

# Establishing Vectors for **Urban Product Positioning**: The Role of **Tourist Boards** in Pulling it All Together

CLÁUDIA SIMÕES \* [ csimoes@eeg.uminho.pt ]

**Abstract** | The positioning of a place constitutes a crucial cornerstone in destination management as the conveyed image is clearly an important influencer in buyers' decision making. This paper focuses on how image is developed and managed in medium-sized urban areas. Two cases illustrate how local tourist boards define the key vectors underpinning the promotion and position of their regions as attractive destinations. This article discusses and comments upon the underlying strategies and their implementation in such urban centers. Managerial implications and avenues for future research are presented.

**Keywords** | Destination Image, Product Positioning, Urban Tourism, Tourist Boards.

**Resumo** | O posicionamento de um local é um elemento fundamental na gestão de um destino, uma vez que a imagem transmitida é um aspecto influenciador importante na decisão de compra. Este estudo aborda o desenvolvimento e gestão da imagem de áreas urbanas de média dimensão. Recorre-se a dois casos para ilustrar o modo como os órgãos de turismo locais definem os vectores-chave que constituem a base da promoção e posicionamento das suas regiões como destinos atractivos. Este artigo discute e comenta as estratégias subjacentes e a sua implementação em tais centros urbanos. São ainda apresentadas implicações para a gestão e avenidas para estudos futuros.

**Palavras-chave** | Imagem do destino, Posicionamento do Produto, Turismo Urbano, Órgãos de Turismo.

---

\* Doutorada em *Industrial and Business Studies* pela Universidade de Warwick, Reino Unido e Professora Auxiliar na Universidade do Minho.

## 1. Introduction

During recent decades tourism markets and tourism businesses environment have become progressively more competitive (Kotler, Haider, and Rein, 1993). Tourists are becoming more demanding and the tourism industry is highly competitive among destinations (Font and Ahjem, 1999). Consequently destinations need to be more efficient in their marketing (Day, Skidmore and Koller, 2002) and positioning dimensions (Ashworth, 1989). Creating strong identities (Williams, 2002), gauging destinations image (Rezende-Parker, Morrison and Ismail, 2003) and developing destination branding (Morgan, Pritchard and Pigott 2003) are very important tools to deal with increasing competition among destinations. Image management, thus, constitutes a powerful driver to attract consumers (Laws, 1995): perceptions held by potential tourists are an important determinant of how successful a destination is/will be (Hunt, 1975). This study constitutes a preliminary foray into the understanding of image development and positioning vectors in urban places.

Past research tried to address the images that audiences have of tourist destinations, such as visitors (Crompton, 1979; Hunt, 1975; Reilly, 1990; Gartner and Hunt 1987; Gartner, 1989; Ahmed, 1991; Gartner and Shen, 1992) and local residents (Schroeder, 1996). However, limited attention, among which empirical studies, has been devoted to Tourist Boards endeavors to position the tourist product in urban areas. This paper aims to contribute to an understanding of destinations' product development and positioning by presenting two illustrative cases of cities: Braga, located in Portugal, and Coventry, located in the United Kingdom. It compares the actions of the local tourist offices in each place, as they attempt to establish the appropriate image for their respective locations. More specifically the study identifies vectors of product positioning development for a small-medium sized city and the role of the regional/local tourist boards in the urban

positioning design. This article further discusses and comments upon the underlying strategies and their implementation on such urban centers.

## 2. Background

Urban tourism is one of a number of features of city management. The aim of urban tourism is to ensure that a place is marketed so that audiences are reached and attracted to visit it. In this regard, one of the central activities related to place marketing is "promoting the place's values and image so that potential users are fully aware of the place's distinctive advantages" (Kotler, Haider and Rein 1993). Image is a driver for a place's marketing and is related to the notion of product positioning. This section reviews the theoretical concepts applied to this research.

### 2.1. Image and positioning

Image reflects the beliefs and attitudes that a person (or a public) holds of an object (a company, a product, a brand, a place or a person) (Barich and Kotler, 1991; Ditcher, 1985; Hatch and Schultz, 1997). The World Tourism Organization defines tourist destination's image as "comprised of the ideas or conceptions held individually or collectively of the destinations under investigation" (Embacher and Buttle, 1989: 3). In this way image is related to the overall perception that an entity causes in the minds of others (Ditcher, 1985). Image is a wide-ranging concept involving an originating entity and a target.

From a managerial perspective, the notion of product image is related to the concept of *product positioning*. Product positioning refers to the projected image compared with competitive products' images (Burnett, 1993). Positioning determines and specifies the product attributes that underpin

a competitive advantage. Consequently those attributes are articulated into “valuable arguments and appeals” transmitted in the promotional techniques (Calantone and Mazanec, 1991:109). Through the development of the right positioning, destinations become more competitive and less sensitive to the low price enticement. Ultimately the destination is viewed as singular (Gilbert, 1990). As such, product positioning ought to integrate the destination marketing strategy (Alford, 1998).

Conceiving the desired image is a task that should introduce distinctive traits of the destination leading to differentiation and, simultaneously, reaching a unique position in the market. As Kotler, Haider and Rein (1993:153) explain, “(...) image positioning [is] where the place positions itself in regional, national, and international terms as the place for a certain type of activity or as a viable alternative location/attraction to another place that may have a stronger or more well-established position. The challenge of image positioning is to develop an image that communicates benefits and unique attributes that make the place stand out among other places”.

## 2.2. The relevance of urban tourist products and image/positioning

The tourist product involves a wide-range of inter-related activities (e.g., lodging and food services, travel and entertainment) (Jafari, 1983). The city product, in particular, is formed by the combination of three types of elements: (i) primary elements (historic buildings, urban landscapes, museums and art galleries, theatres, sports and events); (ii) secondary elements (hotels, shops and other services that are necessary for the experience but which do not, on their own, constitute the motive for visiting); (iii) additional elements (e.g., accessibility, parking facilities and tourist information) (Jansen-Verbeke, 1988). In this regard, “cities offer what can be described as either a product or a bundle of

products. Some visitors travel to the city to purchase one product only, while others are attracted by the possibility of consuming several products (...). Many of them are unique to a city (...). They can only be consumed by travelling to the city where they are found” (Law, 1993: 7).

Since prior product trial of a tourist destination is not possible for consumers, the perceived image of a place will play a major role in the buying decision process. Shaping the image of a destination is particularly difficult as tourism products are complex and multi-dimensional (Gartner, 1989). The image of a place may be organic and/or induced. The *organic image* entails perceptions of a destination assimilated through non-directed information about the destination (e.g., television programs, articles in newspapers). *Induced images* refer to the perceptions created by the conscious efforts of destination development agents such as advertising and promotion. This second level requires that image is positioned in the minds of target publics (Gunn, 1997).

The urban product may be positioned through the design of an appropriate image. The product is the main foundation of the management of a tourism destination and needs to be communicated through the development and promotion of adequate destination images (Laws, 1995). Tourism in urban areas has a specific dynamic as motives to visit a town or city vary widely (e.g., entertainment, night life, historical attractions, cultural attractions, events, city atmosphere or business). Frequently both residents and tourists search for the same services (Pearce, 1991). Ultimately tourism (aimed at tourists) and leisure (aimed at residents) ought to be managed together and therefore various audiences should be accounted for (e.g., residents and tourists).

Overall, it seems that the induced image is a basic determinant of [urban] destination management, as induced agents are relevant for the consumer decision process (Gartner, 1989). Previous research shows that consumers view a city as a set of attributes (events, history, shops and pubs, restaurants and other services) and assign to each one more or

less importance. Cities offering all the attributes, in particular, the most favorable, are more attractive to visitors (van Limburg, 1998). Nonetheless it remains crucial to direct to each target market a tailored product positioning strategy (Ahmed, 1991).

Indeed, product diversification arises as distinct market segments look for distinct products (Baum and Hagen, 1999). This idea is connected to the multi-selling approach, i.e., the city as a product may be sold to different market segments by stressing distinct motives for visiting (Page, 1995). For example, event based tourism is a relevant tourist attraction (Kotler, Haider and Rein, 1993) and facilitates diversification. The organization of festivals and special events is an important aspect in the development and consolidation of a place, which can be aimed at both visitors and residents (Getz, 1991). Similarly, sports-based travel constitutes a prominent market and hallmark events are an important category of sport tourism (Hinch and Higham, 2001). Additionally, the business segment, including conventions, congresses and meetings, is currently considered to be a very important aspect of urban tourism (Law, 1993), helping to face seasonality (Baum and Hagen, 1999) and being a generally growing market (Friel, 1989).

### 2.3. Positioning actors

The relevance of image suggests that the induced image of a destination should be carefully developed and backed up by marketing communication tools (e.g., advertising). In order to establish the positioning strategy, a destination ought to "(...) look at its competitive strengths and weaknesses compared to those of competitors and select a position in which it can attain a strong competitive advantage. Once a destination has chosen a position, it must take steps to communicate and deliver the position to target markets. (...). It is imperative (...) to identify, through image analysis whether the attitudes and perceptions of tourists need to be

altered through product improvement or product positioning or both" (Ahmed, 1991: 340).

In this regard, the role of large hotel groups, tour operators, national airlines and tourist boards in developing the image, should not be underestimated (Laws, 1995). The roles of tourist boards and/or public authorities as agents developing the promotion strategy of places has been emphasized in particular for leisure markets (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990; Page, 1995). These boards may have a prominent position towards a multi-selling approach. As Page (1995:216) observes "cities marketed by local authorities may be multi-sold, meaning that the city as a product is simultaneously sold to different customers with different needs and motives for visiting, unlike the marketing of goods".

Both public and private sectors need to develop coordinated strategies in order to contribute to a sustainable and responsible tourism development. It is important to account for several stakeholders who affect and may be affected by the development of such activity. For example, several studies highlighted the relevance of residents' perceptions of tourism related aspects or policies (Andriotis, 2002; Harrill and Potts, 2003). As such, it is also our view that there is the need to "mobilis[e] actors and means of action towards achieving sustainable urban development (institutional coherence)" (Antoine, 2002:99) – all stakeholders need to be involved so that various implications are measured and sustainable development is attained.

The following section introduces two illustrative cases highlighting the role tourist boards play on product positioning.

## 3. Method and analysis framework

The two cases presented in this research describe and illustrate possible tourist boards' interventions in the positioning of a tourism destination. They depict the effort of the urban tourist product

development for small/medium sized cities by looking at the following areas: i) the nature of the role of the regional/local tourist boards on the urban image design; ii) the relevance of urban image development; and, iii) how the induced image of an urban center is developed/the shaping and communication of the city product.

In order to gain a comprehensive and holistic insight into the research subject, a qualitative approach was chosen (Connel and Lowe, 1997). The purpose was to obtain a detailed and focused understanding of image development in urban locations. The case method was appropriated (Bonoma, 1985) as this research method permits a holistic perspective of the object under study (Yin, 1994). The case-studies selection was purposeful and intended to embrace examples of fairly different cases in terms of context applying a replication logic. Nevertheless the two case studies: Braga in Portugal and Coventry in the United Kingdom, presented similarities in terms of their relative size and tourism impact in their respective countries, since homogeneity in these two variables was wanted. Studying more than one case allowed establishing patterns, swerving part of the "chance data", introducing complementary dimensions to the analysis and comparing approaches.

The evidence collected entails in-depth interviews, published documents, and visits to International Tourism Fairs. In-depth interviewing with people linked to the local tourist boards/communication area was used to detect the rationale underlying the image building process. Additional data sources were consulted to triangulate and to accrual to the information provided in the interviews. These sources consisted of published data – analysis of printed material (e.g., promotional brochures, general tourist board publications, guidebooks) and relevant internet sites. The data collected also involved visits to International Tourism Fairs such as the World Travel Market (London).

The analytical framework was based on literature, data collected, and preliminary work developed within the context of this research. The following descriptive items were considered:

- *History and heritage (background)* – This item relates to the city and urban background embracing various dimensions such as history and culture and other forms of heritage throughout time. The term heritage is over-arching embracing the cultural tradition of a certain society (Li, 2003). *Heritage* may be an urban product which assembles a set of resources that are *interpreted* and presented to customers via communication tools (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990). As Boyd (2002: 212) explains, "[heritage] may be viewed as taking on the identity of an interest in the past, an interest in cultures, buildings, artifacts and landscapes of both the past and present. It is more than simply tourism based on the past, however, as it is an interest that has more often than not been determined by sets of values and criteria imposed on it; values which differ overtime, space and across society. Heritage becomes that which a society deems it to be, removing or obscuring those elements it considers not suitable for the tourist gaze (...)". Marketing of urban historical and cultural heritage is remarkable in tourism development (Ashworth, 1989), specially in Europe. The lack of a proper marketing of cultural heritage may decrease competitive positions of destinations (Dahles, 1998). This dimension attempts to capture the description of each destination, bringing a background note into the understanding of the place's identity and history and ultimately the urban product.
- *Positioning vectors* – This dimension relates to the main pillars of the place's positioning. Overall the city needs to appear attractive (from a distance) so that potential visitors are

encouraged to visit it. Its attractive potential needs to be clearly defined (Boniface and Fowler, 1993). As referred earlier, positioning has been considered one of the most relevant strategic decisions of a place because it determines the competitive stance of the location and influences buyer's decision (Crompton, Fakeye and Lue, 1992). This dimension is linked to the image/identity dimension of a place and entails the main features that ground the positioning of the specific urban place. As Cooke (1996:105) explains, "[t]he identity of a tourist destination is to be found in its consistencies, its values, its ambitions, its truths, its individuality and its recognition signs. The most powerful tool for changing brand identity and image is positioning. Positioning is what you do in the mind of the customer".

- *Implementation and future actions* – The need to develop and add products to existing ones is on-going. Markets are increasingly educated and searching for new experiences. Raising quality levels for existent and new attractions, increasing diversity and developing new products and brand images are relevant aspects of sustainable place management (Boyd, 2002). This dimension entails the concerns of tourist boards towards operationalization of the desired positioning, suggesting applied instruments to implement and monitor positioning strategies. It further specifies avenues for future intended actions.

## 4. Cases

### 4.1. Braga<sup>1</sup>

- *History and heritage (background)*

Braga is located in the north of Portugal and is the capital of the Minho Province. The city is sited close to other attractive destinations in the country (e.g., Oporto, Guimarães, the seaside) and to the Spanish border (Galicia). Braga is a medium-size

city (approximately 150.000 inhabitants) and the province has the highest density of young population in the country (above EU average).

The evidence of Braga's history goes back to the Celts in 300 BC and, then, to a Roman cycle of history (102 AC) when a relevant Roman colony inhabited the region. It was then named 'Bracara Augusta'. Overtime (from 216) the city became a very important religious center and in 400 AC Braga was one of the initial cores for the Christianization of Hispania. As the Roman Empire became extinguished, the city was dominated by several peoples, yet maintaining its religious relevance. Braga is one of the oldest Christian cities and is currently a religious landmark in Portugal. It experienced a high growth rate during the last two decades and is currently the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest city in the country.

- *Positioning vectors*

The local tourist office focuses the city's image on 3 main vectors: the city and its closest surroundings, the province to which it belongs, and as being part of the broader 'brand' of Porto and North of Portugal.

Recurring to the ecclesiastical tradition, the tourist office introduces Braga in the promotional brochures as the "Portuguese Rome" or "The City of the Archbishops". This theme is articulated in the invitation to visit a wide range of religious monuments and events such as the Holy Week (Easter period), when traditional religious processions take place. Baroque religious and non-religious monuments are also abundant in the area. Accordingly, the city is advertised as the "The Baroque City".

The next axis of positioning relies on the marketing of Braga associated with the Minho province/region. Promotion emphasizes the following resources: natural parks, manor houses, overall landscape, local gastronomy and handicrafts. At this level Braga is an attraction complemented and/or that complements other strategic resources. Natural parks and landscape, manor houses, and

<sup>1</sup> This section builds on preliminary work developed within the context of this research (see Simões, Dibb and Farhangmher, 1999).

rural tourism augment the offer. Marketing vectors highlight the richness of the province which is illustrated in its customs, folklore and ethnic culture. The diversity of the local gastronomy and wine (as part of the wine routes) is also accentuated.

Thirdly Braga is promoted in Minho as one of the sub-brands of 'Porto and North of Portugal'. This is promoted as an international brand and at this level the resources highlighted previously are all considered.

Additionally, there has been an investment in complementary attractions such as the organization of international sports events and conventions. Braga has facilities to host major sports events (e.g., a new stadium was built specially for the European football championship in 2004). There are also convention/exhibition facilities and the city hosts several professional events. The local university (Minho University) also organizes in its facilities conferences that bring periodically national and international visitors to the area.

- *Implementation and future actions*

Reasons to visit Braga include multiple attractions and motives. Although still timid it is becoming clear that there is a growing concern in addressing the right positioning axis in accordance with the interests manifested by the specific segments. Preferences of Northern European Markets (e.g., Dutch) entail outdoor activities and ecotourism. Rural tourism is stressed in some of these markets. Latin tourists (e.g., Spanish, Italian, internal market) are enticed by the religious patrimony. Promotional brochures are distributed to the trade (tour operators and travel agencies), to national tourist offices located in originating markets, and directly to tourists at international tourist fairs. Information is also provided individually to visitors upon request. Occasionally, programs are conducted with tourist boards from the adjoining area in Galicia (Spain) suggesting complementary products and circuits (e.g., Santiago routes). This co-operation is seen as an area worth while of future development.

## 4.2. Coventry

- *History and heritage (background)*

Coventry is a medium-sized city (approximately 300.800 inhabitants) located in the West Midlands of England. The city of Coventry is sited close to other important destinations in England (Birmingham, Nottingham, Stratford and London).

Coventry was a very powerful medieval city in the 1400's. For a long time the city was considered an important industrial center in England. The industrial success of the region was initially based on wool and cloth evolving to industries such as ribbons, watch making and sewing machines. By the end of the 19th century, Coventry became strongly linked to the automobile industry. The creation of Daimler in 1896 was the initial impetus for the proliferation of other companies in the region. Additional industries were subsequently rooted in the area (e.g., bicycles, motor cars, tractors and precision engineering). Although over the last 20 years Coventry's industrial profile has diminished, manufacturing still has the most significant role within the local economy.

Due to the level of industrial concentration in the city, at the beginning of the 20th century Coventry experienced an above average rate of growth. However, it was the first city in Britain to be attacked by air during the World-war II, provoking substantial disruption and dislocation. During the onslaught, the Cathedral was lost. After the war, the destruction resulted in a further migration (Irish and Scottish workers), with a huge labor force taking part in rebuilding the city. Later in the 60's and 70's there was an influx of Asian people – nearly 20.000 Sikhs and other Asians settled in the city. Despite the fact that a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural tolerance has developed, many people still do not feel that their roots are in the city.

- *Positioning vectors*

Promoting Coventry's image involves positioning both the city and its surroundings (Coventry and Warwickshire) in the minds of potential visitors.



For a long time Coventry has been regarded, as an uninteresting place. In order to oppose the general level of unawareness about the city, the local tourist office is endeavouring to move Coventry's image forward, so that the city can reinvent itself. The promotional material refers to "The Spirit of Coventry and Warwickshire".

Coventry's image is/was poor, not only in the rest of Britain, but also among residents. This fact highlights the reasons behind one of the principal actions being undertaken by the local tourist board: to win back residents' sense of belonging and to build civic pride. The underlying idea is to create an identity matching the profile of the medieval past (and its remaining buildings) and of a city of the future. One of the first tasks is to recapture the achievements of famous people born in Coventry. For this purpose a series of plaques and statues have been produced. The central theme is to create awareness that Coventry is a city with history, with a past and with a future.

In the city brochures tourists are invited to visit historical places such as the ruins of the cathedral, and in the adjoining areas, locales such as the Warwick Castle and Kenilworth Castle. In order to differentiate the offer provided in the region, parallel attractions have been developed. The growing importance of industrial tourism has resulted in the organization of specific itineraries including a visit to the motor museum (one of the best in Europe), or to the contemporary car and other technologically advanced factories. The interest for gardening is another segment in expansion. Towards the outskirts of the city are the National Organic Garden, the National Agricultural Center and the National Herb Center. Other activities are organized, such as the Coventry Festival – Godiva Festival, which invites residents to participate and attracts outside visitors.

The fact that Coventry has two prominent Universities (Coventry University and Warwick University) is an additional feature of the city. Both institutions contribute significantly to the local community attracting students and other publics from all over the world.

- *Implementation and future actions*

Further actions are planned in order to create a consistent supply among tourist businesses. A training exercise in customer care is being prepared, which will involve about 3000 front-line staff from businesses such as shops, attractions, accommodations and restaurants. However, changing the image of a place is a very slow process. A 10-15 year programme will probably be needed before a major shift in attitude towards the city occurs.

## 5. Discussion

The cases presented in this article depict two interesting examples of tourist boards acting as leading induced agents in the promotion of the respective cities. Braga and Coventry Tourist Boards undertake similar basilar actions to impel tourism in their respective regions. In both cases, the cities themselves do not constitute a primary point of attraction which on their own would bring visitors to the region. This makes the task of the tourist boards more difficult.

A key similarity seems to be the organization of the two cities' history and historic sites as one principal element of attraction to position and promote their respective differentiating features. In fact, built heritage is currently a major appeal to tourist destinations (Laws, 1998). Both cities' positioning relies on a unique identity. Distinguishing features are underpinned and stressed in the message transmitted to the publics. Location might also be seen as an appealing element since they are close to other attractive sites in their countries.

Parallel products are developed to attract different markets. Tourist boards try to market their city as a composite-product suggesting a multi-selling approach. The two cities not only try to differentiate themselves through a specific positioning strategy, but also attempt to create coexistent products that satisfy different market segments and tourists'



interests. For example, Coventry tries to sell parallel products based on a growing interest in industry and gardening. Braga concentrates communication efforts on several dimensions such as promoting the city within the context of the Porto and North of Portugal region and using other enticements beyond the traditional religious and baroque axes (e.g., annual agricultural fair).

Additionally the increasing relevance of the conferences, meetings and conventions market (Friel, 1989), is particularly interesting for Braga and Coventry. This business segment is currently considered very relevant for urban tourism (Law, 1993) and both cities develop this line of attraction (being partly assisted in this initiative by the local universities). This diversification strategy may be complemented with the expansion of events, festivals (Baum and Hagen, 1999) and sports-based travel (Hinch and Higham, 2001). Special events are relevant catalysts for *city dynamics and global competitiveness* (Carmichael, 2002) and may be aimed at both visitors and residents (Getz, 1991). For example, Braga hosted three games from Euro 2004. In Coventry the Godiva Festival was organized to restore the importance of the city's roots and stress its multi-cultural dimension. These activities also show that tourism and leisure interact, becoming a facilitator of the exchange between residents and tourists.

The relevance of dealing with different stakeholders' interests and involving them in the positioning process was also present. Coventry, for instance, is engaged in regaining its residents' pride. Moreover, residents play an important role in the city's tourism as they personify the local culture and constitute the workforce for businesses (Bull and Church, 2001). Overall, residents are a fundamental element for the tourism atmosphere and vital to the cultural identity of the city. Previous empirical studies evidenced a positive relationship between image and resident's support for both state promotional funding and the likelihood of recommending the place to others (Schroeder, 1996).

## 6. Research implications and future research

An urban space, viewed as a product, needs to be communicated in order to attract visitors. In this regard, image design becomes a major variable in tourist place's management. The two cases described in this paper confirm the catalyzing and integrating role of the local tourist boards in establishing the image axes of a place. The range of elements forming the urban tourist product demands an entity capable of connecting and linking several constituencies into a broad coherent offer. The two examples considered showed that it is possible to develop a product and positioning it in the global tourist market, even for less popular destinations. The proposed framework may be used as an analytical tool for the endeavor.

The multi-selling strategy which is pursued covers various market segments (leisure and business) by directing and emphasizing different attractions. Although heritage and historical resources still represent a main feature in the product development, other additional dimensions are used to meet specific audiences' interests. The cases show a diversification in terms of product development. Considering that some of these products have a finite life cycle, there should be a permanent effort to design distinct and new products. Although special events represent a possible feature of product renewal, the short-break holiday market (Law, 1993) should not be overlooked. This market is easily attracted to small/medium-sized cities since in a short period of time consumers can visit the main attractions and/or attend a certain event. Together with conferences and conventions, the short-break holiday market helps to deal with the seasonality of tourism by attracting people throughout the year.

Overall a continuous program is needed to ensure that image is raised and constantly improved by adapting to market conditions and interests. In the long run, market and competitor information should be collected so that appropriate steps can be followed. For example, although segmentation

allow to convey more concise messages, empirical evidence shows that image has different components that are perceived distinctively by target groups. Strategists need to find out the most important ones for the particular destination (Ahmed, 1991) and emphasize the valuable axes for product positioning. Only by conducting formal market research can this information be obtained.

Notwithstanding the fact that tourist boards' role has been emphasized in the positioning and promoting of tourism destinations, the endeavor is far from finished. From a consumer's perspective, product image and experience merge and therefore expectations must be met and exceeded. The tourism industry involves private and public organizations. Private businesses (e.g., accommodation, attractions, shops) are, indeed, important players. Tourism demands a coherent image and delivery among the various elements of the integrated tourist product. Each of the services/products purchased affect customer's satisfaction and ultimately the perceived image. Consequently image must match reality and experience.

In this regard, word of mouth may be relevant. Although not advertising in the technical sense, it is a powerful vehicle for the promotion of tourism destinations. Part of the consumer's decision will rely on the experience of others to reduce the risk associated with the purchase. This implies that consistent and coherent performance among elements of the tourism supply impact on places' current and potential markets. Recommendations from friends and relations represent an important form of 'promotion'. As such, it should be stressed that while induced image is an important measure to bring people to visit places, services and attractions delivery must agree with what is being advertised and promoted. Only by doing so will consumers re-purchase and recommend the place to their friends and relatives. Ultimately destinations should develop a status image in order to create

an enduring competitive advantage in their main market segments.

Finally, tourism development and management is not an exclusive role of tourist boards. All actors involved with or affected by tourism must be aware that only effective planning and co-ordination between resources, facilities and markets may prevent the pitfalls of massive tourism. This effort must be continuously monitored through market and environmental research and must also rely on the establishment of partnerships with private businesses. Indeed, a strategic network between public and private sectors (Berg and Braun 1999; Selin and Myers, 1998; O'Neill, 1998) may be a relevant tool for this line of management. City planners should establish the net of connections between the various players and achieve sustainable tourism.

This study presents some limitations. The case research method may have some data integrity problems (Bonoma, 1985). In fact, the generalization of the study applied to other destinations needs investigation. In addition, further understanding is needed on the roles that private businesses may have in the destinations' positioning. Another limitation stems from the fact that this research did not assess the effectiveness of such programs. Research is due on the following issues: outcomes measurement, programs assessment, and decision making tools.

It is relevant to look at marketing as an instrument (Berg and Braun, 1999) or even as a philosophy for destination management. Future research may take this work further and establish the linkages among destination's identity, image and branding. Moreover, tourism involves a wide range of stakeholders (e.g., residents, tourists) who are or may be affected by tourist activities. A stakeholder analysis and its involvement in product definition and positioning warrant understanding. The challenge to conciliate different needs and contribute to a sustainable development remains.

## References

- Alford, P., 1998, Positioning the Destinations Product – Can regional Tourist Boards Learn from Private Sector Practice?, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, Vol. 7(2), pp. 53-68.
- Ahmed, Z.U., 1991, The Influence of the Components of a State's Tourist Image on Product Positioning Strategy, *Tourism Management*, December, pp. 331-340.
- Andriotis, K., 2002, Resident's Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction with Public Sector Governance: The Cretan Case, *Tourism & Hospitality Research*, Vol. 4(1), pp. 53-68.
- Antoine, S., 2002, Changing Urban Policies Towards Sustainability in the Mediterranean, *Ekistics*, Vol. 69(412-144), pp. 95-102.
- Ashworth, G.J., 1989, Urban Tourism: an Imbalance in Attention, in Cooper, C., (ed.) *Progress in Tourism Recreation & Hospitality Management*, Belhaven Press, London.
- Ashworth, G.J., Voogd, H., 1990, *Selling the City: Marketing Approaches in Public Sector Urban Planning*, Belhaven Press, London.
- Barich, H., Kotler, P., 1991, A Framework for Marketing Image Management, *Sloan Management Review*, Vol. 32(2), pp. 94-104.
- Baum, T., Hagen, L., 1999, Responses to Seasonality: the Experiences of Peripheral Destinations, *International Journal of Tourism Research*, Vol. 1(5), pp. 299-312.
- Berg, Leo van den, Braun, E., 1999, Urban Competitiveness, Marketing and the Need for organising Capacity, *Urban Studies*, Vol. 36(5/6), pp. 987-999.
- Boniface, P., Fowler, P., 1993, Heritage and Tourism in the Global Village, Routledge, London.
- Bonoma, T., 1985, Case Research in Marketing: Opportunities, Problems, and a Process, *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 22(May), pp. 199-208.
- Boyd, S., 2002, Cultural and Heritage Tourism in Canada: Opportunities, Principles and Challenges, *Tourism & Hospitality Research*, Vol. 3(3), pp. 211-233.
- Bull, P., Church, A., 2001, Understanding Urban Tourism: London in the Early 1900s, *International Journal of Tourism Research*, Vol. 3, pp. 141-150.
- Burnett, J., 1993, *Promotion Management*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Geneva.
- Calantone, R.J., Mazanec, J.A., 1991, Marketing Management and Tourism, *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 18(1), pp. 101-119.
- Carmichael, B.A., 2002, Global Competitiveness and Special Events in Cultural Tourism: the Example of the Barnes Exhibit at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, *Canadian Geographer*, Vol. 46(4), pp. 310-324.
- Connel, J., Lowe, A., 1997, Generating Grounded Theory from Qualitative Data: the Application of Inductive Methods in Tourism and Hospitality Management Research, *Progress in Tourism & Hospitality Research*, Vol. 3, pp. 165-173.
- Cooke, P., 1996, The Branding and Positioning of Tourist Destinations, Tourism Intelligence Papers, British Tourist Authority/English Tourist Board, (Nov): A101-A106.
- Crompton, J.L., 1979, An Assessment of the Image of Mexico as a Vacation Destination and the Influence of Geographical Location Upon that Image, *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 17(4), pp. 18-23.
- Crompton, J.L., Fakeye, P.C., Lue, C., 1992, Positioning: the Example of the Lower Rio Grande Valley in the Winter Long Stay Destination Market, *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 31(2), pp. 20-26.
- Dahles, H., 1998, Redefining Amsterdam as a Tourist Destination, *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 25(1), pp. 55-69.
- Day, J., Skidmore, S., Koller, T., 2002, Image Selection in Destination Positioning: a New Approach, *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, Vol. 8(2), pp. 177-182.
- Ditcher, E., 1985, What's in an Image?, *The Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 2(Winter), pp. 75-81.
- Embacher, J., Buttle, F., 1989, A Repertory Grid Analysis of Austria's Image as a Summer Vacation Destination, *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 27(3).
- Font, X., Ahjem, Tor E., 1999, Searching for a Balance in Tourism development Strategies, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality*, Vol. 11(2/3).
- Friel, E., 1989, Convention market, in Witt, S., Moutinho, L., (eds) *Tourism Marketing and Management Handbook*, Prentice Hall International, Cambridge.
- Gartner, W.C., 1989, Tourism Image: Attribute Measurement of State Tourism Products Using Multidimensional Scaling Techniques, *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 28(2), pp. 16-20.
- Gartner, W.C., Hunt, J.D., 1987, An Analysis of State Image Change Over a Twelve-Year Period (1971-1983), *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 26(2), pp. 15-19.
- Gartner, W., Shen, J., 1992, The impact of Tianamen Square on China's Tourism Image, *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 30(4).
- Getz, D., 1991, *Festivals, Special Events and Tourism*, Van Nostrand, New York.
- Gilbert, D., 1990, Strategic Marketing Planning for National Tourism, *The Tourist Review*, Vol. 1, pp. 18-27.
- Gunn, C.A., 1997, *Vacationscape: Developing Tourist Areas*, Taylor & Francis, London.
- Harrill, R., Potts, T.D., 2003, Tourism Planning in Historic Districts: Attitudes Toward Tourism Development in Charleston, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 69(3), pp. 233-244.
- Hatch, M., Schultz, M., 1997, Relations Between Organizational Culture, Identity and Image, *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 31(5/6), pp. 356-365.
- Hinch, T.D., Higham, J.E.S., 2001, Sport Tourism: a Framework for Research, *International Journal of Tourism Research*, Vol. 3(1), pp. 45-58.
- Hunt, J.D., 1975, Image as a Factor in Tourism Development, *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 13(3), pp. 1-7.
- Jafari, J., 1983, Anatomy of the Travel Industry, *The Cornell Hotel & Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, May, pp. 71-77.
- Jansen-Verbeke, M., 1988, *Leisure, Recreation and Tourism in Inner Cities*, Netherlands Geographical Studies, Amsterdam.
- Kotler, P., Haider, D.H., Rein, I., 1993, *Marketing Places*, Free Press, Oxford.
- Law, C., 1993, *Urban Tourism - Attracting Visitors to Large Cities*, Mansell Publishing Limited, London.
- Laws, E., 1995, *Tourist Destination Management*, Routledge, London.
- Laws, E., 1998, Conceptualizing Visitor Satisfaction Management in Heritage Settings: an Exploratory blueprinting Analysis of Leeds Castle, Kent, *Tourism Management*, Vol. 19(6), pp. 545-554.
- Li, Y., 2003, Heritage Tourism: The Contradictions Between Conservation and Change, *Tourism & Hospitality Research*, Vol. 4(3), pp. 247-261.

- Morgan, N.J., Pritchard, A., Pigott, R., 2003, Destination Branding and the Role of the Stakeholders: the Case of New Zealand, *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, Vol. 9(3), pp. 285-299.
- O'Neill, J.W., 1998, Effective Municipal Tourism and Convention operations and Marketing Strategies: The Cases of Boston, San Antonio, and San Francisco, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, Vol. 7(3), pp. 95-125.
- Page, S., 1995, *Urban Tourism*, Routledge, London.
- Pearce, D., 1991, *Tourist Development*, Longman Scientific & Technical, London.
- Reilly, M., 1990, Free Elicitation of Descriptive Adjectives for Tourism Image Assessment, *Journal of Travel Research*, Spring.
- Rezende-Parker, A.M., Morrison, A.M., Ismail, J.A., 2003, Dazed and Confused? An Exploratory Study of the Image of Brazil as a Travel Destination, *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, Vol. 9(3), pp. 243-259.
- Schroeder, T., 1996, The Relationship of Resident's Image of Their State as a Tourist Destination and Their Support for Tourism, *Journal of Travel Research*, Spring, pp. 71-73.
- Selin, S.W., Myers, N.A., 1998, Tourism Marketing Alliances: Member Satisfaction and Effectiveness Attributes of a Regional Initiative, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, Vol. 7 (3), pp. 79-94.
- Simões, C., Dibb, S., Farhangmher, M., 1999, Shaping Tourism Destination Image, in Noble, C., (ed.) *Developments in Marketing Science (Vol. XXII)*, Coral Gables, Academy of Marketing Science, Florida, pp. 382-389.
- van Limburg, B., 1998, City Marketing: a Multi-attribute Approach, *Tourism Management*, Vol. 19(5), pp. 475-477.
- Williams, D., 2002, Leisure Identities, Globalization, and the Policies of Place, *Journal of Leisure Research*, Vol. 34(4), pp. 351-367.
- Yin, R., 1994, *Case Study Research - Design and Methods*, Sage Publications, London.