

# Exploring the politics of place marketing- The case of South Africa

Girish Prayag

**Keywords** : place marketing, stakeholders' perceptions, phenomenology, Western Cape, Cape Town, South-Africa

The purpose of this paper is to identify the factors that generate conflict between local, provincial and national tourism authorities and tourism industry stakeholders in the process of place marketing. South-Africa, Western Cape and Cape Town form the basis of a case study that explores stakeholders' perceptions of these 'politicking' conflicts. In-depth interviews with 58 stakeholders using a phenomenological approach were used to identify pertinent themes in the data.

Contd.....

Girish Prayag is an Assistant Professor in Marketing & Tourism at the SKEMA Business School. Prior to this, he was a lecturer in Marketing at the University of Mauritius. He has published in journals such as *Anatolia*, *Tourism Analysis*, and *Tourism Recreation Research*. His research interests include airline marketing, destination marketing, brand management and sustainable

Place marketing has been described as "defining an area such as a city or region, as a place product, developing and promoting it to meet the needs of identified users or customers. It encompasses changing the buying behaviour of the targeted customer groups and may also include political, social and economic motives to influence everyday behaviour" (Ashworth and Voogd, 1988: 68). In a tourist destination context, place marketing often symbolises a strategy complementing the efforts of tourism authorities to foster the physical and symbolic attractiveness of a place (Hospers, 2004) by imaging and branding it. Place marketing is often the responsibility of the public sector either exclusively or in conjunction with the private sector (Kotler et al., 2003; Ryan and Zahra, 2004; Ryan and Gu, 2007). For example, destination marketing organisations (DMOs) often have the mandate of place marketing and one of their primary functions is to manufacture image as opposed to the product (Ryan and Gu, 2007). The product remains the ownership of stakeholders such as hoteliers, attraction owners and restaurateurs. Nonetheless, these stakeholders have high expectations and a vested interest in marketing and promotion efforts of DMOs as their success is intimately tied to the destination being well marketed in international markets. But often, these high expectations fall short of market realities due to DMOs functioning in uncertain political circumstances which impact on their capabilities (Ryan and Zahra, 2004).

This intertwining of stakeholders' interests and DMOs mandates, which not always converge, have been described as the 'poetics and politics' of managing destinations (Pride, 2002; Ooi, 2004). Politics has been defined as "the dynamic processes of drawing support and cooperation by government from different tourism agencies and local residents, so that all marketing aspects of the destination are accepted" and poetics has been defined as "the process of inventing and presenting a unique and attractive image to tourists so as to influence their perceptions of a place in a

positive way" (Ooi, 2004: 107). Pride (2002) has defined the same two terms as 'politics' and 'paucity' while Ryan and Zahra (2004) call it 'politicking,' which altogether denotes the nature of political influence on DMOs and the amount of control that they have on the destination product.

Due to destination products belonging to either public and/or private sector, DMOs often find themselves powerless to control destination development. As a result, conflicts between DMOs and stakeholders are not uncommon (Morgan et al., 2002; Morgan et al., 2003; Pike, 2008). Against this backdrop, the purpose of this study is to identify some of the broad factors that generate conflict between DMOs and stakeholders in the process of place marketing using South Africa as a case study. However, this study prioritises stakeholders' point of view as opposed to DMOs, despite the latter views being included in the sample. The study contributes to broaden current literature on the factors that create conflicts between DMOs and stakeholders by focusing on a destination that has received scant attention in the literature. Next, the study contextualises the destination of interest. Thereafter, the pertinent literature is reviewed. This is followed by a description of the methodology employed and the findings. The implications of these findings are discussed and the paper concludes with an outlook of the research limitations and areas of future research.

## DMOs in South Africa

South Africa is the leading tourist destination in the Southern Africa region. With a total of 8.3 million international arrivals in 2006, spending approximately R 66.6 billion, the destination improved its global ranking from 31st to 29th position in terms of tourism growth (SA Tourism Annual Report, 2007). SA Tourism is the sole DMO responsible for marketing South Africa as a tourist destination in its generating markets. The marketing tourism growth strategy report for South Africa (2008-2010) states that the key objectives of place marketing for tourism purposes are to

Prayag

Exploring the politics of place marketing – The case of South Africa

Contd.....

The findings indicate the existence of four broad themes in the data: defining destination product, marketing awareness, brand associations and marketing channels. For example, the first theme relates to conflicts in the way the product is defined for marketing purposes. The findings are limited to South Africa as a tourist destination but the broad themes identified can be related to other destinations as well. The use of a qualitative approach requires credibility of interpretation, which was achieved by triangulation of findings with the literature.

increase: (i) tourist volume; (ii) tourist spend; (iii) length of stay; (iv) improve geographic spread of benefits; (v) improve seasonality patterns; and (vi) promote transformation. As far as tourism benefits are concerned, only three of the nine provinces (KZN, Gauteng and Western Cape) tend to capture almost all (76%) of tourism receipts. In the Western Cape, Cape Town Routes Unlimited (CTRU) is the DMO responsible for marketing the Western Cape as a tourist destination. This DMO is responsible for marketing six regions (Cape Town, Cape Overberg, Cape Winelands, Cape Garden Route & Klein Karoo, Cape Westcoast, and Cape Karoo) and its mandate includes promoting the Cape Town and Western Cape brands (CTRU Annual Report, 2007). The current industry structure occurred in the year 2004 after a restructuring process that started in 2001 in an effort to align and combine marketing efforts of all local, provincial and national DMOs to sell the destination as a tourism and investment place. The current structure offers a clear locus of responsibility for each DMO but as argued earlier, non-government related stakeholders might perceive differently what should be the role and responsibilities of DMOs representing their interest on the international scene.

## Literature review

### *The destination product*

A place is inevitably only one component in a hierarchy of spatial scales. For example, Cape Town exists within local, regional and national contexts, which may not bear any relation to the jurisdictional boundaries of those agencies responsible for its marketing. As a result, there may be different opinions on how to define and market the 'product'. This is not surprising given that the destination experience is characterised by intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity and perishability, like any other service products (Shostack, 1977; Zeithaml et al., 1985). Therefore, inherent difficulties exist in defining the destination product (Pike, 2008) and consumers tend to create their own 'product' from the range of services and experiences available (Warnaby and Davies, 1997). Hence, the primary role and responsibility of DMOs is to facilitate the ability of consumers to create the bundle of benefits appropriate to

their own needs and wants. This process is facilitated by locations (cities, regions and countries) being imaged and branded, which 'tangibilises' the product per se. However, the convergence of European regions for example, in terms of amenities and facilities for visitors, has led to 'soft' location factors being considered in destination choice (Hospers, 2004). As a result, DMOs have had to create a 'sense of place' to influence the bundle of benefits sought by visitors through the use of rich visual imagery. The city of London for example, has used strong and established icons such as the London Bridge, Buckingham Palace, Big Ben, and the Millennium Dome as well as traditions to market the city on the global stage. Their strong tourism industry is built on a rich foundation of historical assets that are marketed consistently (Added Value Group, 2002). It is therefore not so much of what is being used to market the destination, but how it is marketed and the consistency of it, that create the 'sense of place' that defines a destination's identity. As a result, a major area of conflicting interests between stakeholders and DMOs include definition of the product and images selected for marketing purposes.

Nonetheless, the growing competition between destinations perceived to be similar accentuates the importance for DMOs to communicate what is unique and different about a place. Often the image and actual physical setting is manipulated and manufactured to correspond to the visitors' expectations (Ryan and Gu, 2007). For example, tourism policy is used as a way to manufacture a new image by favouring niche market developments such as luxury accommodations or adventure products. This can be an area of conflict given that other stakeholders, especially SMEs, feel left out of the process and often feel threatened with new policies. Infrastructural development such as convention and event centres can also generate conflict given that it intensifies competition among existing providers, while providing DMOs with a new product for marketing purposes. The introduction of new environmental regulations can limit expansion of existing service providers, which can lead to stakeholders' perceiving tourism policy as a 'tool' for limiting their control over product development for the destination.

## Destination marketing and branding

Another area of significant conflict between stakeholders and DMOs is place marketing and branding. Ideally, the brand a place communicates should be the shortest translation of those specific things that a place is proud of or wants to stand for (Hospers, 2004). Therefore, place marketing closes the gap between what a location really is (identity), what potential and actual visitors think of it (image) and how the location wants to be known (brand or reputation). Place marketing must find a balance between identity, image and desired reputation (Hospers, 2004). As Kotler et al. (1993) suggest, it embraces four activities: designing the right mix of community features and services; setting attractive incentives for the current and potential buyers and users of its goods and services; delivering a place's products and services in an efficient and accessible way; and promoting the place's value and image to ensure that potential users are fully aware of the place distinctive advantages.

In the process of place marketing, a number of failures can occur. For example, lack of support from stakeholders can lead to marketing failure as was the case with the 'Cool Britannia' campaign, which was the result of a lack of synergy between private and public bodies marketing London as a destination (Morgan and Pritchard, 2000). Further to this, regional and local tourism boards are often heavily dependent on each other and their commercial members for funding. Attraction owners, accommodation providers and smaller districts within a region, all want as much profile as possible for their products (Alford, 1998). However, powerful stakeholders tend to benefit more in this relationship in terms of marketing exposure and ability to influence destination development. This was found in Timur and Getz (2008) study of stakeholders' relationships in Victoria that showed local DMOs had closer ties with cultural attractions sub sector, which influenced destination development more than other stakeholders.

Another issue of substance is that conflicts tend to permeate when destination development strategies and marketing are driven through a private 'expert-driven' process based solely on market forces, rather than a

publicly driven process based on stakeholders' values and consensus (Buhalis, 2000). Marketing is used as a sales tool rather than as a strategic mechanism in coordination with planning and management (Buhalis, 2000). DMOs are often involved in marketing for a number of reasons, most of which being that tourism can be used as a means to an end rather than an end in itself (Horner and Swarbrooke, 1996). As a result, planning and destination promotion tend to be top-down that leaves destination communities and less influential stakeholders with little input or control over their own destinies (Murphy, 1985). DMOs can also lack clearly defined organisational structures, lines of accountability and areas of responsibility (Tyler et al., 1998; Ryan and Zahara, 2004; Pike, 2008). Consequently, they are unable to adequately serve the needs of stakeholders whom they represent and who most often fund their activities. Ideally, the marketing of destinations should balance the strategic objectives of all stakeholders as well as the sustainability of local resources. Successful destinations are those that are able to bring all individual partners together to co-operate rather than compete and to pool resources towards developing an integrated marketing mix and delivery system (Buhalis and Cooper, 1998).

Given the complex nature of destination products, a destination brand usually will reflect the beliefs of its management and the idiosyncrasies of the organisations marketing it (Morgan and Pritchard, 2000). This is often a major source of conflict between those responsible of marketing the brand and those who own the various components of the brand (accommodation, entertainment facilities, restaurants etc.). The social and managerial problems when developing a brand for generically different partners within the tourism system supplying the tourism experience have been noted by Gnoth (1998). Despite this author suggesting that co-operation between all players, both in the private and public sector, is essential for the success of the brand, examples of failure exist. For example, conflicts can arise on what the brand should stand for, the brand elements to be used in marketing campaigns, the brand personality and conflicts can go as far as the choice of colours to represent the brand (Morgan and

Prayag

Exploring the politics of place  
marketing –The case of  
South Africa

International Journal of  
Tourism and Travel

3/1 (2010) pp. 37-46

Pritchard, 2000), thereby highlighting the importance of coordination and cooperation in the process of brand development (Timur and Getz, 2008). A clear image, message and a powerful brand seem to be the key to successful marketing and branding of a destination.

### Methodology

The epistemology underlying this study was phenomenology, which is the study of what people perceive in the world (Mannell and Iso-Ahola, 1987; Ryan, 2000). "Phenomenology is concerned with the question of consciousness, thus anything that appears to consciousness is a legitimate area of phenomenological inquiry" (Li, 2000: 865). Phenomenology suggests that if we lay aside, as best as we can, the prevailing understandings of those phenomena and revisit afresh our immediate experience of them, possibilities for new meaning emerge for us or we witness at least an authentication and enhancement of former meaning (Crotty, 1996). "Only through dialogue can one become aware of the perceptions, feelings, and attitudes of others and interpret their meanings and intent" (Crotty, 1998: 76). This method of inquiry has been largely overlooked in tourism research (Mannell and Iso-Ahola, 1987; Ryan and Cave, 2005) and it offers a number of methods to gather data for example, participant observation, focus groups and in-depth interviews (Jennings, 2001).

In this study, in-depth interviews were used using the semi-structured format. This technique is best used to understand the complex behaviour of members of a society (Fontana and Frey, 1994). The interviews followed the active interviewing method (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997) which allows the interview to be interactional and both researcher and respondents are able to incite the production of meanings that address issues relating to the research. The interviewee is engaged in interpretative practice, perceiving, storing and reporting experience when properly asked (Ooi, 2004). The research question that was asked of participants was: "In your opinion is Cape Town well marketed as a tourist destination?" In order to ensure a broad based sample and different opinions on the issues being investigated, respondents

were chosen to represent different stakeholders namely: Tourism Authorities, Accommodation Sector, Travel Agents and Tour Operators, Wine Estates, Adventure and Sports Recreation, Transport, and Attractions and Places of Interest. A total of 58 stakeholders were interviewed on a convenience basis and on average the interviews lasted for approximately one hour.

However, it must be recognised that the adoption of phenomenology has certain limitations in respect to representativeness and generalisability of findings, yet as White (2005) suggested, the absence of positivistic rigidity allows for more flexibility in terms of data collection process and interpretation of findings. Inevitably, assessing the reliability and validity of the findings derived from a qualitative inquiry is more difficult but it is of paramount importance to assess credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Ryan, 2000; Jamal and Hollinshead, 2001). Consequently, the findings were compared with references derived from other studies in the literature (Ryan and Cave, 2005) using the data triangulation method (Jamal and Hollinshead, 2001). Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data following the procedure recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006). Initially, the data were analysed directly within each individual and across individuals. After this crucial stage of familiarization and immersion within the data, the researcher used coloured markers to 'code' the verbatim notes into categories. Once these categories were formed, they were compared to existing literature to identify similarities and differences. Also, for each category that was devised interrelationships and hierarchies among these categories were also identified. This process led to the identification of potential and latent themes in the data. These are described in the next section, which reports on the findings.

### Findings

#### *Demographic Profile*

The section begins with a brief description of the sample profile. Of the participants in the in-depth interviews (68.9%) were in managerial positions in their business and the remaining (31.1%) were owners/directors. More males (94.8%) participants were

interviewed than females. The average age of participants was 43 years old, with an average of 7 years of experience in the tourism industry specifically, indicative of a sample that is attuned with the opportunities and problems facing the industry. Thematic analysis revealed the existence of four broad themes: 'Defining Destination Product', 'Awareness of the Destination', 'Brand Associations' and 'Marketing Channels'. These are described below.

### *Defining the destination product*

This theme relates to how the product is defined according to stakeholders' perceptions. For example a participant mentioned "a destination [the product] is subjective and exists only in the mind of travellers. The way the destination is perceived is largely dependent on consumer demographics and the type of activities that the traveller wants to undertake at the destination. For example, an international visitor looking for adventure will consider only those destinations that offer adventure related products. But within these destinations, the traveller will choose the one that 'ideally' suits all his or her needs... tourists needs are met in a quick and efficient way." Another participant mentioned that "the product must offer something different and unique and generates curiosity among international travellers...if we do not know what is being marketed and why...it's no good for the destination...tourists' expectations are realised if the marketing is good". Adding to this, another participant mentioned "a well marketed product has customer-focused strategies in place to satisfy every whim of the customer. Once, that is in place, we [the destination] can achieve world-tourist destination status, they [marketing and DMOs] constantly reinforce and sustain this perception."

These quotes illustrate that no single destination can offer a product that can fully satisfy every individual needs. A destination will only at its best satisfy part of the needs and there are too many factors that are interrelated to each other in the potential visitor's mind that will influence his final choice of a destination. Thus a destination at best can emphasise those attributes that most closely satisfy the need through marketing and

communication campaigns. Therefore, a potential area of conflict is related to how the product is defined and what aspects of the product are emphasised in marketing campaigns by DMOs.

### *Awareness of the destination*

The second theme that could be identified was awareness of the destination in international markets. Many of the participants believed that awareness of the tourism products offered in South-Africa and Western Cape was high in British and German markets. However, as one participant mentioned "are we creating the right expectations, some of my visitors still expect to see lions walking on the streets. These misconceptions indicate low marketing exposure and impact. There is a fundamental need to change how the international community perceives South Africa in general to achieve the desired awareness levels." Another participant stated that "the low awareness that exists tend to be focused only on the negatives or the history (apartheid) of the country. Not much is being done to convince international travellers that South Africa is not only about crime, AIDS and poverty. As a result, Cape Town suffers from these misconceptions too. Also, there has never been a sufficient budget allocated to tourism to correct these negative perceptions." However, perceptions of stakeholders are not always unfavourable. For example, a participant mentioned "awareness of the destination is growing especially in countries where marketing efforts are being focused. The logo of Table Mountain, for example, has become associated with Cape Town in people's mind. South Africa needs to be established as the dominant brand that make people think positively about South Africa and Cape Town can then position itself as the sub-brand that offers excitement, adventure, and relaxation." Hence, these quotes indicate that stakeholders do not always perceive DMOs to be doing their best in terms of creating awareness of the product. Also as one participant mentioned "awareness is only going to work if there is agreement on image to be marketed. Cape Town has a 'political' image where the naivety of politicians who are supporting their own agenda are trying to influence the image that is projected based on ideology rather than market forces." This

quote illustrates the political influence that often hampers the ability of DMOs to carry out their mandates, which lead to dissatisfaction by stakeholders.

### **Brand associations**

The third theme of marketing aspects was related to brand associations between South-Africa, Western-Cape and Cape Town. Some stakeholders mentioned that Cape Town should be associated with South Africa to differentiate it as a tourist destination. For example a participant mentioned "Cape Town should be associated with South Africa and not necessarily with Africa. This is because international tourists see Africa as the continent but South Africa as being different to the rest of Africa. South Africa is a separate entity that is considered to be one of the most stable politically and economically and thus should be marketed on its own to avoid the negative connotations of AIDS, violence, crime, poverty, war, racial unrest and malnutrition that are often associated with Africa. Tourists come to see the entire of South Africa and not Cape Town only therefore accentuating the need to link the two destinations in the mind of the international traveller." Yet Cape Town has been marketed for years as the gateway to Africa. Distancing South Africa and Cape Town from Africa may lead to a secluded image for both destinations. However, as another participant mentioned "it is necessary to maintain the competitiveness of the destinations and one has to do everything in his power to distance South Africa and Cape Town from the rest or risk the possibility of being lumped with the trouble spots in Africa."

In contrast, as suggested by another stakeholder, "South Africa should be promoted as the ultimate African experience focusing on getting tourists to visit South Africa first before venturing out to see the rest of Africa - making them spend as many days and as much income here than anywhere else." Adding to this, a participant said "Cape Town is part of Africa and marketing campaigns should acknowledge this fact. The city should not be distanced from Africa because the latter adds value to the rest of South Africa and Southern Africa. For the American tourists, for example, that do not distinguish between South Africa and Africa, it will be a mistake to ignore the African roots of Cape Town or South Africa,

as they will not be enticed to visit the city or country. Tourists do not only want to see Cape Town, they want to see Victoria Falls, the Pyramids of Giza all on the same visit to the continent and thus everything must be packaged to offer the best experience possible. Africa is also perceived as being mysterious, filled with natural and wild beauty, and such an opportunity must be exploited to the advantage of Cape Town and South Africa." Therefore, associating brand South Africa with Africa may not necessarily be counter-productive.

A radical point of view supported by some of the stakeholders was that Cape Town should neither be associated with South Africa nor Africa. The product offered by Cape Town is distinctly different from the rest of South Africa and Africa. As suggested by a participant "to maintain the current exclusivity and uniqueness of brand Cape Town, it should not be associated with Africa by all means, because of the previously mentioned negative connotations with the continent. Whatever affects African countries is transferred to South Africa and Cape Town. The Zimbabwe crisis for example and South Africa's President ill advised views on the crisis as well as on AIDS are affecting everyone in an unfavourable way." For these stakeholders, the negative connotations with the supra-brand justifies why brand Cape Town should be distanced from South Africa and Africa. Another participant added "the city offers a first world, cosmopolitan experience, that has very little of an 'African' experience associated with game parks, safaris and the 'big 5'. The city stands out as being different from South Africa and the rest. Therefore, it is fundamentally wrong to have strong brand associations between Cape Town and South Africa because the product is different." Another participant said that "competitiveness of destinations has shifted from country to city. Countries in themselves do not compete against each other but cities such as Sydney, Cape Town and San Francisco compete among themselves." However, it can be argued that such thinking is flawed because tourists also want to visit regions or continents. The Japanese tourist for example, will visit Europe and include six different countries in one trip, not necessarily visiting city by city. Therefore, one cannot say that cities should

be the focus of branding as opposed to countries. But Cape Town is a unique example due to the fact that the city has a higher awareness internationally than the country. Thus, it makes marketing sense to capitalise on such awareness and market brand Cape Town as the main brand internationally but not necessarily domestically thereby enhancing the image of brand South Africa.

Of interest, another view on this issue was that "Cape Town should be associated with Southern Africa. Many tourists want to say that they have been to Southern Africa and Africa even though they might have visited only two countries or two cities within Africa. It is a fact that South Africa is the most successful tourism destination in Africa while Cape Town is the most successful destination in terms of international tourist visits in South Africa. Therefore, the city and country must work in collaboration with Southern African countries to improve international revenues from tourism across the region. Such a process should fall under the responsibility of improving quality of life in the SADC region where skills and tourism resources are shared for the greater good of the region. However, at present time associations with Southern Africa as a region is not the best marketing strategy because of the negative influences of Zimbabwe political crisis on the region." Hence, the arguments above confirm the existence of diverse opinions on brand associations at national, provincial and city levels, indicating that stakeholders are unsure of the best approach to market these different brands. Adding to this, is the debate on whether marketing the Western Cape region and the city of Cape Town internationally adds to confusion for international travellers. The fact that products such as the Cape Wine and Cape Fruits are internationally recognised brands suggest that a clear alignment and understanding of how these different brands leverage each other is necessary.

### ***Marketing Channels***

The marketing success of a brand is determined partly by how well marketing messages and media options are tailored to the specific needs of the target market. This was identified as theme in the data. For example, participants mentioned that for a destination to be well marketed, one has to

identify the marketing channels being used to create a positive perception of the place. Many stakeholders thought that word-of-mouth was the single most important factor selling Cape Town as a destination. However, as a participant mentioned "it takes time to build word-of-mouth and that is why tourism stakeholders must strive to give tourists the best experience possible. Brochures, pamphlets, and guidebooks are effective but the power of the Internet is a force to be reckoned with." Also, word-of-mouth works both positively and negatively. It is felt that a lot of prejudices and negative perceptions about South Africa and Cape Town stem from visitors and locals who have emigrated. A participant mentioned "these people need to be transformed into ambassadors of the country to dissipate the negative perceptions that exist in international markets on South Africa as a holiday destination."

Another participant mentioned "awareness is created through above the line advertising, we are not doing enough, TV ads and travel documentaries should be used....but also trade shows". Another participant mentioned direct marketing and public relations by South Africans travelling overseas and well-chosen ambassadors can be a very effective way of selling cities and the country. Adding to this a participant mentioned "the film industry is another option that is not exploited fully...the film industry must be developed as many destinations such as France and Australia have relied on their film industry to set the tone for customer expectations...'Crocodile Dundee' was the movie that put Australia on the tourism map and South Africa must follow a similar approach through more pronounced support for the film and event industry."

The Internet is thought of being a key marketing channel for the success of the destination. As explained by a participant, "...in their home-country potential tourists rely to a large extent on websites and information centres to know more about a destination. It is therefore critical to have one portal that allows access to the destination. At present, as suggested by one respondent, if the word 'Cape Town' is used to search information on the Internet, there are more than 600 hits. This clearly shows an uncoordinated strategy

that significantly contributes to customer confusion." Another example from a participant is that "there is no point in having billboards in London showing pictures of a zebra at a zebra crossing or a landscape depicting the 'Free State' with no mention of the country or a telephone number for enquiries. The ordinary man on the street will not know that such a billboard is depicting South Africa. This is an example of uncoordinated advertising messages that confuse potential customers. It is crucial that any advertising or promotion process is designed by experts and implemented by professionals rather than those who call themselves as the 'gurus' of the tourism industry who create their own 'opinions' of what should be marketed and sell it to the trade as 'facts'". These quotes seem to suggest that stakeholders believe that the use of multi-media options reinforces perceptions and interest in a brand but these must be co-ordinated to consistently project the same image and message. As one participant added "there seems to be a need for a very strong media strategy to pick out very strong positives articles from different angles of the media such as magazines that report about music, sport and adventure, to musicians, writers, artists and film makers. A balance has to be brought into media coverage in South Africa as a whole, if necessary to counter negative reports with honesty based on facts rather than rumours. Media tend to spotlight on certain issues that affect South Africa mostly as opposed to Cape Town and blow it up." In a way, this quote suggests that stakeholders perceived DMOs are as not doing enough to correct negative perceptions about the country.

### Discussion, implication and conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify the broad factors that generate conflicts between DMOs and stakeholders in the process of place marketing. The results indicated that conflicts mostly occur around four main activities of DMOs, namely the way the product is defined for marketing purposes, awareness of the product in international markets, brand associations with supra and sub-brands, and the use of marketing channels. It is not surprising that the product

itself is a source of conflict, given that others (Ryan and Zahra, 2004; Pike, 2008) suggest that the complexity of the inter-relationships between stakeholders and DMOs is shaped partly by the complexity of the product. This explains why establishment of collaborative networks for destination marketing success is recommended (Timur and Getz, 2008). Creating marketing awareness is dependent on availability of funds from government and membership fees from stakeholders. Stakeholders seem to expect DMOs to provide value for money of their membership fees in promotional efforts but as Ryan and Gu (2007) noted there is not always consistency in marketing due to political influences. Each new elected party sets their own political agenda in terms of tourism development and the fact that funding is on an annual basis, impedes long term planning and consistency in marketing campaigns. The complexity of branding processes has been noted in the literature (Gnoth, 1998; Pike, 2008) and therefore it is not surprising that brand associations are still a contentious area between stakeholders and DMOs given that these associations are not supposed to benefit the former. The persistent negative associations with South Africa and the region seem to indicate to stakeholders that branding has not necessarily corrected the negative perceptions. As suggested by Timur and Getz (2008) consistency in marketing will be required overtime and the use of various media options to support marketing activities will be necessary. However, Ryan and Gu (2007) suggest that DMOs can use stakeholders existing network of intermediaries based on a complementary product line and supportive relationship, to create awareness of products and correcting negative perceptions. The Internet is a relatively cheaper option for creating marketing awareness but its effective use requires the support of both DMOs and stakeholders in projecting the right image and message about the destination.

In conclusion, the study identified the factors generating conflict between stakeholders and DMOs. However, there are some limitations associated with the methodology employed. As argued earlier, phenomenology does not allow for generalisations and therefore these findings need to be tested using a quantitative

methodology for empirical generalisations. Second, the views expressed by participants are not necessarily indicative of all stakeholders. Nonetheless, the themes identified were based on consensual realities and indicate some areas of potential conflicts which can be further researched using stakeholder theory. Other areas of potential research include, funding of DMOs, their organisational structures and effectiveness, and marketing campaigns of DMOs.

## References

- Added Value Group (AVG) (2002). "Branding and the JMI Process." Report by AVG.
- Alford, P. (1998). "Positioning the destination product - can regional tourist boards learn from private sector practice?" *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 7(2): 53-68.
- Ashworth, G.J., and Voogd, H. (1990). "Marketing the city: concepts, processes and Dutch applications." *Town Planning Review*, 59: 65-79.
- Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2006). "Using thematic analysis in psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(1): 77-101.
- Buhalis, D. (2000). "Marketing the competitive destination of the future." *Tourism Management*, 21(1): 97-116.
- Buhalis, D., and Cooper, C. (1998). "Competition or cooperation: the needs of small and medium sized enterprises at a destination level." In E. Laws, B. Faulkner and G. Moscardo (Eds.). "Embracing and Managing Change in Tourism." Routledge: London.
- Cape Town Routes Unlimited (CTRU) Annual Report (2007).
- Crotty, M. (1996). "Phenomenology and Nursing Research." Melbourne: Churchill Livingstone.
- Crotty, M. (1998). "The Foundation of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process." Australia: Allen and Unwin.
- Fontana, A. and Frey, J.H. (1994). "Interviewing: the art of science." In N.K. Denzin and Y.S Lincoln (Eds.). "Handbook of Qualitative Research." Sage Thousand Oaks
- Gnoth, J. (1998). "Branding tourism destinations." *Annals of Tourism Research*, 25(3): 758-760.
- Holstein, J.A., and Gubrium, J.F. (1997). "Active interviewing." In D. Silverman (Ed.). "Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice." Sage Publications: London.
- Horner, S., and Swarbrooke, J. (1996). "Marketing Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure in Europe." London: International Thompson Press.
- Hospers, G.J. (2004). "Place marketing in Europe: The branding of the Oresund region." *Intereconomics*, 39(5): 271-279.
- Jamal, T., and Hollinshead, K. (2001). "Tourism and the forbidden zone: the underserved power of qualitative inquiry." *Tourism Management*, 22: 63-82.
- Jennings, G. (2001). "Tourism Research." John Wiley & Sons: Australia.
- Kotler, P., Haider, D.H., Rein, I. (1993). "Marketing Places: Attracting Investment, Industry and Tourism to Cities, States and Nations." New York Free Press, New York.
- Li, Y. (2000). "Geographical consciousness and tourism experience." *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27(4): 863-883.
- Mannell, R.C. and Iso-Ahola, S.E. (1987). "Psychological nature of leisure and tourism experiences." *Annals of Tourism Research*, 14(2): 314-331.
- Morgan, N., Pritchard, A., and Piggott, R. (2002). "New Zealand, 100% Pure. The creation of a powerful niche destination brand." *Brand Management*, 9(4/5): 335-354.
- Morgan, N., Pritchard, A., and Piggott, R. (2003). "Destination branding and the role of the stakeholders: The case of New Zealand." *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 9(3): 285-299.
- Murphy, P.E. (1985). "Tourism: A Community Approach." London: Methuen.

Prayag

Exploring the politics of place marketing –The case of South Africa

International Journal of Tourism and Travel

3/1 (2010) pp. 37-46

- Ooi, C. (2004). "Poetics and politics of destination branding: Denmark." *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 4(2): 107-128.
- Pike, S. (2008). "Destination Marketing: An Integrated Marketing Communication Approach." Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Pride, R. (2002). "Brand Wales: natural revival." In N. Morgan, A. Pritchard, and R. Pride. *Destination Branding, Creating the Unique Destination Proposition*. Butterworth Heinemann, Oxford, UK.
- Ryan, C. (2000). "Tourist experiences, phenomenographic analysis, post-positivism and neural network software." *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 2: 119-131.
- Ryan, C., and Zahra, A. (2004). "The politics of branding cities and regions: the case of New Zealand." In N. Morgan, A. Pritchard, and R. Pride. *Destination Branding, Creating the Unique Destination Proposition* (2nd Ed.). Butterworth Heinemann, Oxford, UK.
- Ryan, C., and Cave, J. (2005). "Structuring destination image: A qualitative approach." *Journal of Travel Research*, 44(Nov): 143-150.
- Ryan, C., and Gu, H. (2007). "Destination branding and marketing: the role of marketing organisations." In H. Oh (Eds.). *The Handbook of Destination Marketing*. Oxford: Elsevier.
- SA Tourism Annual Report (2007).
- Shostack, G. (1977). "Breaking free from product marketing." *Journal of Marketing*, 41: 73-80.
- Timur, S., and Getz, D. (2008). "A network perspective on managing stakeholders for sustainable urban tourism." *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 20(4): 445-461.
- Tyler, D., Guerrier, Y., and Robertson, M. (1998). "Managing Tourism in Cities." John Wiley & Sons.
- Warnaby, G., and Davies, B.J. (1997). "Commentary: cities as service factories? Using the Servuction system for marketing cities as shopping destinations." *International Journal of Retail and Distribution*, 25(6/7): 204-211.
- White, C. (2005). "Destination image: to see or not to see? Part II." *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 17(2): 191-196.
- Zeithaml, V.A., Parasuraman, A., and Berry, L.L. (1985). "Problems and strategies in services marketing." *Journal of Marketing*, 49: 33-46.