

### **3.1 The Destination Concept**

Tourist destinations are a mix of tourism products, experiences and other intangible items promoted to the consumer. At a general level, this concept of destination can be developed to represent geographically defined entities such as group of countries, country, regions in a country, a resort or a wide range of experiences created tourism marketers. There are a range of six components which comprise a destination (i.e. from an industry supply perspective or from consumer's viewpoint) The destination is often referred to as an amalgam of six A's. – Available packages; Accessibility; Attractions; Amenities; Activities; Ancillary services.

#### **Early Forms of Destination Marketing**

The history of such organization can be traced to the nineteenth century in the USA, where much of the focus was on attracting meetings and conventions, which is one facet of the events industry (Ford and Peeper 2007). In the USA, the formation of the Detroit Convention & Businessmen's League in 1896 is seen as the formal beginning of the USA destination promotion industry, handled by their Convention & Visitor Bureau Organisations.

While much of the initial interest was on domestic tourism, New Zealand was the first country to begin overseas promotion. In U.K many individual resorts began to advertise in parallel with developments in North America and Mainland Europe. For e.g in 1879 BlackPool Town Council levied a local tax on the rates to undertake advertisements at railway stations, attractions and amusements via its Advertising Committee, initially using leaflets and after 1881, with posters. As attractions were added to the town's tourism infrastructure (e.g Black Pool Tower in 1894 and the illuminations in 1912) these featured in posters. Such advertising sometimes in conjunction with railway companies, was aimed at the domestic tourism and day trip market. Despite attempts by Central Government in U.K to limit municipal spending on promoting tourism, this became a highly competitive activity prior to 1914.

Even during the First World War with Government restrictions imposed on domestic travel & tourism, destinations were still promoted by some of the most influential place promoters of the time – the private railway companies. The most prominent advisor was the Great Western Railway Company (GW) with literary and visual representations drawing upon the concept of departure and the aesthetic appeal of the coast. In U.K in 1921 the Health Resorts and Watering Places Act formally approved municipalities expenditure of a 1d rate to undertake certain forms of destination advertising to existing rail borne travel and the potential of car and Charabanc (early coaches) trips to the coast.

This development of formally funded place marketing in the 1920s typically through guide books, posters and news paper advertising helped to provide the modern day foundations of the destination marketing organization (DMO)

One of the principal task of (DMOs) is to increase visitation levels in a marketing context. However DMO's also have a management function including the co-ordination of planning, economic development, the role of stake holders including the host community, private sector tourism interest, public sector (including local and national government) tourists and other bodies such as pressure groups. These different stakeholders are an important focus for planning, since they may have different political agendas which makes seeking to derive a consensus destination marketing a complex task and illustrates the importance of collaboration.

According to Seddighi and Theocharous (2002) understanding how tourist select the destination. There visit is central to destination marketers so they can decide upon which marketing strategies to use to influence consumer behavior. At a simplest level any traveler is faced with a range of motives. In case of business traveler, this is often not a choice related form of travel and is dedicated by employment needs although conference & incentive travel may be influenced by cheque. It is the leisure holiday which has attracted the greatest amount of research, where the initial choice of destination facing the tourist is either a domestic or overseas destination(s), the decision being partly based upon the purchasing power of the consumer.

The attitudes and perception of the prospective tourist towards alternative destination leads to different preferences as a multistage process. Seddighi and Theocharous (2002) also develop the importance of destination specific factors including :

- Whether the visitor has been to the destination before.
- The cost of living at the destination
- The price of the tourist package
- Facilities at the destinations
- The cost of transportation and time taken in travelling
- The quality of promotion and advertising
- The quality of services
- Any political stability at the destination

This highlights the importance of destination marketing, as Buckley & Papadopolus (1986:86) argued when

***“ Greater attention must be paid to the characteristics of visitors when trying to develop a marketing strategy..... a clear market segment must be identified and an investigation made of the buying decision factors, which predominate in that segment.... It is however, important to recognize that the tourist product is a composite product and that there is more than one type of client.”***

This also indicates the importance of buyer behavior as a key element in destination choice. As Middleton & Clarke (2001) indicate, models of consumer behavior have traditionally emphasized price as the key element in destination choice. But growing consumer sophistication has seen branding and other non-rational consideration and attitudes influence buying behavior. In a simplified form , this process can be summarized as follows :

- Destinations promote competitive products to consumers direct, and via the travel trade / intermediaries.

- Advertising, promotion and the interplay of personal recommendation, family, friends, consumer trends, taste and the internet combine to shape buyer characteristics.
- These buyer characteristics are filtered by the *learning behavior* of consumers, which has been influenced by marketing/ recommendation. For e.g Ashworth and Goodall (1982) observed that if a tourist is dissatisfied they will not recommend the destination to others: a reminder of the importance of visitor satisfaction and Word of Mouth. It is also shaped by the perceptions of consumers of brands and images of destinations and their experience of travel (i.e prior travel to destinations)
- These characteristics combine in the buyer decision making process where learning, perceptions and experience lead to the motivation to buy.

At the motivation stage the characteristics of the consumer (i.e demographic, economic and social profile) combine with their psychographic characteristics as well as their attitudes to

- create: needs, wants and goals. In tourism purchase, Morgan(1996) suggests the family often acts as a single decision making unit and Zaltan (1998) noted male-female differences in purchases.
- The consumers then choose between different goods and services to purchase a product or brand to fulfill their motivation.

Within the buyer research , which is derived from a sub-area of marketing called ‘Consumer behaviour’, the DMO may apply marketing segmentation techniques. Yet one of the most influential factors in the consumers choice of destination is the *destination image* which is not necessarily grounded in experience or facts but is a key motivator in travel and tourism.

Images and the expectations of travel experiences are closely linked in prospective customers mind and the ultimate objective of destination marketing destination marketing is to : ‘ Sustain, alter or develop images in order to influence prospective buyers’ expectations’(Middleton and Clarke 2001:127). Again this reiterates the importance of marketing research in seeking to understand the intrinsic attractiveness of a destination’s image to a visitor, as well as how the perceived image can be used to position the destination to derive a competitive advantage.

### **3.2 The Tourist Destination Image**

Within the literature on tourism marketing, the study of destination imagery is one of the major areas of academic endeavour. For this reason we will examine the factors which have an impact upon destination image including how to approach the study of image formation. According to Gallarza, Saura and Garcia (2002:58), the initial development of destination image research can be dated to Hunt (1975), Most academic studies have focused on :

- Conceptualization and dimensions of TDI (Tourist Destination Image)
- The destination image formation process
- The assessment and measurement of destination image.
- The influence of distance on destination image.
- Destination image change overtime.
- The active and passive role of residents in the image of destination.
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- Destination image management (i.e. positioning and promotion)

**Fig : Tourist Destination Image**

<b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>	<b>GENERAL INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	<b>TOURIST INFRASTRUCTURE</b>
<p><b>Weather</b>  Temperature  Rainfall  Humidity  Hours of Sunshine</p> <p><b>Beaches</b>  Quality of Sea Water  Sandy or Rocky Beaches  Richness of Scenery  Protected Nature, Reserves, Lakes, mountains, deserts etc  Variety &amp; uniqueness of Flora and Fauna</p> <p><b>Tourist Leisure &amp; Recreation</b>  Theme Parks  Entertainment &amp; Sports Activities  Golf, Fishing, Hunting, Skiing, Scuba etc.  Water Parks, Zoos, Trekking, Adventure activities, Casinos, Night Life, Shopping</p> <p><b>Natural Environment</b>  Beauty of the scenery  Beauty of the cities &amp; towns  Cleanliness  Overcrowding  Air &amp; Noise Pollution  Traffic congestion</p>	<p>Development and quality of Roads, Airports and Ports  Private and Public Transport  Developments of Health facilities services  Developments of Telecommunications  Development of commercial infra structure  Extent of Building development</p> <p><b>Culture, History &amp; Art</b>  Museums, Historical Buildings, monuments etc.  Festivals, concerts and handicrafts  Gastronomy, Folklore, Religion  Customs and ways of life.</p> <p><b>Social Environment</b>  Hospitality and friendliness of the local residents.  Underprivileged and Poverty.  Quality of life.  Language barriers.</p>	<p><b>Hotel and self catering accommodation</b>  No of beds  Categories  Quality</p> <p><b>Restaurants</b>  Numbers  Categories  Quality</p> <p><b>Bars, Discotheques &amp; Clubs</b>  <b>Ease of access to destinations.</b>  <b>Excursions at the destinations,</b>  <b>Tourist Centers</b>  <b>Network of tourist information</b></p> <p><b>Political &amp; Economic Factor</b>  Political Stability  Political Tendencies  Economic Development  Safety  Crime Rate  Terrorist attacks  Prices</p> <p><b>Atmosphere of the Place</b>  Luxurious Place,  Fashionable place,  Place with fame &amp; reputation.  Place oriented towards families.  Exotic place  Mystic place  Relaxing place  Stressful place  Happy, enjoyable place  Pleasant place.  Boring place  Attractive or interesting place.</p>

This proliferation of studies has made the definition of TDI a complex task, with no consensus of the term and its scope, although it is broadly concerned with the way individuals and groups develop mental constructions about destinations, focusing on different attributes which are shaped with their beliefs, values, ideas, perceptions & impressions. As Beerli & Martin (2004 a) suggest, the image of the destination might be classified into nine items as shown in the table, based on the attributes of the destinations which are vast and very difficult to reduce to a series of simple constructs. A study by Echtner & Ritchie (1991) has added some clarity to the wide range of definitions which exist by pointing to the existence of three axes that support the image of a destination:

- a psychological/ functional dimensions
- a common/unique dimensions
- holistic/attribute axes

As Beerli & Martin (2004 a) suggest, a number of attributes have been studied in TDI studies, which can be classified according to the functional – psychological axis. These studies can help in understanding what GUMM (1988) described as the personal factors affecting the tourist formation of a destination image.

- the accumulation of images of the destination.
- Modifying the initial image after gathering more information, creating an individual image.
- Deciding to visit the destination
- Sharing the destination
- Returning home
- Modifying the image based on experience to create an organic and induced image.



This organic image, based upon non-commercial sources of data is influenced by the media and friends. In contrast, the induced image is the result of commercial data and information such as destination or industry advertisement.

One consequence of these studies of TDI is that whatever measures are developed to understand imagery, one needs a frame work within which to understand image formation.

### 3.3 A Model of Destination Image Formulation

Baloglu and Mc Cleary (1999) provided a framework to analyse TDI, which is conditioned by two key elements.

- Stimulus Factors (external stimuli, physical objects, personal experience)
- Personal Factors (Social and Psychological characteristics of the consumer)

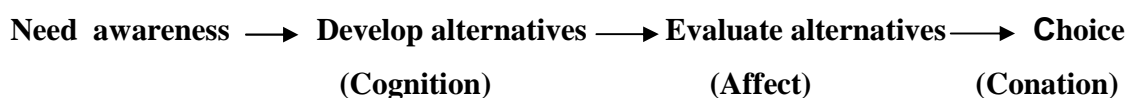
As a result, three determinants of TDI were identified by Baloglu and Mc Cleary (1999)

- Tourism motivation
- Socio demographic factors
- Information sources

These determinants help shape the TDI as an attitudinal construct, that comprises of a consumers mental understanding of knowledge, feelings and global impression of a destination. The image has a perceptual/cognitive as well as an effective element which generate response to create an overall image of the destination as shown in the figure. The conative image is analogous to behaviour since it is the intent or action component. Intent refers to the likelihood of brand purchase (Howard & Sheth 1969). Conation may be considered as the likelihood of visiting a destination within a given time period. Woodside & Sherrell (1977) found intent to visit was higher for destinations in the evoked set, as did Thompson & Cooper (1979) and Pike (2002b).

Figure 3 highlights how the cognition/affect/conation relationships apply in decision-making. The process is similar to the AIDA model used by advertisers, where the aim is to guide a consumer through the stages of awareness, interest, desire and action.

**Figure 3 : Cognition/affect/conation. Source: Adapted from Myers (1992).**



## PERSONAL FACTORS

The construction of images of destinations is clearly an area which can be studied using quantitative research methods to measure the elements of a TDI and the visitors preferences. Yet there is also a growing interest in more qualitative studies which seek to examine the images portrayed in brochures by marketers to promote destinations. In case of less developed world tourism destinations, Echtner & Prasad (2003) examined the visual elements in the brochures.. They found images of land which were unchanged , where unrestrained behavior could occur and where uncivilized people existed. They also highlighted the myths created in destination images by tour operators to represent the less developed world to appeal to particular market segments. Such destination imagery is demeaning to the host population and that this may attract visitors with false expectation and a form of tourism that is not compatible with the destination.

Kim and Richardson(2003) point to a similar effect that may be generated by motion pictures on destination image. Such images enter the domain of popular culture and the impact on place images can be very influential. In fact Gartner (1993) highlighted the interrelationship of cognitive and affective elements of destination images which have a strong impact on the decision to visit.

One example of this occurred in Scotland following the launch of a children's programme, *Balamory* set on a fictitious island of the same name; which was in real life, the Isle of Mull, in the town of Tobermory , with its painted houses. This led to a tourism boom, following the rise of toddler tourism (Connel 2005). The local area tourist board, AILLST, PROMOTED THE AREA USING Tobermory on the front cover of their 2004 holiday brochure, adding to the tourist boom.