

THE BRANDING OF TOURISM DESTINATIONS

~ PAST ACHIEVEMENTS & FUTURE CHALLENGES ~

A Basic Report Prepared for Presentation to the 1998 Annual Congress of the
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Setting the Stage and Management of Branding in Destination Management

It was probably quite predictable, but somehow, it has rather quietly crept up and overtaken us. Despite the fact that “Destination Marketing” has been a well-established component – if not the leading component – of Tourism Destination Management (TDM), we have tended to neglect the “Branding” function of marketing in efforts to develop and implement Destination Marketing Plans.

The foregoing may be due to the fact that the promotion dimension of the marketing function has been so dominant for so long, and that many neophytes in the field tend to equate destination marketing with destination promotion. The great majority of professionals who have not fallen prey to this common “oversight”, have recognized the importance of long term “product” development, carefully crafted distribution channels, astute “value pricing”, and even the need for internal marketing programs that motivate and empower the highly valued front line staff who provide quality service to visitors on a day-to-day basis.

Despite this progress, we have “somehow” failed to recognize the significance of the Branding function in our efforts to increase awareness of destinations and to create the positive attitudes that are so essential to the final choice of a travel destination.

One immediate response may be that we have not really neglected the branding function; rather we have dealt with it under the alternative label of “Destination Image” (Echtner and Ritchie, 1991) To the extent that we wish to let ourselves off the hook, this may indeed be true. Conversely, to the extent that we wish to more critically assess our performance, we need to recognize that the Branding function is substantially broader in scope than simply image. As such, it can provide a more intensive and rigorous framework for managing the total reputation, or “identity” of a destination (Park, Jaworski et al., 1986) and the

manner in which this reputation influences the ability of a destination to attract visitors.

The Role of Branding in Tourism Destination Management

In light of our neglect to date, the purpose of this Basic Report is to attempt to contribute to the process of adapting and integrating “branding” concepts from the mainstream marketing literature into the tourism management literature, and more specifically, into the literature directly addressing the concerns of Destination Management. Before proceeding, it should be noted that this process of transference and adaptation has just recently been initiated in a major way, both in theory and in practice. It is not insignificant that the theme of this year’s Annual Conference of the International Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA, 1998) focused on the theme of “Branding the Travel Market”. Undoubtedly, this theme was partly chosen to reflect the western character of the Host City (Forth Worth, Texas). However, the location only served to accelerate a process that was already well under way, as evidenced by such very aggressive efforts of the state of Florida branding initiative (FLA USA, 1997), and an initiative by the province of Saskatchewan to reposition itself (1997). At the national level, both Britain (1997) and Canada (CTRI, 1996) are currently seeking to establish a clearer identity as tourism destinations through systematic “rebranding” campaigns.

Although the level of activity regarding the branding of destinations is substantial and growing, this activity does not appear to be supported by the same level of conceptual and measurement rigour that has characterized the generic field of branding; (Aaker and Keller, 1990), (Aaker, 1991), (Aaker and Biel, 1993), (Aaker, 1996), (Aaker, 1997), (Ambler, 1997), (Biel, 1997), (Blackston, 1995), (Broniarczyk and Alba, 1994), (Carpenter, Glazer et al., 1994), (Cobb-Walgren, Ruble et al., 1995), (Dacin and Smith, 1994), (Duncan and Moriarty, 1997), (Feldwick, 1996), (Fournier, 1998), (Gatignon, Weitz et al., 1990), (Gregory and Wiechmann, 1997), (Kapferer, 1994), (Keller, 1993), (Leclerc, Schmitt et al.,

1994), (Park, Jaworski et al., 1986), (Park and Srinivasan, 1994), (Raj, 1985), (Shocker, Srivastava et al., 1994), (Smith and Park, 1992), (Sujan and Bettman, 1989), (Weilbacher, 1995), (Zaichkowsky, 1995).

Previous Uses of Branding in Travel and Tourism

Before launching into the primary theme of the Basic Report regarding the branding of destinations, it should be acknowledged that the overall field of travel and tourism has minimally used branding in several sub-contexts. An obvious example is the hotel sector. From a macro perspective, since 1980, 113 new hotel brands have been introduced in the United States, with twenty new brands in the past two years. From 1980 through 1995, the survival rate for new product was just over 50% (Turkel, 1997). At a strategic level, concern for the impact of branding has reportedly played a significant role in decisions on whether or not to undertake specific facility developments (Morey and Dittman, 1997). Similarly, the airlines have developed strong “brands” and associated logos and “wordmarks”. Car Rental firms have also established highly recognized international “brands”. Certain attractions, most notably “Disneyland”, “Sea World”, “Six Flags over Texas”, “Legoland”, and “Dollywood”, have, over time, established well recognized and well defined brands and associated images.

Fundamentals of Brand Theory and Brand Management

In examining the applicability and utility of branding for a tourism destination standpoint, we judge it essential to have a basic understanding of the fundamentals of brand theory and brand management.

The Lexicon of Branding

The conceptual terminology associated with branding is both diverse, and complex. As a first step in grasping this terminology, it is useful to review a summary of definitions prepared by Upshaw (see Table 1). In particular, Upshaw distinguishes between “Brand Valuation” and “Brand Identity”.

Table 1
The Lexicon of Branding

In recent years, as brands and branding have commanded more attention, marketing researchers, consultants, and academicians have created a complete vocabulary to describe various aspects of a brand’s makeup. Here is a brief glossary:

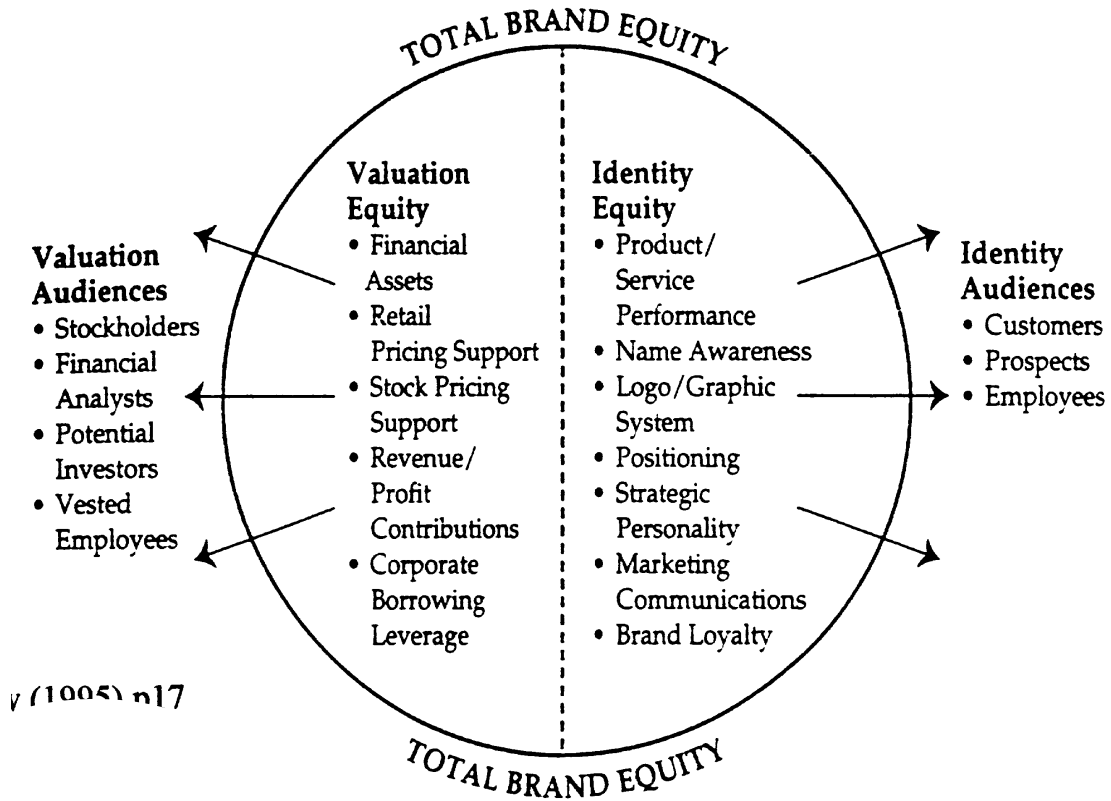
- *The brand “equity”* – The total accumulated value or worth of a brand; the tangible and intangible assets that the brand contributes to its corporate parent, both financially and in terms of selling leverage.
- *The brand “identity”* – Part of the brand’s overall equity; the total perception of a brand in the marketplace, driven mostly by its positioning and personality.
- *The brand “positioning”* – What a brand stands for in the minds of customers and prospects, relative to its competition, in terms of benefits and promises.
- *The brand “personality”* – The outward “face” of a brand; its tonal characteristics most closely associated with human traits.
- *The brand “essence”* – The core or distillation of the brand identity.
- *The brand “character”* – Having to do with the internal constitution of the brand, how it is seen in terms of its integrity, honesty, and trustworthiness.
- *The brand “soul”* – Related to the brand character, defined as the values and emotional core of the brand.
- *The brand “culture”* – The system of values that surround a brand, much like the cultural aspects of a people or a country.
- *The brand “image”* – Generally synonymous with either the brand’s strategic personality or its reputation as a whole.

Source: Upshaw (1995) p 14

Brand Valuation refers to assessing those factors that have a direct bearing on the worth of the brand, including its financial assets and intangible “goodwill”. The total accumulated value and worth of a brand is referred to as “Brand Equity” – a term that is used extensively, both in theory and practice.

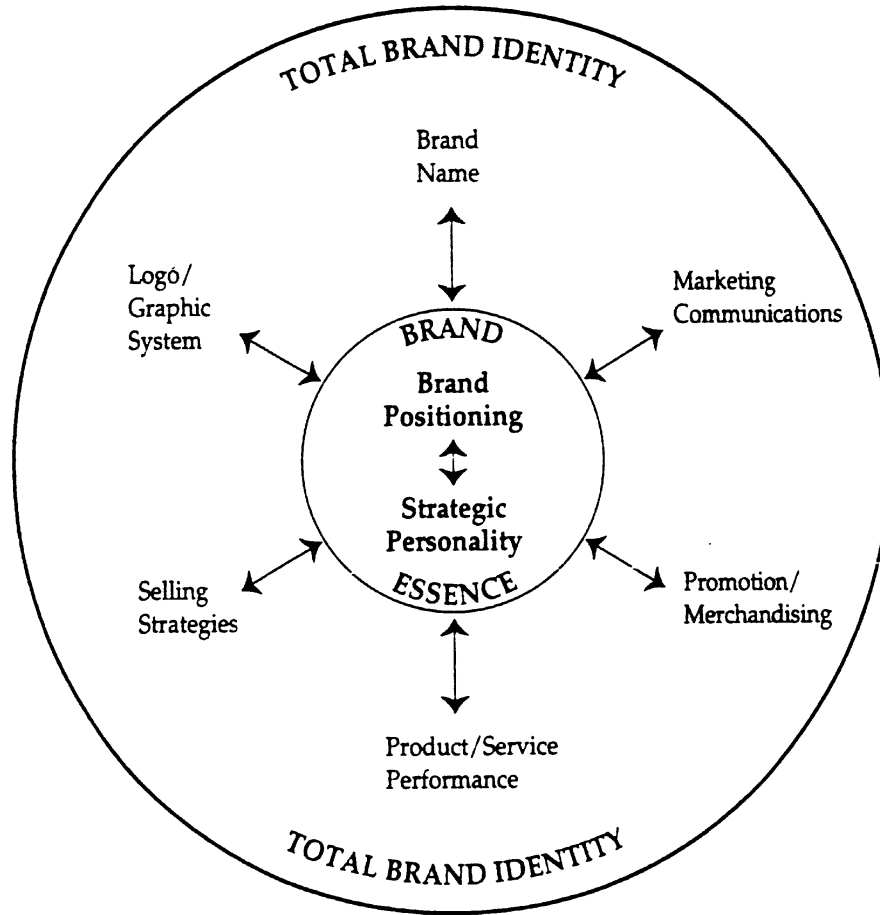
Brand Identity refers to that part of the equity resulting from the perceived benefits offered by a brand that makes it attractive as the object of a possible purchase. Brand identity is considered to be a product of the melding of a brand’s positioning and its personality, and is played out in the product/service performance, the brand name, its logo and graphic system, the brand’s marketing communication, and in other ways in which the brand comes into contact with its constituencies (Upshaw, 1995, pg. 15). Figure U.1 provides a graphical overview of Upshaw’s conceptualization of the relationship between Brand Equity, Valuation Equity, and Identity Equity. It should be noted that Upshaw attaches a high degree of importance to the “Care of the Core” or “Brand Essence” in efforts to establish a Brand’s “Identity”. (see Figure U.2)

Figure U.1
The Nature and Structure of Brand Equity



Source: Upshaw (1995) p 17

Figure U.2
The Nature and Structure of Total Brand Identity



The core of the brand identity.

Source: Upshaw (1995) p 24

Aaker on Brand Equity

While the foregoing has introduced the concept of Brand Equity as conceptualized by Upshaw, the area has been most extensively explored and popularized by Aaker (1991). Although Aaker remains active in the field, his framework model for managing Brand Equity (Aaker, 1991) has already established him as a pioneer in the field (see Figure A.1).

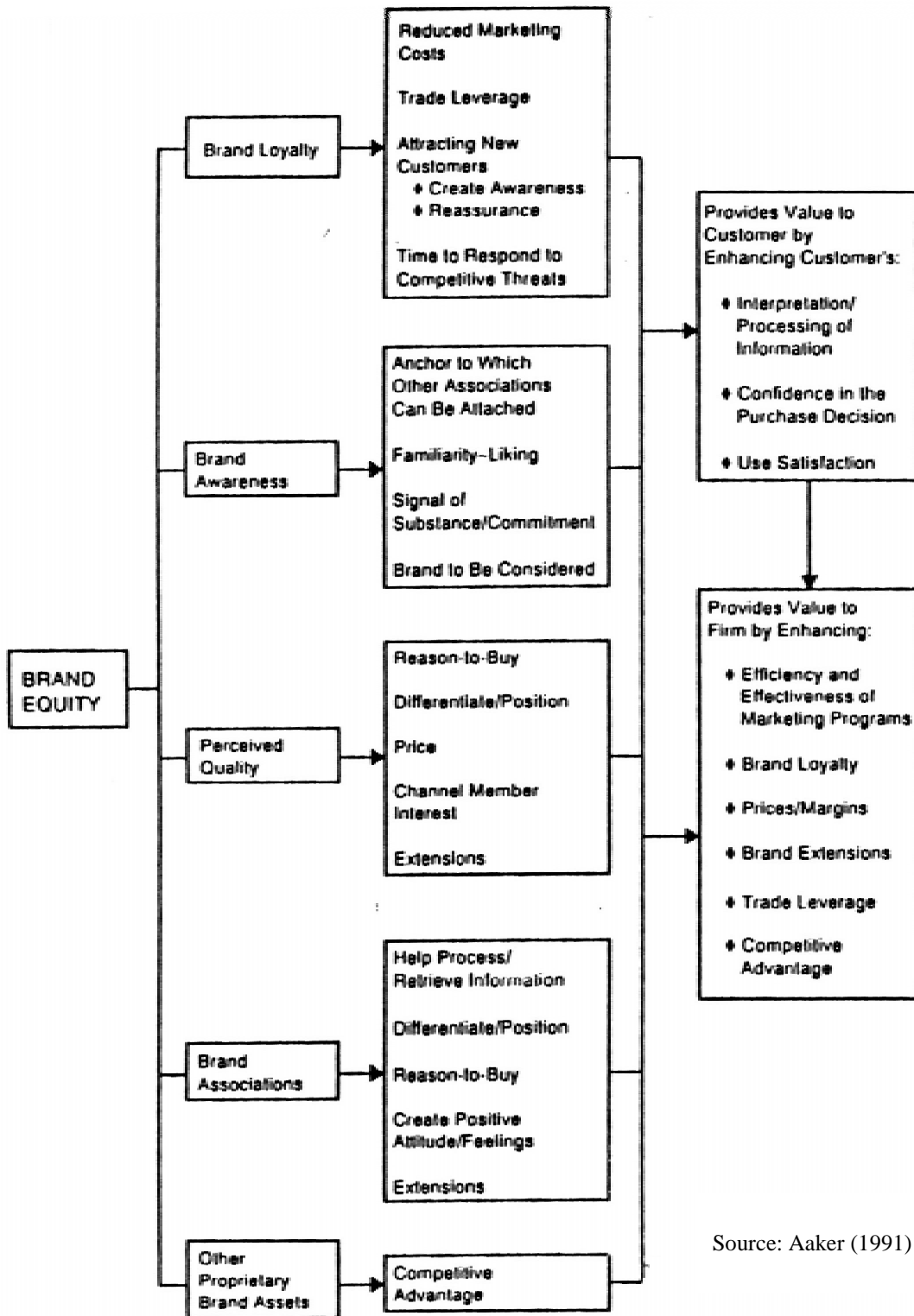
Aaker defines a **Brand** as *“a distinguishing name and/or a symbol (such as a logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of one seller, or group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from competitors who would attempt to provide products that appear to be identical”* (Aaker 1991, p 7).

Aaker defines **Brand Equity** as *“a set of brand assets or liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers”* (Aaker 1991, p 15).

He further identifies five categories of assets and liabilities on which brand equity is based. These include:

1. Brand Loyalty
2. Name Awareness
3. Perceived Quality
4. Brand Associations in addition to perceived quality
5. Other propriety brand assets – patents, trademarks, channel relationships, etc.

Figure A.1
The Aaker Framework for Brand Equity Management



Source: Aaker (1991) p270

Figure A.2
The Nature of Brand Awareness



Source: Aaker (1991) p 62

Aaker's pioneering work (1997) subsequently examined each of the foregoing assets/liabilities, and their relation to Brand Equity in considerable detail. Some of the key aspects of the examination include:

- The value of Brand Loyalty and how to create and maintain Brand Loyalty
- The nature (Figure A.2) and value of Brand Awareness
- The nature and dimensions of Perceived Quality (Table A.2)
- The nature of brand associations, image, and positioning, and the value of these factors
- The characteristics and roles of effective names, symbols, and slogans
- The characteristics of successful brand extensions
- Strategies for brand revitalization

Table A.2

The Dimensions of Perceived Quality

Product Quality

1. Performance: How well does a washing machine clean clothes?
2. Features: Does a toothpaste have a convenient dispenser?
3. Conformance with specifications: What is the incidence of defects?
4. Reliability: Will the lawn mower work properly each time it is used?
5. Durability: How long will the lawn mower last?
6. Serviceability: Is the service system efficient, competent, and convenient?
7. Fit and finish: Does the product look and feel like a quality product?

Service Quality

1. Tangibles: Do the physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel imply quality?
 2. Reliability: Will the accounting work be performed dependably and accurately?
 3. Competence: Does the repair shop staff have the knowledge and skill to get the job done right? Do they convey trust and confidence?
 4. Responsiveness: Is the sales staff willing to help customers and provide prompt service?
 5. Empathy: Does the bank provide caring, individualized attention to its customers?
-

Source: Aaker (1991), p. 91

A Non-Traditional Perspective on “Branding”

While not intended as pejorative, it may be said that both Aaker and Upshaw provide a fairly traditional perspective on the nature and role of branding. It is highly likely that most practitioners in this field will find these approaches to be most relevant and useful. At the same time other readers may find that a recent, somewhat different perspective (referred to as “marketing aesthetics”, or the “marketing of sensory experiences in corporate brand output that contributes to the organization’s brand identity”), provides some rather innovative insights and some alternative approaches to the branding of products and services (Schmitt and Simonson, 1997).

The S&S Marketing Paradigm

Schmitt and Simonson (S&S) stress immediately that their focus is “on the experiential benefits provided by a company or a brand as a whole and the aesthetic planning that is essential to developing and implementing a corporate brand or identity”. In effect, this marketing of aesthetics is about experiencing a brand/company; (e.g. Starbucks, ABSOLUT, Pepperidge Farm, Nike, UPS, Leggo, OXO, CAT) where Experiencing = Look, feel, taste, smell, touch, colour, typeface, sound, etc.” (S&S, 1997, p vii).

The S&S Paradigm: its Relevance to Tourism

One highly relevant aspect of the S&S conceptualization of branding is the almost religious call for a strong “NO” to commoditization – i.e. an avoidance of the current situation where “we are awash in high quality look-alike/me-too products and services” (S&S, 1997; p xii). This 1997 sentiment represents an aggressive, in-depth response to a major policy concern regarding the “homogenization of destinations” identified by some 100 international experts in tourism at a policy forum held nearly a decade ago (Ritchie, Hawkins et al., 1993). The S&S approach also reflects a growing recognition among strategic thinkers in tourism that rather than emphasizing only high quality of service (QOS), a greater emphasis needs to be placed on providing “high quality experiences” (QOE) (Otto and Ritchie, 1995). Under this conceptualization, a “travel experience” is viewed as a series of individual service transactions.

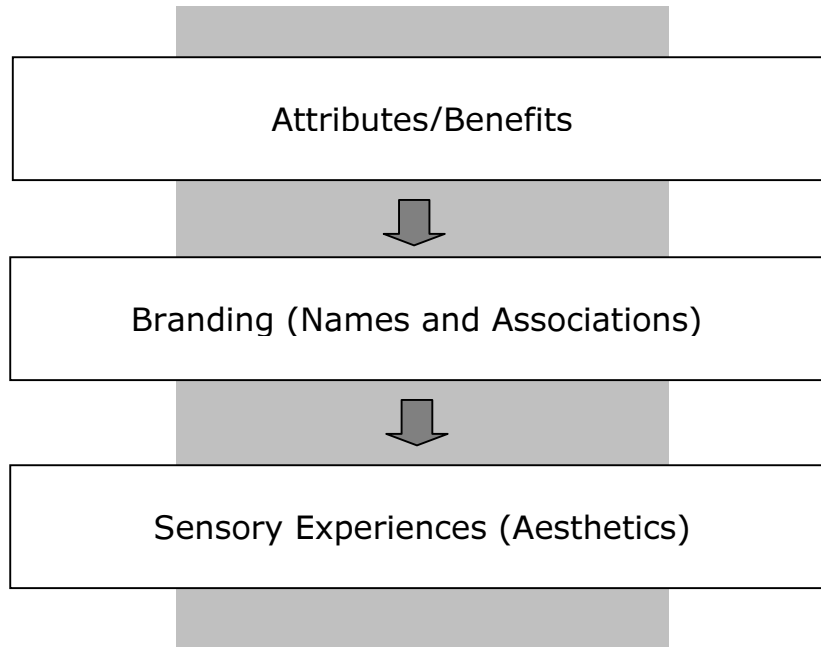
Keeley (1992) has expressed similar statements: “There is an overall trend away from product attributes towards lifestyle or value systems.” S&S (1997) further reinforce this perspective; “The consumer of today makes choices based on whether or not a product fits into her or his lifestyle; whether it represents an exciting new concept – a desirable experience.”

The S&S Marketing Paradigm – Implications for Tourism Destination Management

It is probably already evident from the discussion to this point that the S&S approach stresses the development of an Organizational (Destination) identity where value is provided by satisfying customer experiential needs – their aesthetic needs (S&S, 1997; p 3). This shift in thinking is reflected in the evolving “Focus of Marketing Approaches” identified by the authors (S&S, 1997). This shift is from the attributes/benefits of a product/service to the sensory experiences it provides – see Figure S.1.

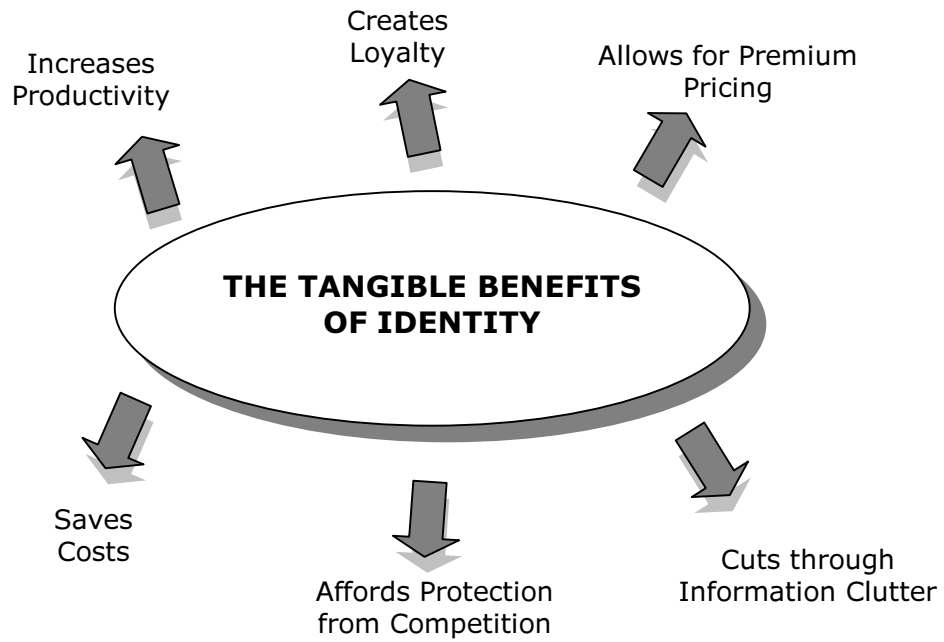
As S&S stress, “Aesthetics is not esoteric. The vitality of aesthetics in customers’ lives provides opportunities for organizations to appeal to customers through a variety of sensory experiences...” The result is the ability to obtain a number of specific benefits (Figure S.2) that are otherwise difficult to obtain.

Figure S.1
Evolving Focus of Marketing Approaches



Source: S&S (1997) p 16

Figure S.2
Tangible Benefits of Aesthetics



Source: S&S (1997) p 22

The TTRA Focus on Destination Branding

As mentioned earlier, it is only recently that we have seen a significant number of serious attempts at formal Destination Branding (DB). Evidence of DB's "arrival" as a recognized component of the DMO marketing "tool kit" is the previously noted fact that the 1998 annual conference of the International Travel and Tourism Research Association's (TTRA) focused exclusively on destination branding. A number of examples were presented. They included:

- the Silver Dollar City Brand (Henry, 1998)
- "Brand Oregon" (Curtis, 1998)
- the Branding of Outdoor Park Recreation Products (Mills, 1998)
- the Branding of Canada (Meis, 1998)
- the Branding of Small Destinations – the Case of Fredericksburg, Texas (Reeh, 1998)
- the Branding of Branson, Missouri – and the Importance of Research in Achieving Success (Fiveash, 1998)
- Nostalgia as a Branding Strategy for New Orleans (Vesey and Dimanche, 1998)
- the Branding of Hawaii (Okamoto, 1998)

While each of these studies is individually valuable, it is the collective focus on branding that is truly significant. This focus, within one of tourism's major conferences, clearly conveys the importance of current efforts to adopt and adapt traditional branding theory and practices to the tourism field. What is needed now, is the development of a coherent and commonly accepted framework for the use of branding theory in a tourism destination context.

Toward a Framework for Destination Branding

The discussion to this point has attempted to provide an understanding of the fundamental theoretical concepts of generic branding as applied to the traditional marketing literature. Our focus now turns to the adaptation of these concepts to tourism destination marketing. The Report concludes by identifying several theoretical and practical concerns that we believe need to be addressed as we move to include destination branding as an accepted component of destination management.

Destination “Brand”: A Definition

A simple transference of the Aaker definition would infer that a “Destination Brand” is a *“distinguishing name and/or symbol (such as a logo or trademark) intended to identify the destination and to differentiate it from competitive destinations”*. Because of the importance that we attach to the concept of “experience” in tourism theory and management, we propose the following definition:

“A Destination Brand is a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience.”

The first part of the foregoing definition addresses the traditional **identification** and **differentiation** functions of a brand. The second part, in contrast to traditional product branding, emphasizes that it is especially important that a destination brand convey, either explicitly or implicitly, the **promise** of the essence of leisure travel – a **memorable experience** – and one that, if at all possible, is uniquely available at the destination in question. While product brands are also intended to convey a promise associated with satisfactory product usage, the promise is, usually, of a more functional nature in terms of

either product performance or the quality of a particular service transaction. Exceptions might be for more pleasure orientated products (such as perfume), or services (such as massage). In tourism, for a destination to compete and succeed, it must offer a high quality “stream of product/service transactions” – or what is referred to as a “quality experience” (Otto and Ritchie, 1995). At the same time, since anticipation and memory are significant components of a quality experience, any attempt at destination branding must attempt to reassure the individual concerning the promise or expectations of future pleasure and/or excitement. Following travel, the brand can also play an important role to consolidate, and reinforce the post travel recollections of a memorable destination experience.

Measures of Brand Effectiveness

Based on the foregoing discussions, we assert that the primary roles of a destination brand are to provide:

Pre-Experience – Selection

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identification 2. Differentiation 3. Anticipation 4. Expectation 5. Reassurance | } | of the destination re: the destination experience |
|--|---|---|

Post-Experience – Recollection

- | | | |
|--|---|-------------------------|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Consolidation b) Reinforcement | } | of destination memories |
|--|---|-------------------------|

In this regard, Figures R1 attempts to convey the “layered” functioning of a brand as it fulfills the pre-experience roles of selection and reassurance; i.e. creating awareness (identification), image/knowledge (differentiation), anticipation (preference/choice) and finally expectation (desire). As shown, these roles are layered one on top of the other in a complimentary manner. In contrast, the

“Reassurance” function of the brand acts as a surrounding “cloud of comfort” that things will not go wrong and if they do, they will be appropriately corrected.

The “post-experience” role of a destination brand is captured in Figure R2. As shown, with the “Recollection” function, brands play an important role in consolidating and reinforcing the memories of the destination experience. In effect, it serves as the vehicle to bind or “chain” the many diverse “recall bits” into a holistic memory of the experience.

It follows that the effectiveness of a brand is dependent on how well it performs each of these roles. Measures of these preferences are summarized in Table R1.

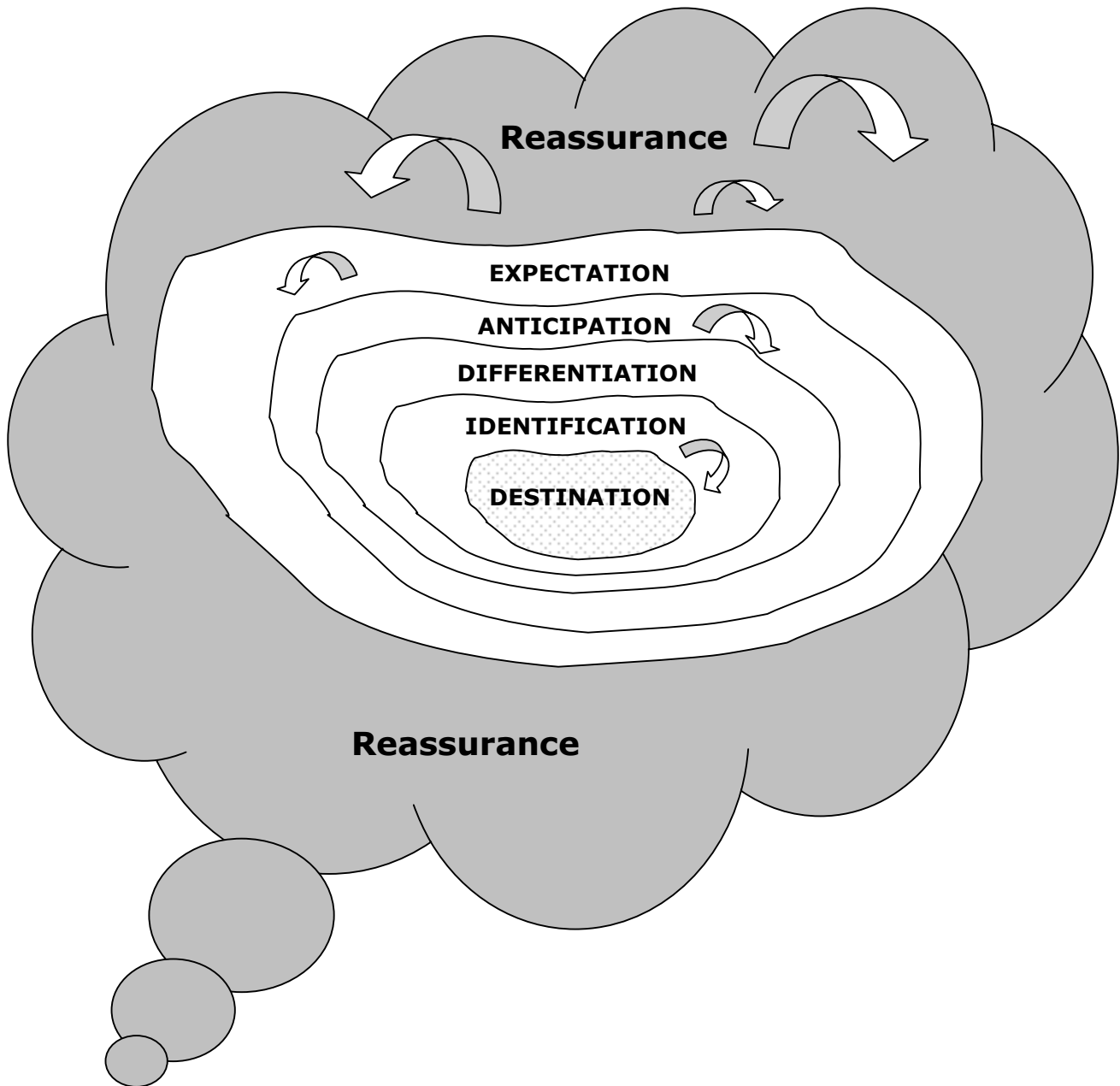
Secondary Roles of a Destination Brand

The foregoing discussion has focused on the primary roles for a destination brand. Some less important, or secondary, roles that a brand may play are:

- To serve as a coordinating symbol for a broad range of community development and promotion efforts, many of which fall outside of the normal responsibility of a tourism DMO. Used in this fashion, a destination brand having tourism origins can greatly enhance the status of tourism within a community. The counter risk, of course, is that the other agencies, whose efforts are being coordinated under the destination brand umbrella, may view destination branding as an attempt by the DMO to covertly assume some of their responsibilities and to co-opt associated resources.
- To generate revenue from the sales of clothing and memorabilia bearing the destination name/logo, etc.
- To serve as a security/theft identifier for materials and equipment belonging to the destination.

The Pre-Experience Structure and Functioning of a Destination Brand

– SELECTION AND REASSURANCE –



Reassurance is a "surrounding cloud of comfort"

Figure R.2
The Post-Experience Structure and Functioning
of a Destination Brand

– RECOLLECTION –

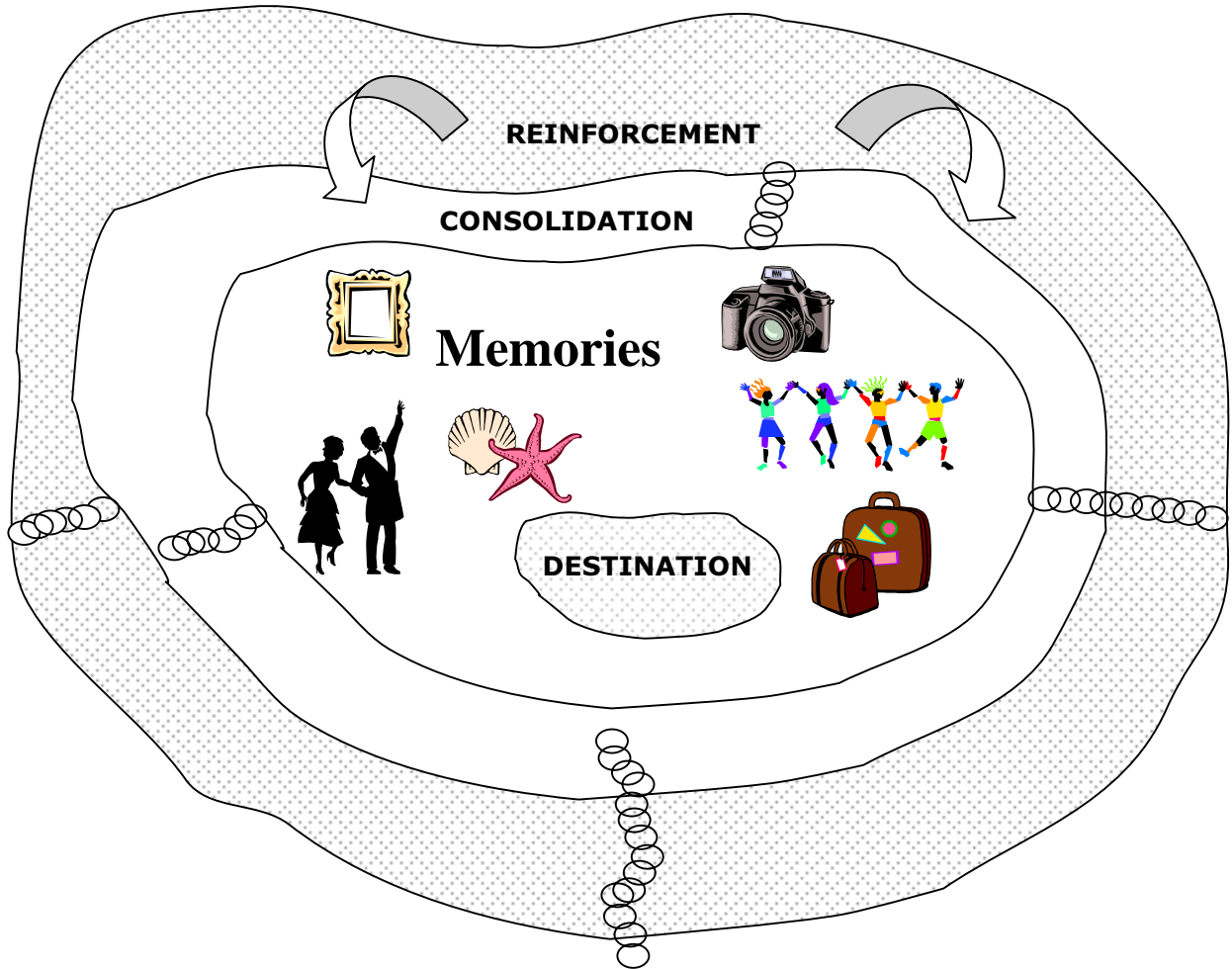


TABLE R.1
Measures of Destination Brand Performance

ROLES	MEASURE
SELECTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the extent to which the destination is chosen over others
Sub-Components	
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • degree of recognition/association
Differentiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of confusion with other destinations • lack of confusion with other products/services
Anticipation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the extent to which brand generates a desire to visit the destination • the intensity of the desire to visit that the brand generates
Expectation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the nature and importance of the specific benefits the visitor expects to realize for the destination experience
Reassurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the extent to which the brand provides a “cloud of comfort” for the visitor – a feeling that all is, or will go well during the destination visit
RECOLLECTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ease, frequency, and strength of recall of the destination experience • the extent to which the brand helps create memories of the destination and the visitor’s experiences • the intensity or warmth of memories elicited • the degree of comfort provided that the future/current choice was/is a sound one
Sub-Components	
Consolidation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ability of the brand to serve as a catalyst to tie together the many “bits” of memory of the destination experience
Reinforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ability of the brand to “cement” the consolidated memory of the destination experience

From Generic Branding to Destination Branding; Some of the Challenges we Face

By its very nature, the field of tourism management is a marketing driven phenomenon. As opposed to the banking sector whose theoretical and managerial roots lie in the field of finance, tourism is a marketing based phenomenon. As such, we have borrowed and adapted many of the concepts, theories, and methodologies of the marketing field. The transference and use of branding in tourism is thus part of this larger process.

This process of borrowing/adaptation is not, however, without its own difficulties. Often the context of tourism is sufficiently different so as to raise questions as to whether marketing concepts and theories or practices are truly appropriate in a tourism setting.

One area where a significant number of difficulties have been identified is in the field of research. In this area, it has been argued that the nature and behaviour and the context within which data are gathered are sufficiently different so as to present a number of conceptual and methodological difficulties (Ritchie, 1975). And so it is with branding as well. While many of the concepts, theories, and practices of branding may be transferred to the destination setting without much difficulty, there are several areas where caution is warranted.

The Individual versus Collective Nature of Traditional Destination Marketing

The marketing of a destination is by nature substantially different than the marketing of a traditional product. Perhaps the primary difference relates to the very fundamental nature of what is being marketed. A traditional product is usually a tangible, well defined entity that is being marketed and delivered by a single firm or group of firms having very common interests and characteristics. In tourism, however, not only are we marketing a very diverse and complex

product, but it is also one that is delivered by many different firms that are typically quite different in terms of their functions and capabilities. In effect, destination marketing – and thus destination branding – is much more of a collective phenomenon than is normally found in the generic marketing/branding situation.

Defining the Entity Being Branded

One of the major challenges facing the Destination Management Organization (DMO) seeking to market/brand a destination is simply to reach a common agreement as to what is being marketed/branded. It is not unusual to find destinations where there is not full agreement as to what the destination offers/should offer, or what its ideal image should be in the marketplace. This clearly creates considerable potential for ambiguity and inefficiency. One of the major sources of perceptual divergence may occur between residents of the destination and the tourism operators in the destination. Residents often have a more idealistic perception of the destination than do more realistic industry operators who are in close contact with the marketplace .

The Experiential Nature of the Tourism Product/Service

While the branding of services is well established, the fundamental nature of these services is generally quite different from the services we find in the tourism sector. Traditional services have tended to be of a functional nature – and often associated with a product that delivers a specific set of functional benefits. In tourism, however, many of the destination-related services have a hedonic as opposed to a functional emphasis. It follows that the branding process must capture the essence of the pleasure dimension, as opposed to only the functional one. This has considerable implications for names, symbols, logos, and wordmarks.

The Multiple Component Nature of the Tourism Destination Product Implies Many Brands Rather Than One

The complex or collective nature of the tourism destination product identified above has implications that go beyond the mere difficulty of achieving consensus. It also presents the reality that the destination product or service being delivered is, in effect, many products or services. The challenge facing a DMO is to determine if these many products/services can in any way be seen to have a common and collective character that can be captured within a single brand. An alternative conceptualization may be to view the destination experience as a “family” of brands.

Balancing the Inequality/Dominance of the Many Subcomponents of the Destination Product

Once we accept that the destination brand has many different components, and agree to seek either a common identification or a “family” conceptualization for the brand, we are frequently faced with resolving the inequalities in importance of the different subcomponents of the brand or brand family. Often, one of the major subcomponents totally dominates brand identification. Such is clearly the case in the example of Orlando, Florida where the dominance of the Disney Corporation has resulted in the prominence of the “Orlando Magic” concept in all aspects of the branding of that destination.

Time Elapse: the Reality of Many Travel Experiences

In the traditional product/service purchase and use situation, we are usually dealing with a finite and typically short time span with respect to product purchase. In the tourism case, the service/series of services are consumed over an extended period of time (that is the vacation/trip). As such, the destination brand must attempt to capture, or at least reflect, a product/service that has ill-defined time boundaries.

The Evolution of the Product During its Consumption

Because a destination product is composed of many parts, and is consumed over a extended period of time, it is not surprising that the product/service itself may undergo evolutionary changes during the time that it is being purchased and consumed by the visitor. This, again, raises a question as to the definition of what is actually being branded. As such, the brand must be capable of capturing or at least allowing for the changing nature of the product/service that it represents.

Cyclical Changes and the Destination Experience

The previous discussion has addressed concerns about the shifting evolution of a product over an extended period of time. In addition to such long term evolution, we frequently observe cyclical patterns in the nature of the destination experience. The most obvious cyclical patterns are those due to seasonality. Certain destinations (indeed most) offer very different experiences across different seasons of the year. Again, Florida is an excellent example. A visit to Florida in July is a very different experience from a visit to Florida in January. This raises the question as to whether a single Florida “brand” is capable of

capturing or representing a visitation experience which is clearly very different at different times of the year.

Destination Residents are themselves Part of the Visitation Experience and Thus the Destination Brand

A traditional product or service can usually be moved from one location to another without significantly altering the nature of the product/service. In contrast, we find that in tourism, the hospitality of the host population can be a significant contributor to the quality of the enjoyment of the visitation experience. Clearly, the host population is immovable. Furthermore, the tourism sector has little control over the priorities and behaviours of the host population – and particularly control over events that may disrupt the destination and substantially diminish its appeal as a place to visit. Perhaps it is too much to expect that a brand can capture and allow for these types of political and social shifts. Nevertheless, the reality is that they affect the perception of a destination brand.

Successful Destination Brands Seem to Have a Very Long Term Life Cycle

There are many brands that have a demonstrated durability in the marketplace (Coca-Cola is a “Classic” example). In contrast to this one example of longevity, the pressures for product innovation from both social and technological sources has meant that many traditional product brands tend to come and go quickly.

While there is a certain turnover in the popularity and appeal of travel destinations, the reality of geography implies that destinations do not come and go, at the same rate as do products/services. How do we face the reality of destination life cycles and the periodic emergence of new destinations? We can generally say that there is much greater stability in terms of destinations than destination experiences. One consequence of this reality is that the destination brands and associated symbols/slogans that have been most successful have

tended to be those that reflect some characteristic or insight that has been retained for some time. The “I Love NY” campaign, the “Virginia is for Lovers”, and the “Super Natural British Columbia” market positioning have stood up well to the test of time. Similarly, such symbols as the Eiffel Tower, the Pyramids of Egypt, and the Great Wall of China are the kinds of unique and enduring symbols that DMOs are prepared to die for.

Concluding Remarks

This year’s Congress has chosen to focus on the role and evolution of marketing in tourism. This Basic Report has sought to focus on one of the most current and most rapidly evolving dimensions of the marketing process. Destination Branding is one of the aspects of marketing that has evolved most rapidly in recent times. Indeed, the very idea of utilizing the concept of branding in a destination context is a relatively recent phenomenon – at least in a formal sense. This Basic Report has sought to review the concept of branding from a very fundamental perspective so as to ensure that we are fully aware of the traditions of branding. It has also sought to identify some of the major challenges that we in the tourism sector face in our efforts to transfer and adapt the basic tenets of branding for use in a destination management context. These challenges are not insurmountable, but their identification and examination does remind us that the branding of tourism destinations presents many unique challenges.

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