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Factors influencing repositioning of a tourism destination

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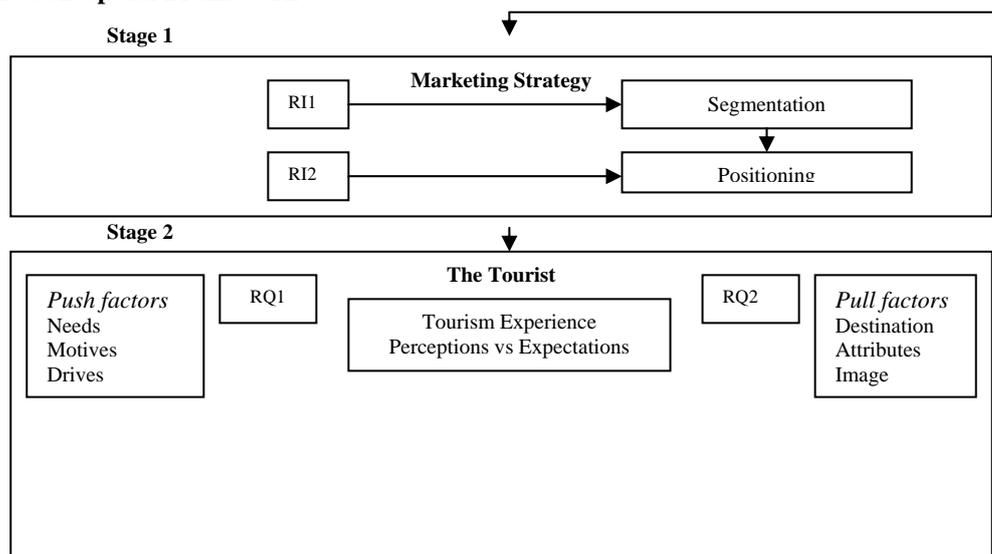
Abstract

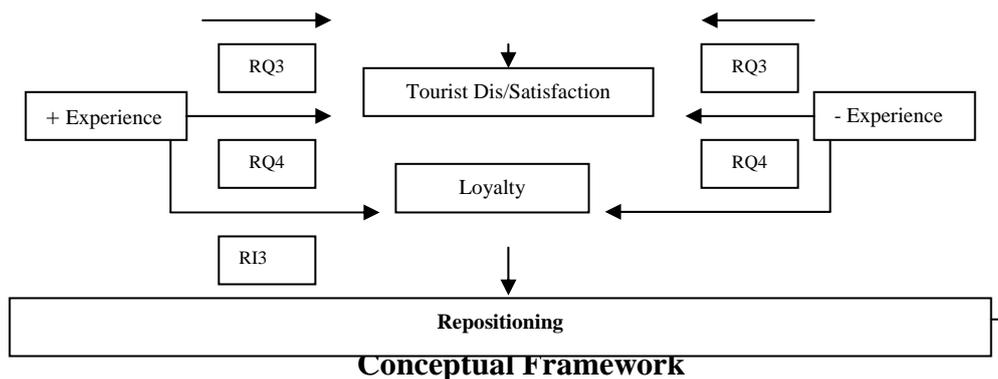
This paper investigates what factors influence the repositioning of a tourist destination. Through the development of a conceptual framework this research has identified that repositioning is influenced by two main areas; firstly the current marketing strategy of the destination including market segmentation and positioning; and secondly the tourist in terms of their perceptions and expectations together with the experience obtained (positive and negative) which influences their level of satisfaction and loyalty. Analysing these two key decision areas allows a decision on repositioning to be made. This framework is the first step in a research project that will be conducted to explore the process of successfully repositioning a tourism destination.

Introduction and Purpose

Tourism has grown into one of the world's largest industries (Bushell, Prosser, Faulkner and Jafari 2001). In Australia alone, the inbound tourism consumption to Gross Domestic Product in 2003-04 was \$7.6 billion, an increase of 5.1% since 2002-03 (ABS 2005). Nevertheless, the Australian Tourism Forecasting Committee predicts that the country's tourism growth will decline in 2006 due to reasons such as increased competition from short-haul destinations and the rising cost of fuel and accommodation (ABS 2005). Established destinations worldwide that may have initially experienced a heavy growth in tourism may now be facing the prospect of decline. Whilst several authors have investigated repositioning a destination, and some practitioners have utilised promotional campaigns to effectively reposition their respective destination, the process destinations need to go through to be successfully repositioned is unclear and indeed the factors associated with repositioning are not fully developed. This paper seeks to develop a conceptual framework for repositioning tourism destinations (see Figure 1).

Figure 1- Conceptual Framework





From reviewing the literature, a conceptual framework has been developed to identify the factors influencing repositioning. The framework has been broken into three separate sections; The Marketing Strategy, the Tourist and Repositioning. The Marketing Strategy is utilised as the first phase in this research, as authors such as French (1999) argue that prior to repositioning a destination, managers need to firstly determine how the tourism market is currently segmented and secondly determine how it is positioned to determine if the managers are positioning the destination effectively to these target segments. The second section, the Tourist, which is defined as 'any person travelling to a place other than his/her usual environment for fewer than twelve consecutive months' (ABS 2005), investigates the tourist's experience which is what occurred to the tourist through their trip to a destination. Specifically, this section seeks to address why tourists with similar push and pull motives travel to a similar destination, if they were similarly satisfied with the experience based on their motives being fulfilled and whether they are destination loyal based on their destination satisfaction. The final section, repositioning, ensures that the process of repositioning can be achieved through having destination marketers adapt their Marketing Strategy to better reflect the tourist's experience. As French (1999) argues that repositioning is a constant process, this model is designed in a cyclical format to ensure that this repositioning process is constantly reviewed to ensure that destination marketers can successfully reposition themselves. While this paper outlines the conceptual framework it is designed to answer the Research Problem of *What is the process of successfully repositioning tourism destinations?*

Repositioning

Tourism destinations worldwide are faced with the challenge of repositioning themselves through image alteration or reclassification of the tourism product in their current positioning strategy (Buhalis 2000; Cooper and Ruhanen 2001). Reasons for repositioning include increasingly worldwide competition for tourism (Manente and Cerato 1999; Pechlaner 1999), changing preferences of tourists (French 1999; Manente and Cerato 1999), or a fixed image that does not promote the destination effectively (Brackenbury 1999). Repositioning is necessary because it allows destinations to rejuvenate themselves to focus on highlighting their current attributes and image to attract tourists in the face of strong competition (Brackenbury 1999; Pechlaner 1999). Whilst a few authors such as Botha, Crompton and Kim (1999) Jawardena (2002) and Ibrahim & Gill (2005) recently introduced marketers to repositioning a destination, and practitioners such as French (1999) and Levy (1999) have utilised promotional campaigns to effectively reposition their respective destinations, the process destinations need to go through to be successfully repositioned is unclear. To determine this process, a Research Issue has been proposed.

Research Issue 3: How can a tourism destination be repositioned?

Market Segmentation

Authors such as Bloom (2005) suggest that tourists should be categorised according to common characteristics (demographics and geographics), needs, motives and drives (psychographics) or purchasing behaviour (behaviour) so they may be targeted. Thus, destinations can target profitable segments rather than wasting resources trying to attract all customers (Burnett and Baker 2001). Table 1 lists the latest segmentation studies in the tourism literature. What is of importance in this table is that different variables have been used by the authors, and some authors such as Baloglu & Shoemaker (2001) have utilised more than one form of segmentation. Consequently, the segment can be profiled by multiple methods. For this study, how a market is currently segmented needs to be identified. This will be explored through the first Research Issue.

Research Issue 1: How is the tourism market currently segmented?

Table 1- Market Segmentation studies

Author/s	Variable	Segmentation type
Baloglu and Shoemaker (2001); Kim, Lee and Klenosky (2003); Morrison, Braunlich, Cai and O'Leary (1996)	Gender	Demographic
Mykletun, Crotts & Mykletun (2001)	Nationality	
Kim et al. (2003) Kozak (2002); Legoherele (1998); Morrison et al (1996); Mykletun et al. (2001)	Income	
Morrison et al. (1996); You, O'Leary, Morrison and Hong (2000); Yuan and McDonald (1990)	Region	Geographic
Baloglu and Shoemaker (2001); Baloglu and Uysal (1996); Oh, Uysal and Weaver (1995); Pyo, Mihalik and Uysal (1989); Uysal and Hagan (1993); Yuan and McDonald (1990)	Motives	Psychographic
Burnett and Baker (2001); Goossens (2000)	Needs/wants	
Baloglu and Shoemaker (2001); Bieger and Laesser (2002); Mykletun et al. (2001); Sirakaya, Uysal and Yoshioka (2003)	Travel Party Composition	Behavioural
Bieger and Laesser (2002); Mykletun et al. (2001)	Trip purpose	

Source: Adapted for this research

Positioning

Destinations need to be positioned on attributes that are firstly meaningful to tourists, secondly are the destination's strength, and lastly can be fulfilled by tourism operators (Chandra and Menezes 2001). Table 2 lists recent positioning studies which illustrate that a destination is perceived favourably if the destination performed well on attributes that the tourists perceive relevant.

Table 2- Positioning Strategies

Author	Study aim	Findings
Botha et al. (1999)	Develop a new competitive positioning strategy for Sun/Lost City.	The differentiating destination attributes were entertainment, excluding cultural activities, with gaming, indoor recreational activities, and golf being recognised as especially strong elements; and infrastructure.
Kozak and Rimmington (1999)	Explore UK respondents perceptions of 18 Turkey destinations (in comparison to other European countries).	Turkey was most competitive in the areas of local people friendliness, value for money, safety and security, and local transport. Turkey was rated lower for cleanliness of beaches, quality of accommodations, and sports facilities.
Uysal, Chen and Williams (2000)	Explore the competitiveness of Virginia as a tourism destination with 10 other States in America.	Virginia was most competitive with Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and West Virginia in terms of natural features and with Pennsylvania, Maryland, South Carolina, and Georgia on historic and cultural heritage attributes.
Chen and Uysal (2002)	Analyse the market position of Virginia compared to eight other U.S states and Washington D.C.	Virginia and Pennsylvania offered similar nature-related activities such as snow skiing and visiting historical Civil War sites. Virginia, Florida and Washington were perceived as being the least competitive attractions.

Source: Adapted for this research

As destination marketers need to identify how their destination is currently perceived by tourists before it is repositioned (French 1999), a second research issue has been proposed to firstly identify which destination attributes are important to tourists and secondly how stakeholders such as tourism operators believe their destination is perceived by tourists.

Research Issue 2: How is the destination currently positioned?

Tourism Motivation

The first section in the Tourist is tourism motivation. Prior to segmentation, marketers need to determine why tourists decide to travel, and why those choose a particular destination as motivation driver behaviour (Gnoth 1997). Dann's (1981) push and pull model, where people are pushed by their own internal forces to travel and pulled by the external forces of destination attributes, has been widely utilised as it is an intuitive approach for exploring the motivations underlying behaviour (Baloglu and Uysal 1996). Table 3 lists studies that have classified tourists based on their similar push and pull motivations at a destination.

Table 3: Push and pull factors

Author	Push factors (in order of importance)	Pull factors (in order of importance)
Yuan and McDonald (1990)	Escape, Novelty, Prestige, Enhancement of kinship relationships, Relaxation/hobbies.	Budget, Culture and history, Wilderness, Ease of travel, Cosmopolitan environment, Facilities, Hunting.
Uysal and Hagan (1993)	Escape, Rest and Relaxation, Self-esteem, Prestige, Health and Fitness, Adventure, Social Interaction, Benefits, Interests.	Climate, History sights, Scenic beauty, Sunshine, Beaches, Snow, Cultural events, Recreational opportunities, Benefit expectations.
Uysal and Jurowski (1994)	Re-experiencing family togetherness, Sports, Cultural experience, Escape.	Entertainment/resort, Outdoors/nature, Heritage/culture, Rural/inexpensive.
Zhang and Lam (1999)	Knowledge, Prestige, Enhancement of human relationship, Relaxation, Novelty.	Hi-tech image, Expenditure, Accessibility, Service attitude and quality, Sightseeing variety, Cultural Links.

Source: Adapted for this research

Despite the acceptance of Dann's (1981) model, there are only a few studies (listed in Table 4) that have segmented tourists according to common push and pull motivations. All of the studies with the exception of Awaritefe (2004) utilised questions from a Canadian Survey, indicating that not all possible motivators specific to the tourist or destination were discovered. The respondents in these three studies did not travel, but only suggested destination motivations that would be relevant to them, indicating these tourists had not made the choice to travel. Awaritefe (2004) segmented tourists on the basis of their motives for travelling and why they chose one of seven destinations in Nigeria but failed to classify tourists further than domestic or foreign. Consequently, little was known where the groups of tourists originated from. This research attempts to match push and pull motivations to assist in developing market segments. Two initial Research Questions have been proposed.

Research Question 1: What motivates a tourist to choose a certain destination?

Research Question 2: What attracts tourists to a certain destination?

Table 4- Push/pull market segmentation

Author	Study purpose	Segments (with description)
Awaritefe (2004)	Explore the motivations for tourists' choice of tourism environments in Nigeria.	Domestic (pull motive emphasis- comfort/place satisfaction, low/cost satisfaction, good accommodation) and Foreign (push motive emphasis- cultural/education needs, education, need for environment change, self/actualisation, belonging/love).
Baloglu and Uysal (1996)	Identify German travellers' preference for overseas pleasure markets.	Sports/activity seekers (active, competent and sporty), Novelty seekers (seek to increase knowledge and experience new culture), Urban seekers (seek comfort and variety in an urban setting), Beach Resort seekers (seek to escape to environments that are reliable).
Oh et al. (1995)	Identify Australian travellers' preference for overseas pleasure markets.	Safety/comfort seekers (travel to places that are safe and feel like home), Culture/history seekers (aim to increase knowledge learn a new culture and visit historic sites), Novelty/adventure seekers (looking for novelty and adventure), Luxury seekers.
Turnbull and Uysal	Identify Japanese travellers' preference for overseas	Careerists (travellers who are seeking to improve their careers via foreign travel), Collectors (people who travel for prestige and development experience), Mainstreams

(1995)	pleasure markets.	(People who travel with others as a form of security).
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Source: Adapted for this research

Satisfaction

The second section of the Tourist category in the Conceptual Framework is satisfaction, which seeks to address whether tourists with similar motivations are satisfied with the experience. After the tourist has experienced the holiday, they evaluate the trip to ascertain if the vacation met the expected requirements of the experience (Snepenger and Snepenger 1993). Tourism satisfaction is related to tourism behaviour because it can determine whether the initial travel motivation has been fulfilled; if a tourist is motivated to visit a destination and the experience is what they had hoped for, they will be satisfied (Dunn Ross and Iso-Ahola 1991; Mannell and Iso-Ahola 1987). By satisfying the tourist, destination managers has a strong potential to create a repeat customer which brings a steady source of income with limited extra marketing expenditure (Manente 2000; Oppermann 2000; Swarbrooke and Horner 1999). It also suggests that the destination is correctly positioned. Recently, studies have been conducted to determine whether tourists have been satisfied based on their push and pull motivation being fulfilled. These are listed in Table 5. Whilst Yoon and Uysal (2005) recently examined both push and pull factors at a Cyprus destination, the majority of tourism studies have only evaluated the tourist's satisfaction with the destination attributes. Further, Yoon and Uysal (2005) did not seek to segment tourists into groups with similar motivations. There is little evidence to determine whether tourists with similar push and pull motivations are similarly satisfied with the tourism experience. A third Research Question has been proposed to categorise the satisfaction of tourists with similar motives.

Research Question 3: Was the tourist satisfied with the experience?

Loyalty

The final section of the Tourist is loyalty which aims to determine whether tourists that were satisfied with the tourism experience are loyal to the destination. Academics argue that tourists can be loyal to a destination if they have been satisfied with the initial experience (Baloglu and Shoemaker 2001; Yoon and Uysal 2005). In utilising Dann's (1981) model (see Figure 5), Heung and Qu (2000) and Qu and Li (1997) were able to determine that tourists were loyal to a destination if the attributes were rated by them as excellent, whereas Yoon and Uysal (2005) determined that tourists were motivated to be loyal to a destination if their needs for travel were fulfilled. However, none of these studies classified the tourists as segments, rather the push and pull motivations were generic to the whole sample. Thus, commonality between the respondents is unknown. These studies also did not determine whether tourists returned to a destination even if they were dissatisfied with their initial experience. To determine if tourism segments will be loyal to a destination based on their satisfaction rating, a final Research Question has been proposed.

Research Question 4: Are repeat tourists more satisfied?

Table 5- Push/pull motivation studies utilising satisfaction and loyalty

Author	Destination	Push/pull factors	Satisfaction Findings	Loyalty findings
Heung and Qu (2000)	Hong Kong	Pull- People, Overall Convenience, Price, Accommodation and food, Commodities, Attractions, Culture, Climate and image.	Accommodation and food were the important satisfaction factors.	Accommodation and food were the important factors in also determining loyalty.
Ryan and Mo (2001)	New Zealand	Pull- Visiting sites of Maori culture, National Parks, City parks and gardens, City tours, Farms, Museums and historical sites, Taking scenic boat cruises.	All of these motivations were considered important and significantly related to satisfaction.	
Qu and	Hong Kong	Pull- Tourism infrastructure and facilities,	Tourists satisfied with the	84% planned to revisit

Li (1997)		Friendly, resident attitudes, Customer service, Clean and Tidy Environment, Shopping, Accommodation.	infrastructure and facilities, the resident attitudes, the Customer service and the environment.	Hong Kong. Male respondents were more likely to do so.
Yoon and Uysal (2005)	Cyprus	Push -Relaxation, Family togetherness, Safety and Fun. Pull - Small size and reliable weather, Cleanliness and shopping, Night life and local cuisine.	Satisfaction not related to push factors. Tourists that were not happy with the pull factors were dissatisfied with the destination.	If the respondents were relaxed, experienced family togetherness, and safety and fun, they would be loyal.

Source: Adapted for this research

Conclusions

This paper concludes that the influences of repositioning are the Marketing Strategy including market segmentation and positioning, and the Tourist, in terms of motivation, satisfaction and loyalty. Through matching the strategy with the tourist experience a decision on whether repositioning is needed can be made. This framework will be validated in a two stage process of convergent interviews and questionnaires. Likely contributions include firstly identifying whether the identified segments were satisfied with their tourism experience based on their initial push and pull motivations and secondly if specific segments will return to a destination based on their motivations being satisfactorily fulfilled at the destination.

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