



## A PARADIGM SHIFT IN STRATEGIC MARKETING FOR TOURISM DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

---

**Dr. Sampad Kumar Swain**

Lecturer in Tourism Studies, School of Management,  
Pondicherry University, Kalapet, Pondicherry-605014.

### ABSTRACT

*The paper brings fourth the concept of destination marketing that has made a paradigm shift in the international tourism scenario. Destination marketing is an innovative strategy to get an edge over other competitive destinations. This paper conspicuously elucidates the concept of destination promoted for tourism promotion and attempts to integrate several well- defined models for strategic marketing and management of tourist destinations. It offers an outline of some fitting techniques extensively implemented by several state governments in India. The paper also clarifies that marketing of tourist destinations should tend to harmonize the strategic objectives of all stakeholders and the sustainability of local resources. Destinations need to set apart their products by conducting cutting edge research in order to display the unique value and expand partnerships between the public and private sector at different levels of destination management in a way that induce the delivery mechanism very effective and prompt. Furthermore, the advancement of new affordable technologies more particularly the web-based promotional measures augments competitiveness of destinations by increasing their visibility, reducing costs and enhancing local co-operation. Destination marketing is conceived to be a relevant step forward in the direction of ensuring optimization of tourism impacts and the achievement of the strategic objectives for all stakeholders. Destination marketing organizations should be formed in the line of western business model to guard the greater interest of destinations and stakeholders associated directly and indirectly in the promotion and development of destinations in India.*

**Keywords :** Strategic, Marketing, Tourism Destination, Competitive Advantage, Tourism Impacts.

## **Introduction**

**T**ourism destinations are endowed with unique attributes that Destination Promotional Agency (DPA) takes the advantage of positioning the distinct products by identifying the niche market. Thus destination marketing is a process of facilitating the implementation of tourism policy that envisages on the regional strategic development plan. The primary objective of marketing of destinations should steer the tourism impacts optimization and the maximization of benefits for the region. In order to appreciate the complexity of destination marketing, this paper explains the destination concept and attempts to synthesize a dynamic stakeholder model for strategic marketing and management of destinations. The analysis illustrates numerous frameworks for the development of a destination marketing strategy and a comprehensive marketing mix. The paper also attempted to demonstrate the relationship between marketing and planning of destinations and their conflicting and symbiotic relationship. This paper is based on several frameworks evolved from the outcome of research and consultancy on destination marketing. Although the suggestions and conclusions presented here are inevitably generalized, destination managers and marketers can use the suggested methodology in order to develop and implement their strategic plan and marketing policies to position India's credible tourist products in the overseas tourism markets. The significance of the paper is to draw a synthesis with well-developed marketing model that will provide a comprehensive framework for destination marketing and management with the perennial support and patronization of stakeholders.

## **Destination : A Blend Of Tourism Services And Experiences**

Destinations with having a plethora of tourism products offer integrated experiences to visitors who are away from home for the sake of satisfying the wants of holidays. Conventionally, destinations are regarded as well-defined geographical areas, such as a country, an island or a town (Hall, 2000). Destinations provide a unique blend of tourism attractions and services, which are experienced under the brand name of the destination. Leiper (1995) explains that destinations are places towards which people travel and where they choose to stay for a while in order to experience certain features or characteristics-a perceived attraction of some sort. Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert, Shepherd and Wanhill (1998) define destinations as the focus of facilities and services designed to meet the needs of the tourists. However, it is gradually more popular that destinations can also

a perceptual concept, which can be interpreted personally by consumers, depending on their types of travel itinerary, cultural background, and purpose of visit, level of educational and past experience in traveling to other places of interest. Most destinations comprise a core of the six components such as attractions, accessibility, amenities, available packages, activities and ancillary service. Therefore, a destination can be regarded as a combination (or even as a brand) of all products, services and ultimately experiences provided locally. It also enables us to assess the impact of tourism regionally, as well as manage demand and supply in order to maximize benefits for all stakeholders. While giving an example, China can be a destination for an Indian business traveler, whilst South East Asia may be the destination for a leisure American tourist who packs five countries in a two week tour. Some travelers will consider a cruise ship to be their destination, while others on the same cruise may perceive the ports visited during the trip as their destination. Time and again destinations are artificially divided by geographical and political barriers, which fail to take into consideration consumer preferences or tourism industry functions. It is pertinent to mention that destinations are considered to be explained as any geographical region which is conceived by its visitors as a unique entity, with a political and legislative framework for tourism marketing and planning.

Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) are guided by the meaning of destinations to be accountable for the planning and marketing of the region. Limited studies on destination marketing probably generate profound interest of researchers to undertake innovative study in the impacts of tourism on destinations. Therefore, the management and marketing of destinations is often left to industry people and consultants. It is not frequently demonstrated in the literature or in academic debates. The competitive nature of destination marketing agencies also thwarts involved parties from bringing out their strategies and marketing plans. Furthermore, there is a noticeable difference between the objective of marketing construct and planning tourism literature so far as the destination development is concerned. In the early period of the introduction of marketing as a tool for promoting tourism products, it is the marketing that conventionally ponders over increasing the rate of visitation and treats tourism like any other commodity. The marketing approach has become failure in recognizing the unique needs and limitations of each destination as well as their particular geographical, environmental and

socio-cultural characteristics. On the contrary, planning literature focuses more on the impacts of tourism and broadly discusses on limiting the development tourism beyond the certain stage. Previous studies on planning for the destinations have often ignored the market dynamics and the requirements of entrepreneurs at the destination and the place of origin. Burns (1999) explains that private tourism organizations and government tourism department have applied only part of the marketing mix to tourism (i.e., promotion), with little attention being paid to the other components of marketing like pricing, placing, positioning. However, if tourism is to endure by generating satisfaction among interacting tourists and hosts, it must adopt societal marketing strategies. This involves carefully monitoring tourist satisfaction levels and using these as part of the criteria for success, rather than increasing numbers of tourists; continually monitoring host reactions to tourists. For host-tourist interaction is an important component of the tourist experience and infrastructure development of tourism resort areas has considerable implications for the types of tourists that will be attracted (Ryan, 1991).

### **Tactical Function Of Destinations**

Destinations are primarily banked upon the dynamic role of tourism distribution channels. Some of the most difficult entities to manage and market destinations are stakeholders in the channels who are closely associated and integrated in the process of delivery of products and services. The inter-linkage is evidently important due to the complexity of the relationships of local stakeholders. Managing and marketing destinations is also tough owing to the variety of stockholders involved in the development and production of tourism products. As an alternative, they symbolize a collection of both professional and personal interests of all the people who live and work in the area. Hence, strategies and actions should be adopted to take into account the views and suggestions of all stakeholders, namely Indigenous People, Businesses and Investors, Tourists, Tour Operators and Travel Intermediaries, Local Bodies, State and National Government Tourism Organizations, Educational Institutions and Interest Groups. The most difficult problem that is ensuring the rational use of zero-priced public goods, such as landscapes, mountains, meadows, rivers, valleys, forest, wildlife, and the sea for the benefit of all stakeholders and at the same time preserving the resources for future generations is a challenging task of DMOs . Conflicts can easily erupt

in, particularly when some stakeholders injudiciously make an attempt to exploit resources for short-term benefits. A compromise encircling all these interests of interested groups is extremely a strenuous accomplishment to sustain the relationship if it is impossible, and subsequently the key to long-term success will remain in jeopardy.

Tourists perceive the destination as a brand comprising of a collection of suppliers or service providers. Prior to visiting destinations, tourists build up an image about likelihood destinations as well as a set of expectations based on previous experience, word of mouth, press reports, advertising, and common beliefs (Chon, 1991). Having undertaken tours to a particular destination, tourists consume a destination as a comprehensive experience, without often realizing that each element of the product are produced and managed by individual players. Most service providers are small and medium-sized tourism enterprises which have a wide range of strengths and weaknesses whilst they are also characterized by their independent nature (Buhalis & Cooper, 1998). Tourists' overall experience is composed of numerous small encounters with a variety of tourism providers, such as taxi drivers, hoteliers, waiters, priests, guides, porters, escorts, as well as with elements of the local attractions such as museums, theatres, beaches, theme parks, etc. The impression by and large is changed about the image of a destination after the end of period of visitation. As a consequence there is much overlapping between strategic marketing of the destination as a whole and of each individual supplier at the region. Hence, the competitiveness of each player is often interrelated and almost indistinguishable from one another. As consumers increasingly value environmental resources they are prepared to pay for them premium prices (Pigram, 1996 and Archer, 1996). Hence, local resources become a central asset for destinations and tourism suppliers and their sustainability a core function of tourism marketing. Middleton and Hawkins (1998) confirm that a marketing perspective is essentially a complete management orientation reflecting corporate attitudes that, in the case of travel and tourism, must equalize the interests of shareholders/owners with the long-run environmental interests of a destination and at the same time meet the demands and expectations of tourists. DMOs tend to be part of the local, regional or national government and have political and legislative power as well as the financial means to manage resources rationally and to ensure that all stakeholders can get maximum benefit in the long term. Destination

management and marketing paradigm should act as tools and facilitators to achieve a complex range of strategic objectives, which will ultimately need to satisfy the needs and wants of stakeholders. Then only they will work together for offering quality and authentic services to tourists without having any compromise in the delivery and substance of product and services. DMOs ought to address four key generic strategic objectives to ensure the level of satisfactions of principals and tourists. The details of these are illustrated below.

---

Strategic management and marketing objectives for destinations

---

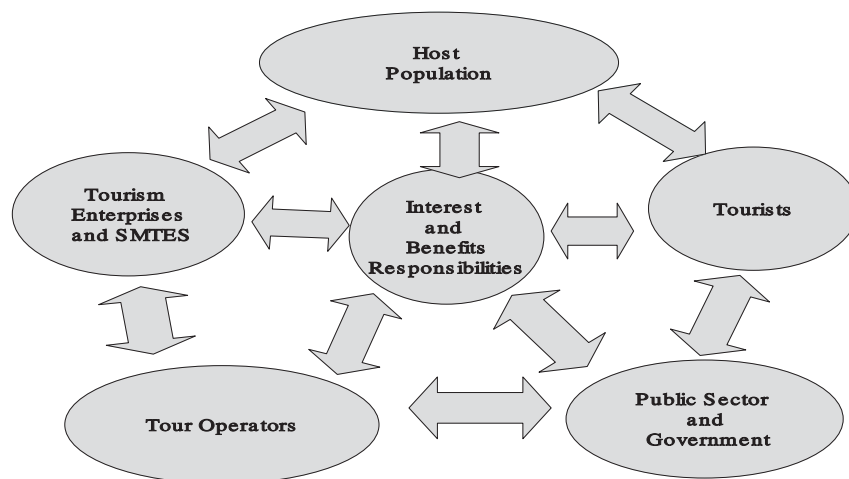
- Enhance the long-term prosperity of local people
  - Delight visitors by maximizing their satisfaction
  - Maximize profitability of local enterprises and maximize multiplier effects
  - Optimize tourism impacts by ensuring a sustainable balance between economic benefits and socio-cultural and environmental costs
- 

The development and implementation of strategic objectives at destinations are driven by the sustainable relationships among the stakeholders. Thus the implementation of the key generic strategic objectives will powerfully be determined by the dynamics of the actors on this wheel. The wheel has to rotate without breakdown. Each stakeholder, of course, aims to optimize the benefits by becoming an emerging competitor in providing customized services. The interests of some stakeholders may certainly be conflicting with others and thus some of the four key strategic objectives may eventually be jeopardized. This is often a result of some stakeholder trying to enhance its benefit at the expense of others. For example, a tour operator may try to reduce the prices paid to local suppliers in order to increase its profit margin and remain competitive in the marketplace. Therefore, it is imperative for DMOs to exercise sustainable legislative and management practices at the stage of planning and management of destinations so as to ensure that the benefits must fairly be shared among all stakeholders. The dynamic wheel of tourism stakeholders are exhibited in fig-1 that explains about the interdependence and inter-linkages of primary, secondary and support service providers which are recognized in the study as stakeholders. As it depicts the interest, benefits and responsibilities in the centre of

the model, that it signifies that stakeholders are both primary beneficiaries and responsible partners in terms of ensuring sustainable development of destinations. Many popular and conventional destinations are malfunctioned to ensure and maintain a balance effectively among stakeholders and that threatens the achievement of the strategic objectives for the long-term competitiveness and prosperity of destinations. Hence, tourism marketing should not only be regarded as a tool for attracting more visitors to a region, as it has been the case for most destinations but also an important mechanism to work for the larger concern of stakeholders.

**Fig-1: The Dynamic Wheel of Tourism Stakeholders.**

Destinations may also involve de-marketing, i.e., the discouragement of certain market segments from visiting the destination during certain



Source: Adapted from Buhalis and Fletcher (1995).

periods, through a range of prohibitive measures or by charging premium prices. Examples of these techniques include: for visitor management techniques in theme parks which divert people from congested attractions to less busy ones by using a leading story/attraction; for national parks in India which aim to attract only visitors who stay overnight and to discourage excursionists who contribute little to the local economy by controlling their parking processes; for Andaman Nicobar Island which provides high-quality resort accommodation and does not allow charter flights, In this

way marketing is used as a mechanism to achieve strategic objectives of destination regions and thus, should be guided by the policies for regional development.

### **Marketing Destinations: Strategies And Practices**

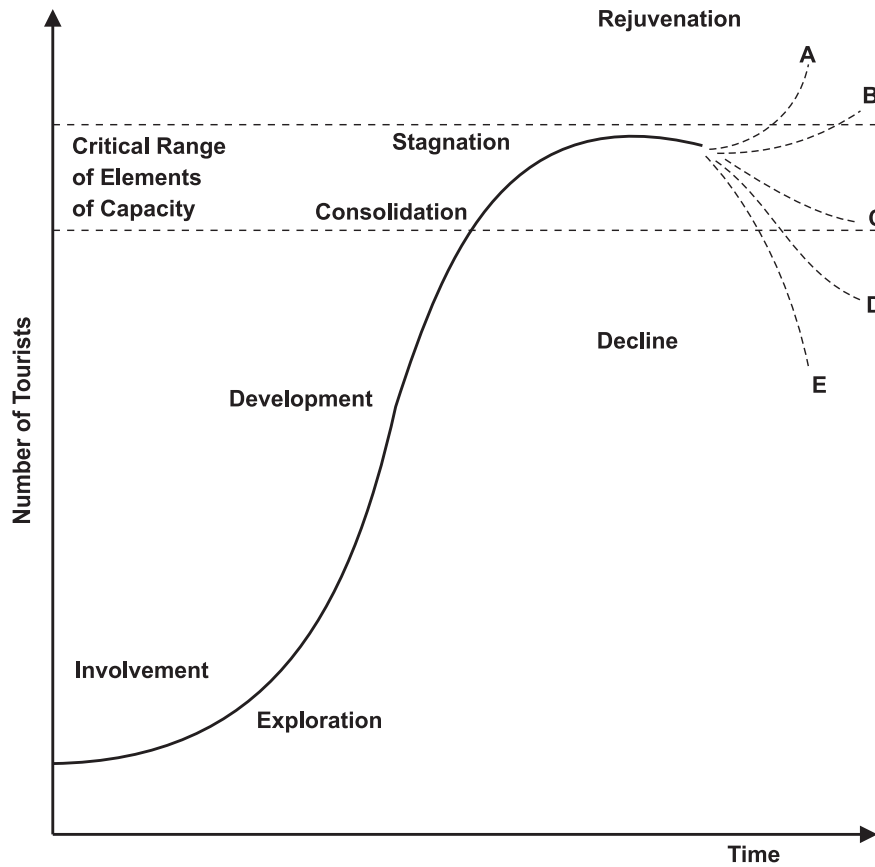
Developing a marketing strategy and mix for destinations is a complex process owing to have the association of many independent stakeholders and principals involved. Destinations cannot be managed or marketed as enterprises due to the dynamics of interests and benefits sought by stakeholders. In addition, most destinations are amalgams of independent Small Marketing Tourism Enterprises (SMTEs), which already follow their own marketing strategies. Perhaps the most important challenge for destination marketing therefore is to bring all individual partners together to cooperate rather than compete and to pull resources towards developing an integrated marketing mix and delivery system (Buhalis & Cooper, 1998). The international tourist industry is becoming an increasingly competitive marketplace where only the best-managed destinations are likely to thrive on a sustainable basis in the long run. Therefore, it is essential to have comprehensive strategic business plans that can address all factors as they have a tremendous impact on the product. Tourism strategies should not only ponder over visitation, but also include the entire range of impacts such as overcrowding, congestion, environmental pollutions, safety and security, seasonality adjustment problems, and sensitivity to local culture (Evans, Fox & Johnson, 1995). Conceivably, one additional complication to tourism marketing is to retain the pristine glory of destinations which need to be taken into consideration at the formulation stage of marketing strategies.

### **The Destination Life Cycle**

The significance of the destination life cycle is to facilitate the understanding of the evolution of tourist products and destinations. It provides guidance to DMOs for strategic decision making. Cooper (1994) suggests the discussion about the life cycle concept that destinations experience a 'birth to death' in a cycle and the life cycle model has gained attention in tourism and hospitality as an advisory tool. Although in tourism, life cycle analysis is often seen as a practical conceptualization device for destination area development. In

hospitality management, the study on the strategic planning as a guide for destination life cycle is in the infancy stage in India. However, the main problem relate to identifying turning points, stages, length of stages and level of aggregation is identified as lack of study on market research and environmental accounting that have crippled the novelty of the destination. Despite having many criticisms of the life cycle paradigm, it is quite critical for marketers to appreciate the stage of development of resort areas tourism impacts. This also illustrates that different stages of the life cycle require different marketing strategies and planning actions. This is largely due to the differences between demand and supply experienced at different levels. In the early stages demand exceeds supply whilst this relationship is reversed in the maturity and consolidation stages. As a result, marketing strategies should focus on building awareness and promoting the destination product on the early stages of the circle while they probably have to deal with image alteration and re-design and re-launch the product at the later stages. The entire marketing mix therefore will need to be differentiated to accommodate the needs of destinations at each stage of their life cycle. Destinations experience different environmental and socio-cultural impacts during their different development stages. Consequently, they need to use marketing to encourage sustainable practices for both tourists and stakeholders of service providers as well as to communicate their environmental and socio-cultural policies. It is evident, therefore, that different destinations are affected in a dissimilar pattern on each stage of their life cycle and as a consequence they require fitting innovative marketing action plan and strategies. However, unless the growth of cycles at different stages is carefully managed, any increase of visitors may deteriorate local resources further and push destinations in greater decline. The implications of rising inflow of tourists must force stakeholders to hike price with low quality of services. This in turn may bring down the demand for destinations and stakeholders may not be able to maintain the quality standards due to the substantial slash in the volume of revenue. This is a vicious circle which eventually makes the purpose and benefit of the entire tourism activity at the destination problematic. Undoubtedly, service providers at the forefront will need to be concerned at each stage of development.

**Fig-2 Destination Life Cycle**



Source: [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

## **CORE MARKETS AND DESTINATION SELECTION**

The foremost task of marketing organization is to have an extensive understanding on types of destination and unique features of destinations. Destinations should be aware not only of the needs and wants of the active demand but also of the potential markets to which target should be made in the future. It can then develop a detailed and well-defined product portfolio, which will enable the optimization of benefits and adapt marketing mix to capture target markets (McKercher, 1995 & Tribe, 1997). Consumer behaviour studies indicate that a wide range of criteria is used to select tourism products. These criteria are altered along with the purpose and features of the business or leisure trip, elements of the external environment, the characteristics of the tourists and the particularities and attributes of

destinations. It has increasingly become an uphill task to classify meticulously the travel behaviour and market segmentation as the contemporary visitors prefer to make combination of pleasure with business with sole intention of achieving time and cost advantage. As a result, there are continuous variations between the two principle travel motivations, i.e. business and leisure trips. However, leisure trips may incorporate elements, characteristics and motivations of business travel and vice versa. Business travel is, often referred to as meetings, incentives, conferences, exhibitions (MICE) which are normally determined by business opportunities and involvement of the visitors. Possibly, visitors can use more inflexibility by attending optional meetings, which offer benefits otherwise, the obligations are not strictly essential to their business such as conferences, exhibitions, incentives, familiarization trips, etc. (Davidson, 1994). Even though business tourism is much more restricted in terms of choice, a high-degree of efficiency and safety, as well as elegance and leisure opportunities of destinations tend to be preferred for conferences and incentive travel. Business travel is seasonal, as people working for business or corporate houses do not generally travel less during the holiday seasons, i.e., summer months and public holidays. Nonetheless, business tourism activities provide ample revenue opportunity for enterprises as consumers are willing to pay more for inflexible nature of schedules. At the same time, destinations can enhance multiplier effects as some particular forms of business tourism utilize a much greater spectrum of local services than leisure tourism.

It is also important to understand other factors that influence the decision of consumers to purchase holiday package tours. The social status and peer groups of consumers often influence the potential buyers. Travel intermediaries also play a significant role in determining the travel decision of consumers by using a diverse array of promotional techniques and often channeling travelers to destinations and principals. The process of generating revenues for DMOs will also enable destinations to manage their resources accordingly and attract the right market segments in order to optimize their impacts. However, the selection of destinations whether it is business or leisure motives depends on image of destinations. Image is the set of expectations and perceptions of a prospective traveler on a destination. Past experience of the destination or the companies involved (i.e., airlines, hotels, tour operators); descriptions by friends and relatives; general information; and marketing campaigns develop these expectations and perception which may be true or imaginary representations. Fascinatingly,

the sustainability of local resources becomes one of the most important elements of destination image, as an increasing chunk of the market is not ready to bear over-developed and congestion tourism destinations and diverts to more environmentally advanced regions. The degree of consumer satisfaction will depend on the assessment of the perceived overall experience of the destination versus anticipated expectations and perceptions. Developing the right image for destinations will therefore determine their ability to satisfy visitors as it will allow them to develop realistic and fulfill-able expectations.

### **Value Added Features Of Destinaions**

Developing a destination typology is an uphill task, as destinations are perceived differently by visitors for different purposes. However, most destinations may be classified as urban, seaside, hill stations, rural, authentic third world business destinations and unique, exotic & exclusive business which represent principle attractiveness of destinations. Since the early years of the civilization, urban destinations have been the focal point of attraction for business and leisure class tourists. People used to undertake travel to cities and towns to meet politicians, bureaucrats and business associates. Sports organizations, such as the Olympic Games in ancient Greece also generated tourism activity in main cities. People also traveled to cities on pilgrimage for religious purposes, as all major cathedrals, mosques and temples were usually located in the urban areas. Urban destinations have also been attracting business travelers attending meetings, conferences and exhibitions. Most urban destinations are well equipped with conference and exhibition halls and transportation and accommodation infrastructure to facilitate the organization of larger events. Urban destinations also attract leisure travelers, especially during periods of low business traveling activity, such as weekends and school holidays. Suppliers and front line service providers intend to lessen the period of seasonality by inflating the number of leisure visitors. On the other hand, leisure tourists can take advantage of some of the unique facilities and services of urban destinations to enjoy short-breaks or extended weekends. All metro cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, and Hyderabad, Chennai and Kolkatta provide a wide range of entertainment attractions such as theatre, concerts, bars, theme restaurants, discos, etc. Urban destinations also attract education and health tourists, as they are generally equipped with good educational establishment and hospitals. Urban resorts

increasingly take advantage of industrial heritage and put on show obsolete industrial sites as educational experiences and leisure facilities. Seaside destinations and resorts traditionally serve the recreational and health related purposes of tourists during holidays. Tourists can plentifully enjoy sunshine as well as sea bathing and sea sports. Travelers from hot and humid climatic regions tend to spend a proportion of their annual holiday in the awe-inspiring hill stations dotted across in India. As the product in traditional seaside resorts matures, new long haul and exotic destinations, often in less-developed countries attract sophisticated travelers who are looking for authentic and off-the-track experiences. The advancement of fastest and economic air transport has substantially reduced the fear of traveling long distances and enables tourists to travel farthest places. For examples destinations such as Goa and Sri Lanka have taken advantage of developments in transportation in attracting tourists from far of places to their exotic destinations. The destinations located in the foothills of the Himalayas entice leisure seekers for summer sports such as skiing, heli-skiing, trekking, river rafting, trekking, and mountaineering. Holidaymakers more particularly naturalists, mountaineers, cyclists, walkers, etc have a high degree of preference and appreciation for natural attractions in all seasons. Although, the majority of the Himalayan sports are for recreational purposes but a wide range of expeditions and challenges are organized for mountains such as the Everest or the Alps. The Chilika lake in Orissa is bestowed on attractions such as surfing and rowing, canoeing, boating, etc. Similarly, the majorities of hill resorts in Darjeeling, Shimla, Gulmarg, Manali, Nainital, Auli, Mussorie, etc are in near proximity to urban centres and thus they can easily be accessed by private car, several are still unexplored and offer authentic experiences for travelers. As a result a wide range of marketing and planning implications emerge to allow the Himalayan areas to benefit from tourism and yet to ensure the sustainability of their resources. Rural tourism is also developing in leaps and bounds. Farmers, artisans, artists, magicians, snake charmers, black smith, etc as totality of rural populations take advantage of offering unique experience and feelings which are really authentic and novelty in the rural environment. There is an educational element to this activity particularly for children from urban centres who may have never experienced agricultural life. Rural tourism can also be themed according to the activities undertaken, such as cooking or bee-keeping schools organized in rural regions.

## **Marketing Research**

Marketing research is an inseparable instrument that is used extensively by DMOs to identify the types of customers that can be attracted (active demand), as well as the prospective visitors (suppressed demand) who do not visit for a variety of reasons (Athiyaman, 1997). As tourism bundles are formulated on ad-hoc basis to satisfy specific consumer requests, a dynamic marketing research process facilitates destinations to provide unique products by initiating local partnerships among all suppliers to cater to the needs of demand. Destination image is also developed through marketing research, which guides promotional activities towards branding and amending the brand values of the region. The effectiveness of promotional campaigns can be evaluated so that the most cost-effective media is used to approach and persuade target markets to visit the destination (Woodside, 1990). As tourism demand is extremely dynamic, marketing research needs to follow constant developments to ensure that all elements of the destination marketing mix evolve continuously. Data is often collected by frontier controls, airports and transport authorities, national statistics offices, local councils, tax offices as well as principals such as hotels, travel agencies, etc. The effectiveness of marketing research in destinations will depend on their ability to co-ordinate the research activities undertaken by the entire range of local authorities and organizations. It is therefore very important to co-ordinate all these surveys and data in order to produce meaningful inferences to inform and guide tourism policy and marketing strategies

## **Contribution of marketing research to destination marketing**

- Design and attributes required for tourism products and services.
- Evaluation and development of destination image.
- Segmentation of market and development of corresponding marketing mixes.
- Opening new markets and reducing dependency on existing ones.
- Evaluation of the elasticity of demand for each market segment.
- Reduction of seasonality by matching market segments.
- Examination of reasons deterring people (suppressed demand) from visiting destinations.
- Assessment of compatibility with other target markets.
- Examination of alternative distribution channels.

- Assessment of tourism impacts to the destination and selecting the right segments.
- Evaluation of marketing effectiveness and selection of media for promotion.

### **Destination Promotional Techniques**

Promoting destinations basically entails the role of promotional agencies taking the help of communication channels with clientele and other stakeholders to amplify the level of awareness and influence to purchase and experience products that should be affordable and accessible to them. Destination promotion requires a well-defined campaign and message with active contribution of all local principals and suppliers. Designing a cost-effective promotional mix is difficult because of the diversity of tourism suppliers at destinations and the spread of consumers throughout the world. Achieving a consensus on the marketing campaign as well as raising adequate funds to develop and implement is one of the most challenging tasks for destination marketing. Traditionally, DMOs lead promotional campaigns, whilst suppliers participate and contribute. On the other hand, DMOs are increasingly being held accountable for generating adequate results through advertising and for measuring advertising effectiveness. Advertisements use slogans, which change frequently in order to follow tourism demand trends and to update the image of destinations (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998). For example, India has recently added the slogan i.e. “*Attithi Devo Bhava*” along with Incredible India Campaign. Thus, the incorporation of this tag line has shifted the focus of its product away from the fabulous tourism products to the service quality. The Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India and all State Governments do participate in major annual tourism and travel fairs in Berlin, London, Milan, Madrid, Paris and elsewhere. DMOs have the opportunity to meet intermediaries and members of the public to promote their offerings with the colourful printed brochures. Brochures are distributed to all potential promoters of package tours and destination promoters and to prospective consumers who require information on the destination. Brochures normally exhibit fascinated attractions and activities along with a number of local suppliers such as hotels, entertainment and catering establishments (Wicks & Schuett, 1993). In addition, travel trade manuals disseminate information more particularly about the destination to the travel trade and provide a reference guide for the design of package tours.

While DMOs frequently set up and run information offices and counters at the key tourist centres and turn around places like airports, railway stations, bus stands and sea ports to provide information about providers of services. The organizations acting as principal facilitators rather than intermediaries do refrain from selling direct services to tourists and keep away from performing as promoters of individual products and services against other local suppliers. However, when inquired by prospective clients they give contact details of local suppliers and suggest consumers on the ones that are likely to satisfy their demand. Direct marketing is also used as destinations which can identify prospective customers and promote elements of the local offerings that satisfy the specific demand. Developing relationship marketing and loyalty clubs enables repeat visitors to be recognized and appreciated. Discount schemes and other add-ons are currently developing for several destinations to reward and maintain their loyal clientele. Finally, public relations are extensively used for most tourism destinations. Often hosting a journalist or a celebrity in the destination can generate more interest than any other forms of promotion because consumers are more passive receivers than with advertising. Public relations are also critical for the development and updating of the right image

### **Marketing Competitive Destinations**

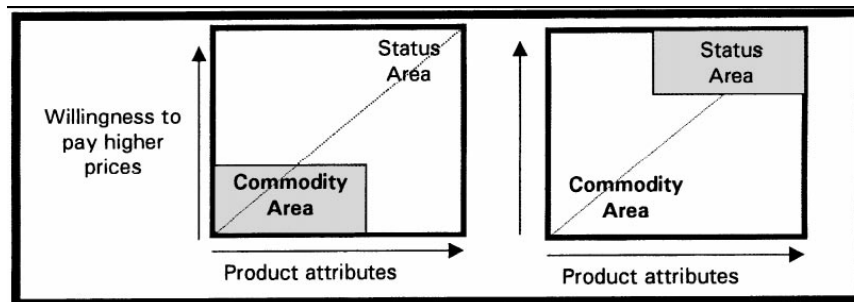
Destination marketing has been an integral part of the process of positioning unique features of the destinations in the competitive business environment because they work hard to achieve strategic objectives in an organized fashion. Providing innovative and well co-ordinated tourism products is therefore exceedingly important for tourism regions. Consumers assess their travel experience as a whole and they associate destinations with the entire range of local producers and suppliers. Producing innovative and specialized tourism products will enable destinations to attract intentional demand and to differentiate their products. Flexible specialization will also support local suppliers and the region as a whole to evolve with consumer trends and support the requirements of the emerging sophisticated clientele as well as compete globally. Destinations, which appreciate these principles, can develop and maintain competitive advantage and as a result achieve their strategic objectives. Partnerships between the public and private sector and close co-operation between all local suppliers are keys to the ability of destinations to offer quality products. Exceeding consumers'

expectations is instrumental for the ability of both suppliers and destinations to attract visitors in the long term. Hence the competitiveness of each supplier locally as well as their distributors determines the competitiveness of destinations. Local suppliers should co-operate rather than compete. Buhalis and Cooper (1998) argue that tourism suppliers at destinations need to mature and understand that they should not compete with each other at the destination level. Instead they should join forces and pool resources to develop and implement comprehensive marketing strategies which enable them to compete with other destinations. They can offer unspoiled natural landscapes and authentic socio-cultural resources inexpensively. In contrast, most traditional destinations suffer from their own success and the lack of a strict rational planning and management system. Having gone through most of the stages of their life cycle they have reached maturity or saturation and this has forced them to depend on the mass tourism for their operations. Often facilities require urgent renovation, but lack of financial resources and the unwillingness of consumers to pay must jeopardize the competitiveness of destinations further. Initiatives at the local level facilitated by both private and public sectors can improve the tourism product and by investment in resources, as well as the implementation of a comprehensive marketing strategy and mix supports the competitiveness of the destination. This is particularly important for small and medium-sized tourism enterprises, which traditionally dominate local supply but lack management and marketing expertise to operate their business professionally and financial resources to approach their target markets.

Taking advantage of new technologies and the Internet can also enable destinations to enhance their competitiveness. Technology can improve the efficiency of all local suppliers and also provide tools for the development and delivery of differentiated tourism products. Provision of information on local facilities and attractions and the ability to reserve the whole range of tourism products determines the ability to attract the new and sophisticated types of tourism demand. The recent evolution of Destination Management Systems (DMSs) reinforces destinations to co-ordinate the entire range of products and services offered locally and to promote them globally. The provision of differentiated and tailor-made products becomes much easier as consumers can assemble specialized products and construct their own itinerary. More importantly the new IT tools enable even smaller and peripheral players to compete on equal footage with larger and more

central ones. Therefore, the DMSs provide an unprecedented opportunity to enhance their competitiveness. One of the major benefits is the reduction of dependency on intermediaries for the distribution of tourism products. As a consequence, tourism suppliers are able to improve their negotiation power with powerful tour operators and can develop a healthier distribution mix. This is particularly significant for remote, peripheral and insular destinations where local principals and authorities have a great dependency on tourism for their livelihood but lack of expertise and resources to undertake comprehensive marketing campaigns. Finally, tourism destinations should learn from past mistakes and appreciate that their strategic management and marketing must lead to the optimization of tourism impacts and the achievement of their strategic objectives for all stakeholders. This paper presents a generic strategic marketing model derived from three strategy models, namely Porter's generic strategies, Gilbert's proposition for differentiation of the destination and Poon's analysis for flexible specialization. The paper then synthesizes their propositions in order to propose a generic strategy.

**Fig-3 : Generic Strategy Model for Destination Marketing**



Source: Adapted from Buhalis, (2000) p. 109).

### **Conclusion**

Destination marketing is increasingly becoming more composite and dynamic as tourists have developed an attitude and behaviour towards consuming a particular destination or a bunch of destinations as a totality of experiences and feelings. Tourists very often pay no attention to that tourism products consist of a great number of involvement of individual service providers. In the era of global competition and a high volume of industry concentration have created a series of new challenges for the destination developers and promoters. In this backdrop, destination marketing organizations have to follow the strategic objectives by laying

emphasis on the stakeholders' analysis and examine the appropriate demand with supply for the management of destinations, by using the entire range of marketing tools for communicating with consumers and suppliers. The new age tourists are gradually following special interests motivation factors and underpin their visitation as both recreational and educational experiences. In nutshell, destination themes and their interpretation has become more significant feature for the future course of action to be ensured for destination development. Human resource development is a key functional area for the destination development. There is an acute shortage of skilled and qualified personnel for the management of destinations. Thus training of human resources should be imparted to people working in the frontline of the tourism sectors as tourists have a high degree of interface with these personnel. There should be a sustained as co-operation and perennial linkage between competing and complementary destinations that will facilitate regions to learn from each other and adapt to demand requirements. In conclusion, it is imperative to elucidate that innovative technology based marketing led by cutting edge research with adequate technical and financial support from the destination marketing organizations will be the finest way to manage and market competitive destinations. As a result, a paradigm shift will certainly be possible to manage and regulate stakeholders in the destinations in order to achieve competitive advantage.

## References

1. Archer, B. (1996). *Sustainable tourism \* Do economists really care?*. *Progress in Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 2(3 & 4), 217}222.
2. Buhalis, D (2000) *Marketing the competitive destination of the future*, *Tourism Management*,21, 97-116
3. Buhalis, D., & Cooper, C. (1998). *Competition or co-operation: The needs of small and medium sized tourism enterprises at a destination level*. In E. Laws, B. Faulkner, & G. Moscardo, *Embracing and managing change in Tourism*. London: Routledge.
4. Buhalis, D., & Fletcher, J. (1995). *Environmental impacts on tourism destinations: An economic analysis*. In H. Cocosis, & P. Nijkamp, *Sustainable tourism development* (pp. 3}24). England: Avebury.
5. Burns, P. (1999). *Paradoxes in planning: Tourism elitism or brutality?*. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26(2), 329}348.
6. Chon, K. S. (1991). *Tourism destination image modification process:*

- Marketing implications. Tourism Management, 12(1), 68}72.*
7. Cooper, C. (1994). *Tourism product life cycle*. In A. Seaton, et al., *Tourism: The state of the art* (pp. 340}346). Chichester: Wiley.
  8. Cooper, C., Fletcher, J., Gilbert, D., Shepherd, R., & Wanhill, S. (ed.).(1998). *Tourism: Principles and practices, (2nd ed.)*. England: Addison-Wesley, Longman.
  9. Davidson, R. (1994). *Business travel*. London: Pitman Athiyaman, A. (1997). *Knowledge development in tourism: Tourism demand research. Tourism Management, 18(4), 221}228.*
  10. Evans, M. R., Fox, J. B., & Johnson, R. B. (1995). *Identifying competitive strategies for successful tourism destination development. Journal of Hospitality and Leisure Marketing, 3(1), 37}45.*
  11. Hall, C. M. (2000). *Tourism Planning: Policies, processes, relationships*.UK: Prentice Hall.
  12. Leiper, N. (1995). *Tourism Management*. Melbourne: RMIT Press.
  13. McKercher, B. (1995). *The destination-market matrix: A tourism market portfolio analysis model. Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing, 4(2), 23}40.*
  14. Middleton, V., & Hawkins, R. (1998). *Sustainable tourism: A marketing perspective*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
  15. Morgan, N., & Pritchard, A. (1998). *Tourism promotion and power: Creating images, creating identities*. Chichester: Wiley.
  16. Pigram, J. (1996). *Best practice environmental management and the tourism industry. Progress in Tourism and Hospitality Research, 2(3 & 4), 261}271.*
  17. Tribe, J. (1997). *Corporate strategy for tourism*. London: International Thomson Business Press.
  18. Wicks, B. E., & Schuett, M. A. (1993). *Using travel brochures to target frequent travelers and &big-spenders'. Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing, 2(2/3), 77}90.*
  19. Woodside, A. G. (1990). *Measuring advertising effectiveness in destination marketing strategies. Journal of Travel Research, 29(2), 3}8.*
  20. [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)