solution — is problematic because:

- individual stakeholders would create less promotional impact on potential visitors than if they collaborated;
- a promotional campaign where resources are pooled allows the benefits to be shared equally among all tourism businesses, small and large;

- objectives can be achieved more effectively if stakeholders recognise their interdependencies.

Clearly, collaboration between stakeholders and the development of a strategic plan are fundamental to success in destination marketing.

DESTINATION PLANNING

The tourism plan addresses what is to be done and when, estimates costs, suggests which agencies will be involved in implementation, and suggests how to measure change and the effectiveness of the response (Howie, 2003). While there is no defining text that states what constitutes an effective destination marketing plan, several important and emerging areas are cited in recent literature.

First, the increasingly competitive tourism environment and the nature of destinations require that a strategic perspective is adopted when developing tourism plans. Hovinen (2002) applied Butler's (1980) tourism area life-cycle model to the stagnation that occurred in the 1980s in Lancaster county, in the United States. Hovinen's analysis identified that destinations have the potential to experience significant decline if appropriate planning and management decisions are not made, and thus highlights the need for proactive, strategic destination marketing planning (Hovinen, 2002).

Similarly, Deffner and Metaxas (2005) argue that during the last 20 years developing a long-term vision has become of increasing importance to European cities, in order to become more competitive and increase market shares. The authors discuss the strategic planning process, which involves analysis of the internal and external environment of a city, as a basis for developing an effective plan covering: identification of the city's vision; identification of development objectives; market research and market segmentation processes in order to evaluate the potential target markets, to investigate the global tendencies and to change experiences; planning the appropriate

strategies, tactics and alternative scenarios per action; and planning the feedback procedure. They add that, according to Ashworth and Voogd (1990), strategic planning is particularly important, considering that public local authorities and private sector organisations cooperate through common policies and interests to define their differing goals. Similarly, Buhalis (2000) notes that destination marketing facilitates the achievement of a tourism policy, which should be coordinated with the regional development strategic plan and which should focus on all the impacts on the destination over and above visitation — such as overcrowding, environmental problems, visitor safety and security, seasonality problems and sensitivity to local culture — in order to ensure fulfilment of the objectives of all stakeholders.

Gunn (2002) notes the significance of image in tourism planning today. In the competitive tourism market, the author warns of the danger of replicating the same theme of tourism development and so argues that analysis of factors such as the destination's cultural and natural resources, geographical characteristics and tradition is required in order to differentiate the destination from the competition.

According to Howie (2003), the present approach to tourism planning in the UK is characterised by acknowledgment of constant change; continuous monitoring and response; and continuous revision. Likewise the WTO (1994: 16) recognises:

‘During and after implementation, tourism development must be monitored to ensure that it is accomplishing the objectives and achieving the recommended policies. Monitoring will detect any serious problems that arise so that remedial measures can be taken before the problems become serious’.

Thus, implementation, monitoring and review are crucial aspects of a destination tourism plan.

A further issue pertinent to tourism planning and destination development is collaboration (Jamal and Getz, 1995). Jamal and Getz (1995)

define the former as a process of joint decision making among autonomous, key stakeholders of an inter-organisational, community tourism domain to resolve planning problems of the domain and/or to manage issues related to the planning and development of the domain. Gunn (2002) also argues that collaboration is required for successful tourism planning and development, in particular collaboration between public and private organisations. Integration is also an issue that has been well documented in the tourism planning literature (see eg Gunn, 2002; Inskeep, 1991). Gunn, for example, contends that destination plans must be developed within the context of regional tourism plans. This is to ensure that tourism is developed in concordance with the broader goals of the destination and is thus more efficient and consistent.

Some of the difficulties of achieving this are exemplified in Curtis' (2001) case study of Brand Oregon. With the weakening of the Oregon economy in the mid-1990s, all the regional tourist offices receiving government funding were required to use the Oregon Tourism Commission's advertising agency and comply with the umbrella Brand Oregon. This was seen as restrictive and led to considerable resistance underlining the need for cooperation and collaboration rather than fiat and regulation. Yet, as noted earlier, formal strategic planning rarely creates a sustainable competitive advantage in its own right. Rather, it has become a necessary but not sufficient condition to ensure that one's offering is at least equivalent to those offered by one's competitors. Through the analysis that underpins strategic planning it may be possible to pinpoint attributes and features that will offer additional benefits to customers. The problem is that unless these are protected by IPR (intellectual property rights) the competition will soon copy and so erode the advantage. Protection against this is afforded by the organisation's reputation which, in turn, is reflected in its brand equity. While difficult to measure precisely, brand equity reflects the additional benefits and values that consumers perceive

they receive by preferring one brand over another. It is for this reason that issues of reputation and branding have become so vital in developing effective strategies and long-term competitive advantage. In the sections that follow we will look first at branding as a practice and then examine its application to destinations.

BRANDING

A brand is defined by Keller (2003: 4) as '...a product, but one that adds other dimensions that differentiate it in some way from other products designed to satisfy the same need'. Additionally, a brand is '...a shared desirable and exclusive idea embodied in products, services, places and/or experiences' (Kapferer, 2004: 13), and to be successful it must establish an emotional relationship with the consumer by ensuring that there is a fit between the consumer's needs and the brand's values and features (Hankinson and Cowking, 1993).

Howie (2003) stresses the importance of branding and positioning in relation to the product element of Kotler's marketing mix that comprises: product, price, promotion and place. So, according to Hall (2002), brands encompass:

- a clear and distinct image which differentiates them from competitors;
- association with quality and a distinctive way of relating to the customer;
- the ability to deliver long-term competitive advantage;
- something greater than a simple set of physical attributes.

On these grounds, it could be argued that branding is now a fundamental component in a destination-marketing plan. Indeed, Kania (2001) argues that branding is the most important element in any marketing plan.

Brands have become so prevalent and powerful in modern society, making their way into all aspects of life, including economic, political, social and cultural spheres, that they

have come under criticism in recent years and political and environmental backlash against them has increased (Howie, 2003; Kapferer, 2004). Brands have, however, become increasingly important to organisations for several reasons. First, Kapferer (2004) argues that, if managed properly, brands are one of the few strategic assets at a company's disposal that can provide a long-lasting competitive advantage. In addition, Pike (2004) argues that one of the most important impacts of branding for commercial organisations is brand equity, the increasing awareness of the balance sheet value of brands, which can create competitive advantage by generating greater sales or margins than would be achieved without the brand name.

To achieve competitive advantage, a successful brand strategy is required and brand equity must be strong. Keller (2000) proposed ten characteristics that should be present for a successful brand strategy. These are that: the brand excels at delivering the benefits customers truly desire; the brand stays relevant; the pricing strategy is based on consumers' perceptions of value; the brand is properly positioned; the brand is consistent; the brand portfolio and hierarchy make sense; the brand makes use of and coordinates a full repertoire of marketing activities to build brand equity; the brand's managers understand what the brand means to customers; the brand is given proper support and that support is sustained over the long run; and the company monitors sources of brand equity.

Further reasons for the growth in branding, according to Pike (2004) include the increasing global competition due to globalisation that has led to greater awareness of global competitors. For example, as 70 per cent of international travellers visit only ten countries, over 90 NTOs compete for only 30 per cent of total international arrivals. Pike (2004) also cites: the increasing commoditisation of products as congested markets make differentiation difficult and lead to growth in price-based competition; the growing power of retailers' own labels, which acts as a barrier to smaller suppliers; the

Table 2: Roles that brands play for consumers and manufacturers

<i>Consumers</i>	<i>Manufacturers</i>
Identification of source of product	Means of identification to simplify handling or tracing
Assignment of responsibility to product maker	Means of legally protecting unique feature
Risk reducer	Signal of quality level to satisfied customers
Search cost reducer	Means of endowing products with unique associations
Promise, bond or pact with maker of product	Source of financial returns
Symbolic device	Source of competitive advantage
Signal of quality	

Source: Keller (2003: 9).

increasing sophistication of consumers; brand extensions and portfolios; decreasing effectiveness of traditional advertising and declining advertising budgets, which are resulting in the use of niche media and below-the-line communication; and the short-term performance orientation of many organisations that place tactical gains over strategic advantage.

As a result of all the above benefits of branding, Keller (2003) identifies the roles that brands play for both consumers and manufacturers (Table 2).

Likewise, Pike suggests that it is useful to think of a brand as representing an identity for the producer and an image for the consumer and that brand positioning is the interface between the two (see Figure 3).

Branding is thus concerned with creating an emotional connection with consumers through the development of a unique personality or image for a product or service and therefore, as stated by Weinreich (1999), is a two-way process that is developed *with* rather than *to* the consumer and can help to bridge any gaps between a product's or service's strengths and potential consumers' perceptions (Morgan and

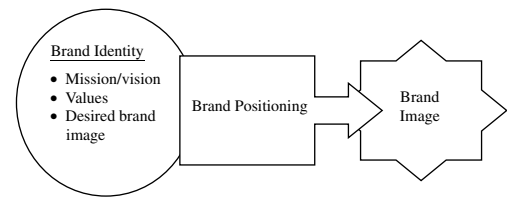


Figure 3 Brand identity, brand positioning and brand image

Source: Pike (2004: 75)

Pritchard, 2004). This relationship is particularly important for tourist destinations for many reasons, including the changing tourism environment and consumer behaviour. These factors will now be discussed, along with the process of destination brand building.

DESTINATION BRANDING

Geographic locations, like organisations or products, can also be branded and the goal of such branding is to make people aware of the location and then link desirable associations to create a favourable image to entice visits and businesses (Keller, 2003). According to Dinnie (2004), the interests of companies and places are similar and often overlap as, ultimately, both desire stability and prosperity. Fan (2005), however, warns of the dangers of treating place brands like commercial brands as there are fundamental differences between the two. He cites, for example, that products can be altered, re-launched, replaced or withdrawn from the market, whereas places can not; a nation brand can only create emotional benefits due to intangibility; product brands have a single owner with legal rights, whereas a place is owned by any organisation that chooses to exploit the image of the place; and the audiences for place brands are diverse and hard to find, unlike product brands that have targeted segments.

Although, the topic of destination branding did not appear in tourism literature until the late 1990s (Pike, 2004), it has, like corporate and product branding, become increasingly

important in recent years. As suggested earlier, the definition of a brand appears to satisfy many of the aims of destination marketing and thus highlights the importance of branding to destinations. Several authors confirm this, arguing that branding provides a good starting point for destination marketing and a sound framework by which to manage the image of a place (see eg Kavaratzis, 2004; Kotler *et al.*, 1999) and that branding is at the very heart of destination marketing strategy (Pike, 2004). Furthermore, many believe a successful brand to be a key national asset (Kotler *et al.*, 1999; Kotler and Gertner, 2002; Olins, 1999; and Van Ham, 2001) perhaps because branding provides an advantage over promotion on its own, as the branding process 'forces the development of the place resulting from the process' (Rainisto, 2004). An example of such development is that of Australia and the Sydney 2000 Olympics. Together with the branding of Australia as a whole, the Sydney Olympics helped impact not only on how other countries viewed the country, but also on how Australia viewed itself, as events have the ability to both appeal to target markets and excite residents (Brown *et al.*, 2002).

The reasons why image and branding have become of such importance to organisations in recent years are also shared by destinations, with the main reasons for destination branding growth being related to either competition issues or consumer behaviour. Substitutability has become one of the main problems for destinations today, especially in the most competitive markets such as sun, sea and sand markets, and many destinations are becoming increasingly substitutable (Pike, 2004). In addition most destinations have excellent facilities and services and claim to have unique culture and heritage (Morgan and Pritchard, 2002). Further to this, tourists are becoming increasingly sophisticated and discerning and destination choice is now a considerable indication of lifestyle and a way to express identity in an increasingly homogeneous world (Morgan *et al.*, 2002; Yeoman

and Munro, 2005). Luhrman (1998) confirms this when he states:

'...the next century will mark the emergence of tourism destinations as a fashion accessory. The choice of holiday destination will help define the identity of the traveller and, in an increasingly homogeneous world, set him apart from the hordes of other tourists'.

Additionally, tourists are looking more for discovery on holiday and less for escape, asking the question 'who can we be on holiday?' as opposed to 'what can we do on holiday?' (Morgan and Pritchard, 2000: 278). Thus, destinations have been required to find new ways to differentiate themselves from the competition and to establish connections with consumers. Morgan and Pritchard (2002) emphasise that the key to effective destination differentiation is the development of brand saliency, which is the creation of an emotional relationship with the consumer through highly focused communications campaigns, of which New York's 'I love NY' and the 'Glasgow's miles better' are two well known campaigns. Howie (2003) also identifies the 'I love NY campaign' as one of the most successful brand identity building and positioning campaigns, as well as the 'Super Natural British Columbia' campaign. Several further branding campaigns and slogans, past and present, that have been cited as particularly effective are presented in Table 3.

Clarke (2000) further emphasises the relevance of branding to tourism destinations by highlighting the marketing advantages of branding to tourism organisations or destinations, which she summarises into six points. These are as follows:

- Tourism involves complex and high involvement purchase decisions and so branding can reduce the choices available to consumers.
- Branding can help offset the effects of the intangibility of the tourism product, especially if combined with positive past experience.

Table 3: Destination branding campaigns and slogans

<i>Destination</i>	<i>Campaign/Slogan</i>
New Zealand	100% Pure New Zealand
Australia	Australia: A Different Light
Spain	Everything Under The Sun
India	Incredible India
Scotland	Silicon Glen
Cyprus	The Island for All Seasons
Singapore	Live It Up in Singapore
Paris	Paris is for Lovers
Copenhagen	Wonderful Copenhagen
Amsterdam	Capital of Inspiration
Las Vegas	What Happens in Vegas, Stays in Vegas

- Branding can communicate consistency in a sector that is sensitive to variability of experience.
- Branding can act as a mechanism to reduce the risk of ill-spent time through selection of a poor destination.
- Given the inseparable nature of the tourism product and the desire for segment compatibility therefore being high, branding helps ensure tourist satisfaction and thus facilitates precise segmentation.
- Motivation and teamwork are of high priority in such a high-contact service as tourism and brands can provide a focus for the integration of producer effort and assist people in working towards the same outcomes.

The need for the branding of destinations and branding’s relevance to tourism appear indisputable, as is the view that the development of a unique, effective branding campaign can differentiate a destination from the competition.

DESTINATION BRAND BUILDING

Given the importance of image to destination branding, Aaker’s (1991) model of consumer-based brand equity can be of use in the application of brand theory to destinations. Aaker’s

model suggests that consumer-based brand equity consists of four major components: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality and brand associations. Additionally, Morgan and Pritchard (2004) recognise that neither place reputations nor visitor choices are made in a vacuum, and so destinations must compare their image to those of key competitors. They suggest that ‘wish you were here?’ appeal and celebrity value are critical, that is, do tourists see the destination as a fashion accessory or a fashion faux pas? Figure 4 positions several destination brands according to these two factors.

Morgan and Pritchard (2004) also identify the stages involved in destination brand building, that are presented in Table 4.

The authors further add that in order to create an emotional attachment a destination brand has to be:

- Credible
- Deliverable
- Differentiating
- Conveying powerful ideas
- Enthusing for stakeholders and partners
- Resonating with the consumer

The second last point highlights the importance of cooperation from all stakeholders. Indeed, Prideaux and Cooper (2002) contend that without this cooperation brand fragmentation, as opposed to brand building, would occur.

As well as ensuring a destination brand has all of the above features, has celebrity value and that brand building follows the stages in Table 4, however, there are various additional factors within the macro-environment that create challenges which destination marketers must also be aware of. We explore these in the following section.

THE CHALLENGES OF DESTINATION BRANDING

Despite the advantages of destination branding, there are a number of challenges faced by

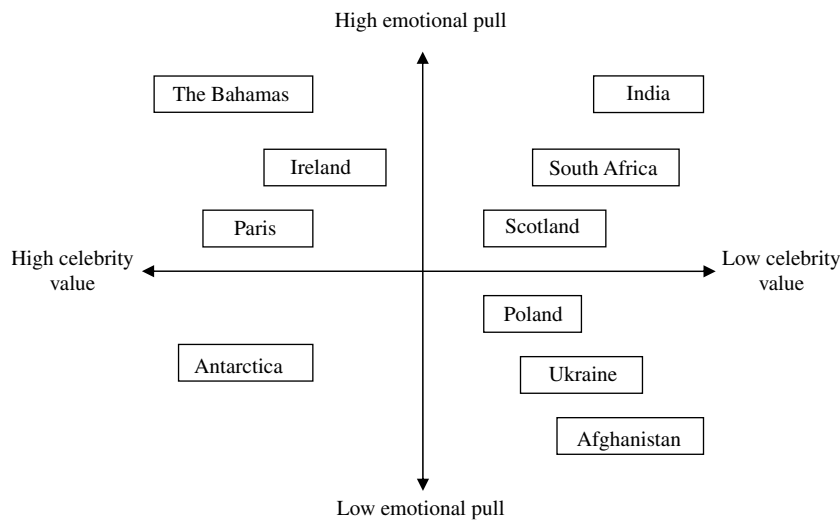


Figure 4 The destination brand positioning map
 Source: Morgan and Pritchard (2004: 67)

Table 4: The five phases in destination brand building

Phase one	Market investigation, analysis and strategic recommendations
Phase two	Brand identity development
Phase three	Brand launch and introduction: communicating the vision
Phase four	Brand implementation
Phase five	Monitoring, evaluation and review

Source: Morgan and Pritchard (2004: 69).

destination marketers. These challenges are noted by Morgan and Pritchard (2002) and are related to financial, political and environmental issues.

The first challenge facing destination marketers is their limited budgets compared to many global consumer product brands. For example, a global giant such as Sony may spend as much money as the combined total of most of the world’s national destination organisations on its annual global advertising budget (Morgan and Pritchard, 2004). This increases the need for innovative marketing communications, requiring them to ‘outsmart rather than

outspend the competition’ (Morgan and Pritchard, 2002). This is, however, often difficult to achieve as destination marketing communication practitioners are increasingly required to demonstrate financial accountability despite the fact that there is a positive correlation between the promotional budgets of destinations and tourist expenditures (Fall and Lubbers, 2004).

Destination politics — which is concerned with the complexity of the tourism product, the number of stakeholders and the complexity of the relationships between stakeholders — also poses a constraint against effective destination branding. First, due to the fact that destinations are amalgams of products, services and experiences that are outwith the control of any one organisation, and also due to the differing objectives and interests of different stakeholder groups, image-related problems can occur. For example, is a tourist’s opinion of destination image based on functional values such as the shops available, social values such as its suitability for all ages, emotional values such as the atmosphere of a resort, epistemic values such as the experience of a new culture or on conditional values such as the availability of cheap travel? (Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000). In addition, destination marketers also have to

take into account the heterogeneity of travel motives of different target groups, which poses a challenge to finding a common foundation of associations which are unique and relevant to each one, and then integrating communications into a joint effort (Supphellen, 2004). As a result, the image the consumer has of a destination brand may be quite different to the self-image intended in the brand identity (Pike, 2004).

Howie (2003) discusses the importance of residents in ensuring consistency of image between the brand and reality and argues that despite the fact that customer orientation is vital, residents, too, need to be actively involved in destination branding as they are part of the destination's marketing mix and marketing professionals cannot afford to be out of touch with the 'message on the street'. In addition, according to Ashworth (2001: 69), destination branding is '...as much about communication between citizens as clients, and public authorities as service providers, as about attractive exogenous investment, employment or customers'.

Furthermore, the need to satisfy the objectives of all the stakeholders of a destination highlights the importance of internal marketing to destinations. Internal marketing aims to ensure that employees act in a service-oriented manner and is based on the premise that if management wants its employees to do a great job with customers, then it must be prepared to do a great job with its employees and should therefore be viewed as a management philosophy for motivation and support rather than a short-lived campaign (George, 1990). Greene *et al.* (1994) also note that internal promotion can create a positive image of an organisation and its products in the mind of the customer.

Within the context of branding, a corporate brand management model was developed by de Chernatony and Harris (2000) who argue that creating an appealing corporate brand requires consideration of both internal and external stakeholders. Similarly, in relation to destinations, Prideaux and Cooper's (2002)

study highlights the need for cooperation between internal stakeholders as a requirement for destination branding. Furthermore, according to Ashworth (2001: 69–70):

'...promotion is both easiest and most effective when it is self-promotion. A place is sending messages to itself. The purpose is the fostering of a civic consciousness and self-confidence. This is both an end in itself and a necessary precondition for external marketing'.

All this suggests, therefore, that before a destination brand can attain success with visitors, its internal stakeholder groups such as local residents and businesses must understand and be made aware of the destination brand and its potential positive impacts. Therefore, successful destination branding requires balancing the local, regional and national politics of a destination with the application of innovative marketing communications (Morgan and Pritchard, 2002). Despite widespread recognition of the need to understand local residents' attitudes to tourism and to be sensitive to local culture, however, there has been a lack of research into residents' perceptions of their own destination and the extent to which brands impact on local communities (Hankinson, 2003 and Morgan *et al.*, 2003).

It has also been suggested that strong, effective leadership from top-level government and public-private partnerships are a way to overcome the above political problems. For example, Morgan (2004) views these factors as necessary, otherwise large stakeholders such as airlines will market what they believe to be the most attractive product at the expense of broader brand identity and smaller stakeholders. Similarly, Hall (2003) argues that public and private sectors are increasingly working together in order to maximise revenue from tourism. In addition, good leadership and management ensure good use of resources and capabilities and provide alternative strategies for future uncertainty (Rainisto, 2004). Morgan *et al.* (2003), however, argue that destination marketers have little

control over the various stakeholder groups, due to the range of different sectors involved.

Curtis (2001) warns of the dangers of not following the above suggestions regarding destination branding. The author examines why Brand Oregon began to fail in the late 1980s and cites inconsistency in marketing communications between the state's brand and the regional tourism bodies, and the resistance of these regional bodies against direction from the top down, as two of the main reasons. Curtis also emphasises that 'it takes many years to establish a brand image, establish name recognition and develop strong awareness of a destination or product' and thus advises that destination marketers 'stay the course' (Curtis, 2001: 81).

In recent years, the sensitivity of destinations to shocks in the external environment and the ability of such shocks to reverse branding activity and damage the image of a destination has become even more apparent following political and environmental events and disasters and economic downswings such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the war in Iraq, terrorist attacks in Turkey, Madrid, Bali, Kenya and London, the UK foot and mouth and bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) outbreaks, and the 2004 tsunami and hurricane Katrina. An example of the impact a macro-environmental event can have on a destinations tourism industry is that of Nepal. Morgan and Pritchard (2004) describe the downturn in Nepal's tourism industry in 2001 following a highly publicised airline hijacking and the subsequent five-month suspension of key flights to Nepal's international airport together with several internal political disasters. The authors note that, during the 1990s, tourism in Nepal had enjoyed an exceptional period of growth and, after collapsing in 2001, the industry did not recover until 2003, in part due to the country's successful celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the conquest of Mount Everest. Further to this, Morgan and Pritchard (2002) use the example of Israel, which, until the breakdown of the peace process from the year 2000 onwards, had been achieving above industry

average increases in visitors following a successful branding campaign. These external forces also reinforce the point suggested earlier that no individual stakeholder has control over the destination product and the marketing of it, including destination marketers (Morgan and Pritchard, 2004).

Successful brands are those with strong, consistent marketing heritages that also evolve and remain contemporary, which is difficult to achieve (Morgan and Pritchard, 2004). Given the increasing commoditisation of destinations, Morgan and Pritchard (2004) further contend that it is necessary to build a brand on values that connect a destination to the consumer in a unique way that the competition cannot surpass, as destinations such as Rome, Paris and India have done. As seen throughout this section, the issue of destination politics is one of the biggest threats to effective destination branding, yet all of the aforementioned factors related to destination politics must be effectively managed for destination branding to be successful. It was highlighted in a previous section that brand saliency can help to overcome many of the above challenges. Furthermore, the most critical factors identified here were public-private partnerships, internal marketing and stakeholder involvement, government leadership and longevity.

Based on our reviews of destination marketing, planning and brand development, it has become clear that there is a multitude of factors that impact upon the development of effective marketing plans. In the next section, we seek to synthesise these into a checklist of things that need to be taken into account.

SUCCESS FACTORS

Success factors try to explain why place marketing practices are successful or unsuccessful and represent the ability and capacity of a location to take these into account in developing an effective marketing strategy for a location (Rainisto, 2003).

Based on our review of the literature we identified 33 different success factors. Based

broadly on the suggestion of Morgan and Pritchard (2004) (Table 4), we have clustered these factors into four stages involved in destination brand building which we have called: strategic orientation; destination identity and image; stakeholder involvement; and implementation, monitoring and review. The allocation of individual factors was judgmental and not based on formal cluster analysis. The specific factors included under these headings and their importance to destination branding may be explained as follows.

STRATEGIC ORIENTATION

The first phase in destination branding, according to Morgan and Pritchard (2004), is market investigation, analysis and strategic recommendations. This suggests that the important elements are related to situational analysis factors, goals and objectives, and strategy.

According to Johnson and Scholes (2002), strategy is the 'direction and scope of an organisation over the long term'. Thus, adopting a strategic orientation involves taking a long-term and holistic approach to tourism planning. In addition, Buhalis (2000) notes that the strategic marketing objectives for destinations are to: enhance the long-term prosperity of local people; delight visitors by maximising their satisfaction; maximise profitability of local enterprises and maximise multiplier effects; optimise tourism impacts by ensuring a sustainable balance between economic benefits and socio-cultural and environmental costs. Further to this, investment in buildings and brand infrastructure sufficient to make the promised brand experience a reality is required for successful branding (Hankinson, 2003).

Several authors have identified the need for a long-term orientation in destination branding, for example, Curtis (2001), Deffner and Metaxas (2005) and Pride (2002). Similarly, Ritchie and Ritchie (2002) highlight the need for a more holistic, strategic approach to destination marketing in order to attain sustainable competitive advantage, as opposed to a

promotion-oriented approach, while Rainisto (2004) highlighted the importance of alternative strategies for future uncertainty.

Thus, the provision of suitable gains to all stakeholders, long-term vision and the negative impacts of tourism over and above visitation are indicators of a strategic orientation.

DESTINATION IDENTITY AND IMAGE

Identity development, image and communicating the vision comprise the second and third phases of destination brand building. Place identity is how a place wants to be perceived and is a unique set of brand characteristics that destination marketers want to create or maintain and that differentiate it from other places (Rainisto, 2003). Image, however, is the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that people have of a place and must be valid, believable, distinctive and appealing (Kotler *et al.*, 1999). Therefore, as noted by Pike (2004) and Keller (2003), a brand represents an identity for the producer and an image for the consumer, with brand positioning the interface between the two. Likewise, Rainisto (2003) adds that marketing communications can be used as a bridge between the identity and image of a place.

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

As discussed throughout the literature review, satisfaction of the objectives and needs of the various different stakeholders of a destination is one of the fundamental requirements of successful destination branding. Indeed, many authors argue the need for the involvement of these different stakeholder groups in the process (see eg de Chernatony and Harris, 2000; Howie, 2003; Morgan *et al.*, 2003; Pride, 2002; Prideaux and Cooper, 2002).

Stakeholder involvement involves all individuals, organisations and groups who are affected by tourism development playing a role in determining the nature of the direction of development (Simpson, 2001). Simpson further adds that stakeholder identity and

scope of participation are two elements of this definition. Furthermore, the issues of leadership and stakeholder, or public–private, partnerships are prevalent in current destination branding literature.

BRAND IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Implementation, monitoring and review form the last two phases in destination brand building, (Morgan and Pritchard, 2004). Simpson (2001)

Table 5: Critical success factors derived from the literature review

Strategic orientation

1. Visitation statistics are included and the destination's main markets are quantified and segmented
2. The main competition is identified
3. Tourism trends are identified
4. A long-term orientation is adopted
5. The importance of international competitiveness is recognised
6. The need for infrastructure improvements is highlighted
7. The need for integration with national/regional tourism plans is recognised
8. Residents' attitudes to tourism are considered
9. Local cultures, values and lifestyles are considered
10. Wealth and job creation and quality of life for residents are primary aims
11. The issue of overcrowding is addressed
12. The issue of environmental problems is addressed
13. The issue of seasonality is addressed
14. The benefit of tourism to the destination is quantified
15. Scenarios are developed

Destination identity and image

16. The need to develop brand identity is recognised
17. Brand associations are identified
18. The need for image development is recognised
19. Positioning is discussed
20. The need for coordination of industry promotional material is recognised
21. Recognition to ensuring the promises made in marketing communications are conveyed to visitors
22. New and innovative forms of communication channels are addressed
23. The need to improve branding and brand awareness is recognised
24. The importance of experiences to tourists as opposed to tangible propositions is recognised

Stakeholder involvement

25. National government agencies are involved in planning
26. Local government agencies were involved in planning
27. The area tourist board/area tourist office was involved in planning
28. Local residents were involved in planning
29. Local businesses were involved in planning
30. The need to improve communication between stakeholders (public, private and residents) is recognised
31. Leadership is addressed to give greater guidance to stakeholders.

Implementation, monitoring and review

32. The timescale for each task is included
33. The need for monitoring and review is established

notes that it is often in these end phases that many strategic planning processes fail, and so effective planning should include implementation, monitoring and review elements in acknowledgment of this.

Such elements, according to Simpson (2001), include prioritising objectives, assignment of responsibility for key tasks, estimation of costs, the inclusion of a review mechanism and methods by which resources should be allocated. In addition, Pride (2002) notes that continual evaluation, monitoring and adjustment to what is being done in order to determine the effectiveness of the brand is required and, similarly, Metaxas (2003) in Deffner and Metaxas (2005) argues that feedback procedure performance is one factor necessary for effective destination marketing.

The 33 critical success factors and their assignment to the four categories are summarised in Table 5.

Taken together, we believe the four categories and 33 individual success factors provide a useful checklist against which to benchmark extant tourism planning documents as well as guidance for the development of effective plans for the future.

SUMMARY

In an increasingly competitive global environment, places — towns and cities, districts, regions and countries — need to differentiate themselves from one another if they are to attract industry and commerce and sustain the economic and social development of their inhabitants. To do so they need to understand fully the nature of their competitive environment, and their own strengths and weaknesses, as a basis for crafting effective marketing strategies and plans for their implementation. Central to the success of this process is knowledge and understanding of those factors that impact upon it — what may be termed ‘critical success factors’ or CSFs.

In this paper, we have undertaken an extensive review of both the academic and practitioner literature relating to place and destination

marketing. In addition to highlighting a number of CSF, this review confirmed the importance of branding and the development of a strong brand and strategy for promoting it. Evidence in support of this claim has been presented together with broadly based advice on the use of the listing of CSF as a basis for evaluating the content and relevance of the marketing/branding strategy. We believe the use of this checklist should prove useful in both the development and evaluation of destination marketing plans. Inevitably, its value will depend significantly on the users ability to operationalise the individual factors in the context of the specific problems they are seeking to solve

While the authors have used the checklist as a basis for evaluating the content of the published plans of all the 14 area offices in the VisitScotland network (not reported here), and were able to form a judgment as to the extent and degree that they covered the key issues identified, there is clearly a need for further research to assess its value in use. Such research might be retrospective — that is, evaluate the success or otherwise of an implemented plan and use the checklist as a diagnostic for analysing the content of that plan — or prospective by using the success factors in constructing a plan and then monitoring their influence/impact on its implementation.

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