

2. Image and destination brands

Choosing a travel destination in times like these is not simply a choice, it is moreover a statement of lifestyle. What kind of journey is worth investing one's hard-earned money and relatively little leisure time into? The key to success for tourist destinations is to create a product that attracts potential consumers in an emotional way (Morgan et al. 2004, p. 60f). The tourist destination needs to offer something exceptional, otherwise the potential tourists will not be attracted (Howie 2003, p. 102). Therefore, a positive image development as well as a tourist destination's branding is inevitable to classify and differentiate one destination from another. As a result, the tourist should be attracted by a motivating communication strategy in order to select a specific tourist destination (D'Hautesserre 2001, p. 300).

"Images of destinations are in the 'mind's eye' whether these places have been visited or not." (Howie 2003, p. 101). To develop an assertive and coherent image, a country and therewith its marketing strategies need to be well positioned in the world's competing marketplace (Harrison-Walker 2011, p. 135f). In general, people have specific perceptions of tourism destinations all over the world, so-called country images. These images occur independently and often without influence of the countries' conscious development of a brand image. This is the outcome of different characteristics like the countries' culture, natural environment, traditions, artworks, music or celebrities, having their origin in this specific country. Consequently, country images affect the process of choosing a travelling destination (Morgan et al. 2004, p. 42).

Furthermore, the image of a destination is the outcome of different factors such as the recommendations and views of previous visitors, advertising campaigns like media statements in leaflets and newspapers or visible on television and the actual day-to-day life and local culture of the destination (Echtner and Ritchie 2003, p. 38). In addition to that, potential customers have individually formed images about a tourist destination based on their own experiences. Nevertheless, this perceived image often does not match the tourist destination's reality (Andreu et al. 2001, p. 50). The observed cultural disparity of a country plays a part in the travellers' selection of a tourist destination as well as the visitor's loyalty. Therefore, destination managers need to have a general understanding of their potential guests and their individual manners (Chen and Gursoy 2001, p. 82f), since the overall development as well as continuous control of the TDI components is the responsibility of the destination's management (Howie 2003, p. 102).

2.1 TDI and branding

In general, tourist destinations are specific areas where elements such as the local culture, the social system, the ecologic and economic situation as well as the political background can influence the public appearance in a positive, as well as negative way. Furthermore, the phenomenon of tourism in the respective country emerged unplanned or has been consciously

worked out (Howie 2003, p. 55). Pike (2007, p. 379), Ekinici (2003, p. 22), Agapito et al. (2010, p. 92) and Jenkins (1999, p. 2) agree that the most often quoted definition of a destination's image has been developed by Crompton (1979, p. 19) and is formulated as "the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination." Destinations all over the world have specific characteristics at their disposal, like the countries' cultures and historical backgrounds as well as its natural resources and landscapes. For a successful tourist destination it is essential to add an emotional component to the offered experiences, in order to attract potential customers and to transfer as well as provide a sustainable promise and therewith product claim (Morgan et al. 2004, p. 64f).

2.1.1 Types of images

In order to develop a basic understanding of the various types and image terms referring to tourist destinations, the author subsequently provides a detailed insight into the differences between an induced and organic image, as well as a transferred and perceived image.

2.1.1.1 Induced and organic image

Generally a tourist's destination image can be distinguished between the induced image and the organic image. An induced image is the result of overall advertising campaigns and marketing efforts that the management of a tourist destination actively undertakes. Printed materials like leaflets and tourist booklets are part of these marketing campaigns. Furthermore, the induced image should result in a successful position in the competing marketplace. The second image, the so-called organic image, is the result of informal as well as passive information obtained about a specific destination. This knowledge is gained over a longer period in life by talking to people in the surrounding environment such as relatives and the family as well as the memories created by tourist booklets and media publications (Howie 2003, p. 103). The organic image of a tourist destination includes a broad range of components such as the history, local culture, traditions and beliefs of a country. Therefore, tourist destination managers cannot be in full control or affect these elements in their entirety. Nevertheless, these components in particular should be seen as the foundation for the development of advertising campaigns for a tourist destination. The organic image plays an important role when developing successful strategies and marketing activities. Furthermore, the promotion of a country itself starts at a previously developed level, as many individual tourist destinations have a historical background that leads to an organic image, fully loaded with positive attributes. These attributes need to be well sustained in order to keep up the positive image. Conversely, there are destinations with a negative historical background, such as an economic downturn that might end up with a negatively charged organic image. Moving away from a negative image necessitates a transformation of the tourist destination's goods and therewith demands high amounts of financial resources. To summarize, the organic image of a tourist destination can also be defined as the main image of a destination as well as what

potential customers have in their minds about a destination before actually visiting the country (Hankinson 2004, p. 12ff). Consequently, the author uses both image types in the theoretically based research process model in chapter 7.1. A detailed analysis of the organic image will be given in chapter five of the theoretical part of this master thesis. Exploring the induced image is part of the second and empirical part and includes printed materials, leaflets and the Internet presence of the individual emirates. In addition to that, the author has decided to analyse on-topic newspaper articles. Nevertheless, a detailed transcription of the research process is provided in the seventh chapter of this master thesis.

2.1.1.2 Transferred and perceived image

Besides the differentiation of an induced and organic image, it is necessary to clearly distinguish the transferred and the perceived image of a tourist destination as well. The transferred image can also be categorized as the element “pull” in the overall decision-making process of a tourist destination. The image is transferred through various means of communication and promotion campaigns by tourism organisations like the local and regional tourism boards or travel companies, as well as the information available in various media channels. In contrast, the element “push” is part of the perceived image and refers to the individual needs and expectations, as well as the motivational factors of the potential customer. Each individual has different pieces of information available and therewith the images of various tourist destinations are formed through this information existing in the customer’s mind (Andreu et al. 2001, p. 50f). However, to stay unique as a tourist destination, the image needs to be transferrable and meet consumers’ needs. Furthermore, the transferred message has to be trustworthy and sustainable in the long-term (Morgan et al. 2004, p. 65). The image of a tourist destination needs to be closely related to the real and currently-lived culture in the day-to-day life and characteristics of the individual country (Govers et al. 2007, p. 16). Once tourists travel to the destination, the promoted destination image will be confirmed or overthrown through tourists’ perceptions and experiences on-site (Echtner and Ritchie 2003, p. 38). Nevertheless, if the promoted image of a destination and the real culture do not match, so-called gaps might arise referring to the image formation of a tourist destination (Govers et al., op. cit.), which will be discussed in chapter six, providing the theoretical orientation of this master thesis. Finally it can be stated (Andreu et al., op. cit., p. 48) that for tourist destination boards and therewith tourism organizations, the actually transferred image of a tourist destination is of particular importance. The image development of a tourist destination needs to be seen as a framework of multiple data and information available, rather than a single process (Govers et al., op. cit., p. 15).

The overall development and communication of a specific image of a tourist destination can generally be seen as a benefit to other competitors (Frias et al. 2012, p. 437). The image that tourists have about a specific tourist destination is strongly linked to its success (Morgan et al. 2004, p. 61). Clearly defined positioning strategies can lead to the emergence of a specific

image potential customers have in mind about a tourist destination, both in a positive and negative way. Therefore, it is vital for tourist destination managers to develop positively charged brands in order to be attractive to tourists in the long-term (Gertner 2010, p. 383).

As a result, destination managers need to develop and actively maintain the image of a tourist destination as well as the respective personalities, including the emotional aspect of this respective destination, in order to be successful in the long-term and effectively place the product on the competing marketplace (Hosany et al. 2006, p. 12). On the one hand, destination managers need to develop an attractive destination image. On the other hand a destination (in other words a positively charged product) that stands out from the competing marketplace needs to be provided (Harrison-Walker 2011, p. 137). The image of a tourist destination cannot be seen as one single aspect, but rather as a holistic process that requires the integration of all parties concerned as well as making use of the positive factors of this entire system (Howie 2003, p. 1). The overall strategies of a destination need to be coherent as well as up-to-date and in keeping with the changing trends in the market (Morgan et al. 2004, p. 64). Summing up, destination managers need to have a holistic perspective when developing the branding strategies and therewith a tourist destination in general.

2.1.2 Development of a TDI

As destinations have different promotional channels to develop their brand and image, including marketing campaigns, direct promotional activities, Internet presence, printed informational material and public relations campaigns (Morgan et al. 2004, p. 59) and the strategies of a destination have to be coherent in its transmission (Howie 2003, p. 1), the following subchapter should provide a detailed overview about possibilities of how to develop a TDI as well as the elements that need to be taken into consideration for the branding of a tourist destination. Basically, there are four main elements to consider when developing a tourist destination in general. First of all, the available, accessible and adequate resources need to be used for the formation of tourist attractions. As a next step, suitable hotels and lodging facilities have to be set up. The third element is the availability of a well-performing transportation network. This is necessary to provide the potential travellers a tourist destination with easy access from the individual home countries. The fourth and last element covers the overall development of the tourist destination in a holistic view, including the factor of sustainability and the performance according to the changing marketplace in a long-term view (Howie 2003, p. 73).

According to Ekinçi (2003, p. 21), the development of a successful and appealing destination image includes a three-step procedure including first the overall destination image, second the destination branding and as a third step the brand personality itself. These elements are directly interrelated with the tourist's self-image, including individual, essential needs on an emotional basis. As shown in the illustration below, the destination image is surrounding the

construct and consists of the subjective and personal information about a tourist destination, differing from person to person. The second step, destination branding, is crucial to building up the emotional aspect of a destination image itself and can therefore be categorized as inevitable. The third and last step is the destination personality, the human part of the process. This step is the key driver to arousing the destination image, using different characteristics like being unique or thrilling, or positioning itself as a family-friendly destination. To summarize, these steps and strategies are necessary in order to develop a unique destination image and brand, by utilizing selected interaction tools and product development methods to finally achieve a distinctive tourist destination personality (ibid., p. 22f).

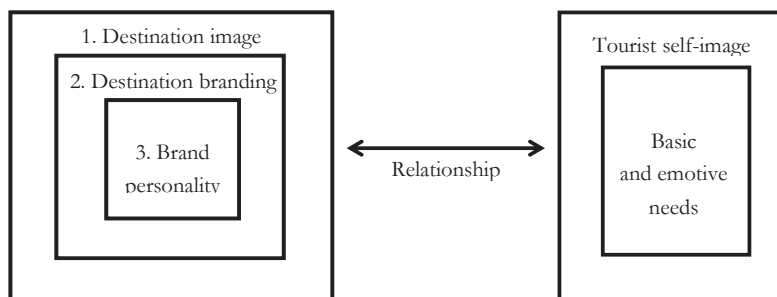


Fig. 1: Three-step procedure: Destination image, branding and personality
Source: Ekinci 2003, p. 21

Focussing on the aspect of branding, the brand itself can be seen as the strongest element in advertising a tourist destination and the most valuable element of a successful brand is uniqueness (Morgan et al. 2004, p. 60f). Four aspects should be considered when developing the branding strategies and achieve a unique position in the competing marketplace. The first aspect is distinctiveness. The overall statement or slogan of a destination needs to be strong, unique, clearly defined and distinguishable, even if the name of the specific destination or country was removed and therefore wasn't visible for potential consumers. The next aspect covers the area of singularity. If a destination tries to attract each and every target group, this would not only cause confusion in the mind of potential tourists but would moreover lead to a complex image development process. Therefore, the tourist destination needs to clearly define its target group in order to position itself appropriately in the marketplace. Acceptance is the third element and deals with the level of approval, not only on behalf of the tourists, but also on behalf of the inhabitants of the tourist destination (Harrison-Walker 2011, p. 141f). The local people need to support and should be in keeping with the overall strategies of a destination. Otherwise, there might be a difference between the transported and actually perceived promise and consequently the image about a country (Quelch and Jocz 2005, p. 231). The fourth and last aspect is translatability. The overall statement of positioning needs to

be coherent with the countries' values, but also clearly understandable and applicable by the concerned stakeholders (Harrison-Walker, *op. cit.*).

As Morgan (2004, p. 48) states, "Tourism requires image-making and branding grounded in the place's reality." However, destinations are different and therewith address different target groups. Successful tourism destinations need to know exactly what they are going to place in the competing market and they need to be aware of the individual guests' expectations and requirements. A successful destination image should not only appeal as being trustworthy, but also fit to the local conditions of the individual country (*ibid.*, p. 47f). Tourist places are more complex than tangible products and require a higher association with the countries' characteristics to attract our fast-moving society (Pike 2005, p. 258).

In conclusion, every culture is different and therefore the promotion and marketing of a tourist destination internationally is affected by this circumstance as well (Javalgi and White 2002, p. 563). Tourist destination managers need to be aware of what kind of image already exists about the country in the minds of individual travellers as well as companies across the globe. This knowledge is the essential basis for the development of a strong destination brand, which leads to an appealing and successful destination (Hankinson 2004, p. 7). In times like these, destination managers have a broad variety of marketing tools in order to generate a TDI. Nevertheless, the pride of the people working in an organization, as well as the local citizens living and working in a tourist destination itself, are some of the most valuable ways to reach a distinctive position in the competing marketplace, particularly through employees who are directly positioned at the front lines, dealing with the customers' expectations and needs. As a result, being proud of the country that one lives in, the organization that one works in, or the own cultural background is not only a strong emotional expression, but also part of daily motivation. Furthermore pride can strengthen working together in a team and additionally boost the individuals' commitment (Katzenbach 2003, p. 35). Therefore, developing a TDI often needs to begin with the people actually living and working in the country and can affect the image of the destination in a positive way (Balakrishnan 2008, p. 66). The local culture, tradition and beliefs, in other words the organic image, needs to be the basis for developing and advertising a tourist destination (Hankinson, *op. cit.*, p. 12f). In addition to that, destination managers need to be aware that the communication patterns in an intercultural way can differ completely from each other and might end up in difficulties like misunderstood content or an appearance (facial expression, body language) due to a lack of intercultural knowledge (Javalgi and White, *op. cit.*, p. 569).

According to Mr. Jeff Swystun, Global Director of Interbrand, the branding of a destination in fact leads to developing a brand of the individuals living or working in the respective country. These people are responsible for giving the tourist destination an image and symbolizing it. It is not about where a tourist destination is situated geographically, it is much more about the locals who make the difference and highlight the uniqueness of their countries

and tourist spots. Due to Mr. Swystun, the cultural background of a country plays a vital part when developing a strategy for branding and image creation of a destination (Shikoh 2006, onl.).

2.2 Challenges and obstacles

Developing a country's image as a tourist destination needs to be thoroughly considered to successfully develop a position in the competing marketplace (Morgan et al. 2004, p. 45). The process of engineering, managing and organizing the image of a tourist destination can be seen as a complex process in comparison to individual companies in the marketplace (Howie 2003, p. 55). As a result of its complexity, the brand development of a tourist destination cannot be compared to the branding strategies of traditional goods or services (Gertner 2010, p. 384). Tourist destination managers need to be aware of the internal situation of the individual country, in other words the strengths and weaknesses, as well as the external situation, including possible opportunities and threats. The overall development of a destination's marketing strategies and image need to be in line with the vision of the country's government and the local inhabitants, as well as the stakeholders concerned. Poorly developed strategies as well as an inconsistent image might influence the tourists' choice of destination for this specific country in a negative way. Once a country's image as a tourist destination has received a negative connotation, destination managers are forced to transfer the negative image into a more positive one by developing innovative, powerful and positive associations with the destination instead of getting lost in defending the negative image. The trigger of the problem needs to be analysed in order to move on with a successful transfer of a country's image in the long-term (Morgan et al., op. cit., p. 45ff). Nevertheless, only 19 per cent of the United Arab Emirates' population are official citizens (CIA 2012, onl.). As the tourism industry is directly linked to the service sector and individuals consequently build the major part in order to guarantee a high level of service quality, this results in a challenge for the United Arab Emirates (Balakrishnan 2008, p. 68).

In times like these, tourist destination managers need to recognize at an early stage if a tourist destination and its brand necessitates an innovative approach. A poorly managed tourist destination brand will lead to a failing position in the competing marketplace (Morgan et al. 2004, p. 68). Nevertheless, tourist destination managers do not have full control over the existing information, communication and publicity about their own destination image. The reason for this is the broad range of information sources available all over the world, including the experiences of a tourist's relatives, friends or colleagues, the overall media and print campaigns (travel brochures, books) as well as the entertainment medium containing films and celebrities (Gertner 2010, p. 384). Regardless, tourist destination managers must be in control of the communication media that are within their power, including self-developed advertising and marketing campaigns. It is necessary that these messages appear in the marketplace in a consistent way and transfer a proper image of the destination as well as the offered services. If

the transferred image does not represent reality on the ground, the customers' expectations are overthrown and cannot be met. As already mentioned, there are various communication channels that tourist destination managers cannot have full control over. Regardless, all possible efforts must be undertaken in order to guarantee a coherent and positive appearance (O'Cass and Grace 2003, p. 468). Furthermore, it is important to immediately react to a negative image or communication in order to avoid the destruction of the brand. The key to success is a permanent observation and control of the transferred messages, as well as being open and prepared for the changes a tourist destination brand requires. Each and every change that has to be carried out needs to involve the brand in a coherent way (Morgan et al., *op. cit.*, p. 74). According to Dinnie (2008, p. 52), tourist destinations and their promotional activities often fail to develop a unique statement for the country's strengths like beautiful beaches, an appealing culture or the positive way of living. Therefore, coherent promotional and marketing strategies, including materials and further advertising activities of a destination, are important tools in developing and maintaining not only an attractive image, but also in achieving a strong position in the tourism marketplace (Harrison-Walker 2011, p. 137).

Another important aspect that needs to be considered when developing the image of a tourist destination is the financial aspect. Various resources are needed in order to set up and maintain the individual strategies of a destination. These resources can be divided into the financial ones and into the more organizational part, including the factor of time (Harrison-Walker 2011, p. 144). To lay emphasis on the financial challenge, a comparison of the marketing budget of the company "Sony" and the annual budget of most of the national tourist destination companies all over the world, which is nearly the same, points out the obstacle for tourist destinations in general (Morgan et al. 2004, p. 62). According to Hankinson (2005, p. 25), tourist destinations having higher amounts of financial means at their disposals, are more likely to be successful when developing an attractive and positive TDI and brand. As a consequence thereof, elements such as the countries' historical background, local inhabitants, celebrities having their origin in this country or the overall status of the country are positively influenced (*ibid.*). Besides being constrained by limited financial resources, there are additional challenges that destination managers have to cope with, such as the political circumstances, both inside and outside the respective destinations, economic crises and terrorist attacks as well as natural catastrophes. In particular, the challenges regarding terrorism, political circumstances and possible negative media reports may be reasons for a negative image of a destination and could harm it irreparably (Morgan et al., *op.cit.*).

To summarize, the development of a successful tourist destination, its brand and therewith the transferred image and reputation is an on-going, long-term process. If the brand of a tourist destination is well managed and maintained, it can lead to tremendous success as well as to huge returns. One of the most important aspects is the involvement of the destination's vision

and has to be displayed in both the tourist commodities as well as the overall service experience. The brand of a successful tourist destination typically consists of a coherent, significant and attractive advertising campaign containing the core values and consequently has the potential to develop an enormously innovative and pioneering brand. Every tourist destination striving for a successful destination brand and image has to be aware of the strengths and advantages of branding. The tool of branding does not only offer the possibility to create a brand, fully loaded with emotion, but can also be seen as a tool to develop customer loyalty and therewith positively influence the individual image of potential customers (Morgan et al. 2004, p. 74ff). The overall branding strategies of a tourist destination need to be in line with the requirements of the concerned stakeholders (Balakrishnan 2008, p. 76). Finally it can be stated that the target of image developers needs to be an image development and transfer that is as authentic as possible (Haberman and Dolphin 1988, p. 15).

Although there has been lot of research done in the overall field of developing brands, there is still a lack of research in the area of branding tourist destinations and creating destination images. The first book in this field was released in 2002, and the first journal articles were published in the late 1990s (Pike 2005, p. 258f). In addition to that, there is a lack of research in measuring the image of a tourist destination in a more psychological aspect including the cultural background (Echtner and Ritchie 2003, p. 45). Furthermore, the expression image is linked to other phrases, such as reputation, awareness, mind-set, trustworthiness, confidence, and connection as well as the transferred statement. Due to the variety of definitions, it is hardly possible for a researcher to clearly evaluate the image of a specific country. In addition to that, the image might appear as surreal and fake when it comes to the emotional stage and human beings could possibly perceive the transferred image as controlled, smoothed, blurred and enhanced (Grunig 1993, p. 124). Until now, no profound scientific statements have been established about the image of the United Arab Emirates as a tourist destination brand with special focus on the incorporation of the Arabian culture when developing the image strategies. This fact consequently results in the need for research for this master thesis. Furthermore, this chapter partly builds the basis for the proposition building in subchapter 7.5 and include aspects as the importance for image developers having a holistic perspective when developing image strategies, different image types such as the organic and induced image as well as the transferred image of a tourist destination brand.

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Using the Example of the United Arab Emirates

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