CHAPTER 4: AUSTRALIAN TOURISM MARKETER'S BRAND UTILIZATION

4.1 Introduction

The examination of Destination Branding from the DMOs perspective has been the most popular approach of researchers in this topic. In the case of National Tourist Brands, it is the National Tourist Office that has been the central focus of the studies. Examination of NTOs branding activity has focused primarily on case studies of specific national tourist offices branding activities. In particular Britain, Spain, New Zealand, Australia and the Balkan countries have received attention in recent years. The study in Chapter 3 provides a broader perspective of the branding activity than has preciously been undertaken. Nevertheless, it is proposed that an examination of the destination branding from the perspective of other stakeholders will provide even richer insight to the overall nature and benefits of National Tourism Branding.

As noted previously, although the NTO is often the initiator and coordinator of the National Tourism Branding processes, other groups are stakeholders in the process and may receive benefits from the process. Figure 4.1 provides a representation of the stakeholders in relation to the brand. Some stakeholders are driven by domestic influences; some by market driven influences. In order to gain greater insight into the NTB processes, a study was developed to look at two commercial stakeholder groups; tourism product operators and tourism wholesalers. These groups are important in the product/destination delivery to consumers. These stakeholders therefore generate much of the direct economic benefit created by tourism that NTOs are charged to stimulate for their nations. These stakeholder groups also have the greatest financial interest in the branding process. This financial interest can occur in at least two ways; firstly product may be direct beneficiaries of marketing and branding programs undertaken by NTOs; secondly they may be financial contributors to the campaigns.

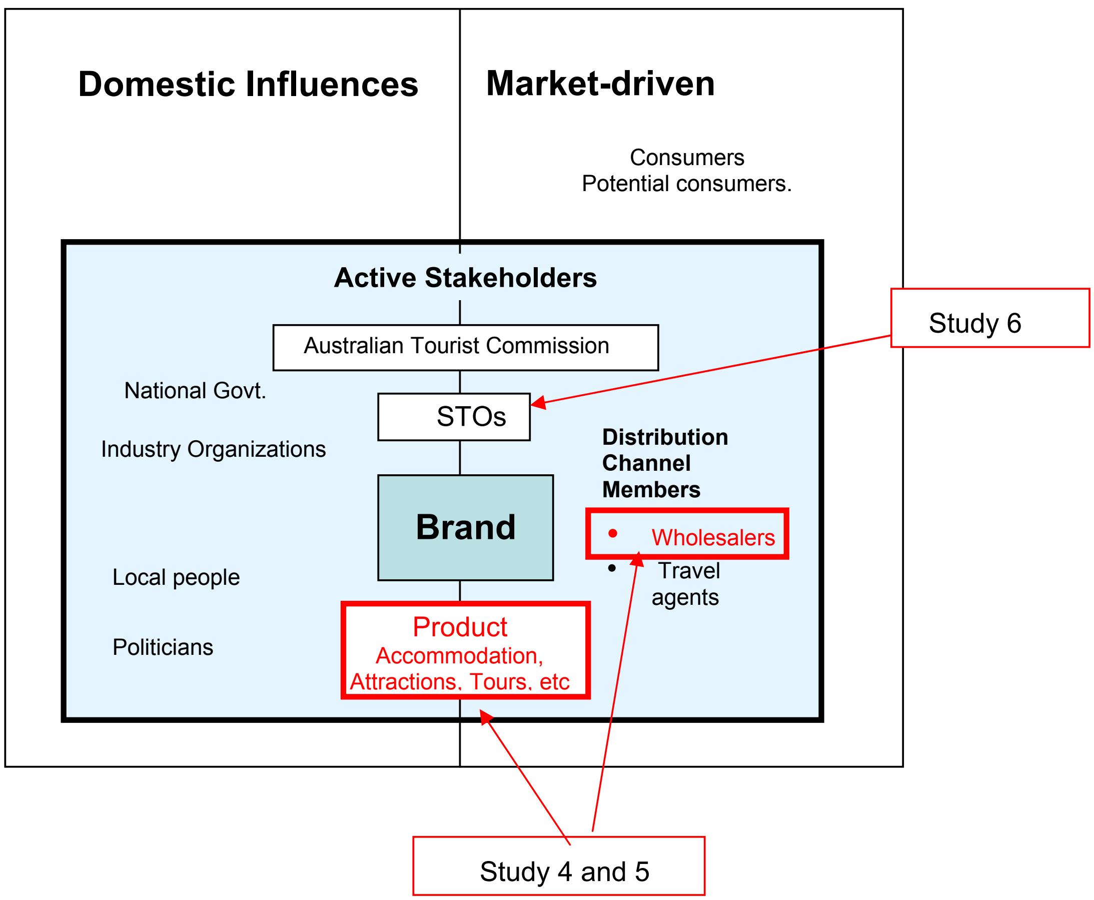

Figure 4:1 Stakeholder Model

As noted, Australia has been active in national tourism branding for some time and it was determined that an examination of the branding process from the perspective of Australian tourism product and the wholesalers that sell Australian travel, would provide insights into the NTB process and benefits. Although Australia undertakes branding across the globe it was decided to focus on the American marketplace. The United States, as noted previously, is the largest, and in many ways most sophisticated, media marketplace in the world. It provides great challenges for product and wholesalers in reaching appropriate target markets and so the national branding efforts are particularly important in this environment.

Chapter 4 is organized as follows:

4.2. **Content analysis of Brand Australia Brochures in the USA.**

This section commences the chapter with a more detailed examination of Brand Australia as it is used in marketing materials, specifically two motivational brochures produced in the late 1990s.

4.3 **Content Analysis – Australian Travel Wholesalers.**

The content analysis of the ATC brochures is compared to an analysis of the use of Australian images and copy in tour wholesalers brochures produced in the same time period.

4.4 **Study 5 and 6 – Australian Tourism Marketers Brand Study**

The chapter then moves to review the results of Study 5 and 6 – which review the benefits of Brand Australia from the perspective of two commercial stakeholders groups: travel product and travel wholesalers. The studies examine the characteristics of the stakeholders as well as their participation in the brand development process, the benefits these stakeholders perceive they receive from Brand Australia and their views on the future of Brand Australia.

4.5 State Tourist Office Leadership Opinion Study.

The chapter then examines the role of State Tourist Offices in the branding process. This section looks at both the interaction of the STOs with the National Tourist Branding process and their own branding activity in the USA.

4.6 Summary and observations.

A summary of the key findings and observations of the study.

4.2 Content Analysis of Brand Australia in the USA.

In order to understand how the brand values translated into marketing tools used by the Australian Tourist Commission in their American activities a content analysis was undertaken on two brochures, produced in 1997 and 1999, which were designed to motivate travelers to visit Australia. These brochures were deliberately developed to express brand values to potential visitors. Bob Monfrini, Director of Consumer Marketing at the Australian Tourist Commission, oversaw the production of these brochures. In his words these brochures "represent our most current thinking on the brand at the time of their production".

The explicit brand values, previously described in Chapter 2, are outlined again in table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Brand Australia Values and Personality

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Source ATC Online **(Australian** Tourist **Commission, 2002b)**

There are many ways that creative for advertising or promotional materials could be developed to represent these brand values. Nevertheless, based on these brand values, it is reasonable to expect that the creative execution would include the following:

Writing style:

The writing style would be expected to be informal and personal, as if sharing information with a friend. Australian colloquialisms would be mixed with copy to add flavor without confusing readers.

Key Messages:

Key messages included would include hospitality and welcome, adventure and experience, wildlife and wilderness, style; food, and culture.

Images:

Images would include Australia's unique wildlife, iconic destination images, friendly locals; visitors interacting with locals and the natural environment. The creative layout would express the vibrancy of the people and landscape to support the "colorful" brand personality attribute.

In order to test these expectations content analysis was undertaken of brochures representative of the brand values being presented by the Australian Tourist Commission during the years of the study. Content Analysis is defined by Babbie (2002) as "the study of recorded human communications". Krippendorff (1980) adds to this definition by asserting: "Content Analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their content'. Content analysis has been used extensively in the analysis of destination image and brand. Recent examples of content analysis of brochure images for tourism brand/image research include Wales (Pritchard & Morgan, 1996a) Ireland, Wales and Scotland (Pritchard & Morgan , 1996b), US State marketing materials (Sirakaya & Sonmez, 2000), English Cities (Hankinson, 2001) and comparative studies of multiple destinations brochure material (Dilley, 1986).

4.2.1 Methodology

The content analysis looked at two dimensions of the ATC's motivational brochures:

1. The images used in the brochure, and
2. The written content /copy used in the brochure.

In a two stage approach, a brief comparison was made of the two brochures noting changes in formatting and approach. A more detailed analysis was undertaken on the brochure produced in 1999. This approach is justified given the brochures are very similar but the 1999 edition reflects greater levels of learning and experience in presenting the brand. The images were examined along a number of criteria. Those criteria included:

- content, particularly in terms of the relationship between the destination and people, either locals or visitors;
- group structure;
- gender of people in the images;
- age of the people in the images;
- types of activity in the images; and
- the inclusion of animal images.

In examination of the images it became clear that the use of "iconic" and "non-iconic" images played important roles in the development of a visual representation of the destination branding. As noted earlier, "icons are landmarks that are instantly recognizable" (Becken, 2005), and for the purposes of this study "iconic" images are images that would be readily identifiable as “Australian” by the target audience. Given a relatively limited familiarity with Australia, as noted in image studies undertaken by Day, Skidmore and Koller (2002) there are a relatively limited number of “iconic images” of Australia. Those iconic images include the Sydney Harbor Bridge, The Sydney Opera House, Ayres Rock (Uluru) and images of some Australian Animals including Kangaroos and Koalas

Copy was examined in terms of references to key brand cues, destination icons, barriers and colloquialisms. Two units of observation were used in the analysis:

> **Specific words:** The analysis tracked use of specific place names and Australian colloquialisms in the copy of the brochure.
>
> **Key concepts:** Sentences containing key points or concepts regarding geographical information, references to brand cues; and barriers to travel.

4.2.1.1. Preliminary comparison

It is noted that the second brochure (1999) represents an “updating” of the first brochure (1997) to reflect the evolution and refinement of the expression of the brand through copy and images. In broad terms both brochures cover the same topics and body copy is essentially similar. Nevertheless, there are differences in the way the same basic information is presented.

The first edition motivational brochure (1997), “No Worries Australia” uses colloquialisms and Australian Slang more frequently to describe pages of copy.

The “headers” or page titles on each page illustrate this point. As Table 4.2 shows – the headers on the first brochure used Aussie Slang and Colloquialisms in an effort to convey the branding; the second brochure, while still using some of Australia’s unique language, made greater effort to ensure the target market understood immediately what the content of the page was about by using both headers and sub-headers. These “sub-headers” or sub-titles on each page provided added meaning and explanation for colloquialisms used in the branding.

Table 4.2: A comparison of brochure headers 1997:1999

1997 Header	**1999 Header**	**1997 Sub Header**
Wombats don’t fly	A completely different Animal	*How to see some of the weird wildlife*
Get All Tuckered Out	A Taste of things to come	*A sampling of Aussie Food and Wine*
Go Walkabout		

The content of the two brochures is very similar. The ATC used basically the same order for the contents. They used the same maps in both brochures and 20 images were used in both editions. Nevertheless, as evident in figure 4.1, the look of the second brochure is quite different from the first. The second brochure uses a “hero” image on each double spread page that covers virtually all of one page in the spread. The result is that the images are far more impactful on the later brochure. Pritchard and Morgan (1998) observed a similar effect in the use of images of Wales in promotional materials and noted “the depth of the branding experience emerges not just from frequency of the use of brand signatures, but also from their prominence.”

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First edition

Second edition

Figure 4.2: Motivational Brochures – Edition 1 (1997) and 2 (1999)

4.2.2 Image Analysis of Motivational Brochure - 1999

The analysis looked at the images in the brochure from a number of perspectives. The inclusion of destination images, animals, the people in the shots, the group structure, their gender, age, the activities being undertaken were all examined from the perspective of the brand positioning.

In all there were 101 images, including maps but excluding Australia "icon' graphics, on the 23 pages of the motivational brochure produced in 1999.

Table 4.3 ATC Motivational Brochure – Image Analysis

Image Analysis	
Total Images	101
Content	
Map	20
Iconic Destination Images	12
Destination Images	32
Non-Destination Images	31
Interaction with Destination	
People with Destination Ques	26
People without Destination Ques	27
Group Size	
0 people – images with no people	19
1 person	9
2 people	28
3 people	4
more than 3 people	13
Gender	
Male	67
Female	53
Age	
Children	3
Youth	1
25-55	36
55 plus.	2
Activity	
active	23
dining, eating or drinking	12
reflective	9
relaxing	8
welcome	6
"vacation" shots	10
Animals	
Aussie Animals	11

Table 4.3 provides a summary of images classified by various categories. Key findings are discussed in the following sections.

4.2.2.1 Destination Images

Images that include destination references can be considered in two ways. Images can be iconic and therefore immediately recognizable as “Australian”. The Sydney Harbor Bridge or Uluru are examples of these iconic images. Some images will be contextually iconic – for instance - an aerial image of the reef in an Australian brochure is likely to represent the Great Barrier Reef. Other destination images will not necessarily be immediately recognizable as “Australian” but in the context of the motivational brochure will reinforce and even add to understanding add to the understanding of Australia. These destination images are contextually Australian.

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Figure 4.3 Iconic and Non-Iconic images

Of the images in the motivational brochure 12 were iconic destination images and an additional 31 were destination images that added to the impressions of Australia through their inclusion in the brochure.

It is interesting to note that 31 images did not include destination references to Australia. These are typically close-up images of people and rely on the fact that the images are in the "Australian" brochure to convey they represent Australian experiences.

A subjective assessment of the images to determine whether the people in the shots were Australians or visitors was included in the analysis. There were greater numbers of images with what appeared to be visitors than there were of Australians. Only 12 images included Australians and visitors together.

4.2.2.2 Group Structure

The most popular group structure, appearing in 28 of the pictures, was two people. The majority of these dyads were clearly "couples". There were 13 images with more than three people in the image. These pictures tended to be either small group social settings or crowds at events such as the football or a festival. A total of 19 images were destination images without any people at all.

4.2.2.3 Gender

The brochure has significantly more males than females although the inclusion of a large number of images of couples provide balance in the brochure.

4.2.2.4 Age

The images clearly reflect the age group of the target market. There are a few (3) images of children and people clearly over 55 but the vast majority of the people included in the images fit the target age group of 25-55 years of age.

4.2.2.5 Activity

A total of 23 of the images were determined to be “active”, that is the participants were actively participating in the topic of the picture. A far smaller number, 8 or about a third of the number of activity shots, were “relaxing shots. An additional 12 images included dining, eating or drinking.

Figure 4.4: Active and Reflective Images

Admittedly subjective assessment placed 9 images as “reflective’; 6 images were clearly welcoming and 10 were typical “vacation shots”.

4.2.2.6 Animals

Perhaps one of the most interesting things about the collection of Australian images is the lack of Australian animals. There are 11 images of animals in the brochure including one each of the iconic Aussie animals including a koala, a kangaroo, a platypus and a wombat. Interestingly there are more images of camels than any other animal. Although camels have a long history in the Outback they are not an "iconic" image of Australia.

4.2.3 Copy Analysis

As noted, this brochure was considered at the time it was produced to be the embodiment of the brand thinking. The brochure's imagery, layout and content reflect how the marketing team at the Australian Tourist Commission believed the brand could best be communicated to the target audience.

Table 4.4: ATC Brochure – Analysis of Written Brand Elements

Brand Elements	Total References
References to key brand cues	**43**
Overcoming Barriers	**12**
accessibility, planning assistance, affordability and time	
Geography	
Geography	**43**
Destination References	**98**
Colloquialisms and Key words	**70**

As part of the analysis references to brand elements were identified in the copy. References were defined as ideas that convey meaning about brand elements and included sentence fragments, sentences, sections of paragraphs or whole paragraphs. These references covered a number of topics identified as supporting brand development and included:

Based on this analysis there were 42 brand references on the 21 pages with copy in the brochure or 2 references per page. Most frequently referred to brand elements include “wildlife and nature”, “food and wine” and “welcome, hospitality and friendliness”. There is extensive use of colloquialisms in the brochure as well. Each page has on average 3.3 colloquialisms. Most commonly used colloquialisms, in order of frequency, include: “G’day”, “No Worries”, “Oz”, “Aussie” and “Downunder”.

The copy also addresses the perceived “barriers to travel” to Australia. Copy references to these perceived barriers include references to ease of planning, ability to see the destination in a two week period and indicative pricings.

In addition to conveying the brand elements the brochure provides geographic information about Australia. This information is provided not as a comprehensive planning tool but as a means to motivate potential travelers to experience a wide range of activities. Geographic references were defined as ideas that convey information about Australia, its natural or man-made environment. Again these references could take that form of sentence fragments, sentences, sections of paragraphs or whole paragraphs.

Interestingly it was found that there were 43 geographic references, the same number of references to geography as there were to brand elements. Specific references to place names are frequent in the copy. There are 98 references to specific places in the copy. This equates to 4.7 references per page. The inclusion of specific geographic information as well as “brand cues” indicates that the ATC was appealing to cognitive images of the destination as well as affective associations.

4.3 Content Analysis: Wholesaler Travel Brochures

Following the content analysis study of the Australian Tourist Commission motivation brochures an examination was conducted of a number of travel wholesalers' brochures. These brochures are distributed widely and are also an important resource for American planning to travel to Australia. In conducting the comparison it is noted that the primary purpose of the two types of brochure – that is, motivational brochures and product brochures – is different.

4.3.1 Methodology

A selection of brochures produced by major Australian Wholesalers was examined in terms of their consistency with core destination messages, tone and imagery. The following brochures were examined: Contiki, Brendans Tours, ATS, Goway, Swain Australia Tours and Qantas Vacations. These wholesalers are a generally representative mix of important wholesalers operating in the market during the study timeframe.

Brochures were examined in terms of content featuring Australia, destination information and the style and tone of the copy. Brochures were also examined in terms of the imagery they presented on the destination.

4.3.2 Copy Analysis

None of the brochures were purely Australian Product; each brochure included New Zealand and most included South Pacific Islands. These brochures therefore needed to reflect the brand values of a number of distinct destination brands in addition to addressing corporate brand development. Nevertheless, Australia is the primary destination in most of these brochures accounting for, on average, 56% of each brochure.

Table 4.5 Wholesalers –Copy Analysis

Wholesaler		**Total pages**	**Australia pages**		**Aust Map**	**General Destination pages**	**Regional destination introductions**
Contiki	Australia and New Zealand	44	20	45%	yes	1	no
Brendans	Australia, New Zealand and South Pacific islands	60	36	60%	no	0.66	3 intros
ATS	Australia, New Zealand, Tahiti, Fiji, Orient	74	48	65%	yes	0	
Goway	Australia, new Zealand ,South Pacific: Downunder	68	40	59%	yes	0	yes
Swain	Australia New Zealand & South Pacific	108	57	53%	yes	0	yes
Qantas Vacations	Australia, New Zealand, Fiji& Tahiti	84	45	54%	yes	0	no

These brochures devote an extremely small amount of space to “general destination” information. The majority of wholesalers do provide regional/city level destination introductions in order to provide context to the product offerings – hotels, tours and attractions - in each section.

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Figure 4.5 Destination Copy – wholesaler brochures

The copy is written in a neutral tone and does not include the Australian Colloquialisms common in the ATC motivational brochure.

4.3.3 Image Analysis

Although scant resources are devoted to Brand Development from a copy perspective, wholesalers use imagery extensively. The adage – “a picture is worth a thousand words” appears to be the working assumption for wholesalers attempting to convey as much information about the destination experience as possible. The review of images used by wholesalers reveals that wholesalers use slightly more images of general Australian images, termed “Australia images” in this examination, than they use of the specific product they are selling. As Table 4.5 shows, 52% of images used on the Australia pages of the wholesalers brochures are “Australia images”. Wholesalers also use a large number of non-iconic images on their pages and so provide considerable visual detail of Australia.

Table 4.6: Wholesale Brochures - Image Analysis

	Total Number of Images	Product Images	Australia Images	Iconic Images	Non-Iconic Images
Qantas Vacations	223	164	59	9	50
Swain Australia	184	83	101	16	85
ATS	65	19	46	6	40
Brendans	47	18	29	7	22
Goway	120	39	81	14	67
Contiki	70	19	51	6	45
Total Images	**709**	**342**	**367**	**58**	**309**
Percent of total images		48%	52%		
Percent of Australian Images				16%	84%

Despite the limited space devoted to written descriptions of the destination noted in the previous section it is clear that wholesalers consider providing information on the destination as an important activity. As Table 4.6 shows, the wholesalers dedicate a high proportion of their available brochure space to "non-commercial" destination images and use these "Australia images" to add new dimensions to consumer's perception of the destination. In this way it is argued that they are appealing to the "holistic" image development of the destination.

In building the overall image of the destination the wholesalers use iconic images to reinforce perceptions and support established images of the destination while adding many images that are not iconic but provide new associations for the destination. It is interesting to note that there are over five times as many "non-iconic" images used as icons. This reflects the limited ability of the icons to tell the whole story of the destination and the commitment of the wholesalers to provide a "broad" perspective of the destination to appeal to their target market. Examples of the brochures and the destination images used by the wholesalers can be viewed in Figure 4.6.

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Figure 4.6 Images – Wholesalers Brochures

4.3.4 Content Analysis Observations

The content analysis provides clear insight into several areas of the destination branding process. In the case of the brochures produced by the Australian Tourist Commission it is clear that the ATC was able to employ a wide variety of techniques to provide specific details for planning a visit to Australia and give a general sense of the destination and the character of its people. In crafting the brochures ATC used the copy, including use of colloquialisms, the tone of the writing style, type font and imagery to convey brand elements. The brochure provides very specific geographic information with insights into the culture and style of the location. As such, it is clear that it is acting on what Echtner et al (1991) describe as both attribute and psychological dimensions of image.

The wholesalers' brochures provide a far more limited "brand experience". Although there is limited research available of the activities of tour wholesalers marketing activities, at least one recent study notes that tour wholesalers provide very limited non-product specific information in their brochures (Pennington-Gray, Reisinger, Kim, & Thapa, 2005). As a group, the wholesalers in the content analysis do not use the copy to convey the destination message to a great degree; instead they focus almost exclusively on images to convey the brand message. The images are by no means constrained to product specific images. As noted, approximately half the images used in these brochures show non-product related images of the destination. The wholesalers use both iconic and non iconic images that "broaden" the understanding of the destination at a "cognitive" level but do little to address "affective" or emotional connections.

4.4 Studies 5 and 6 – Australian Travel Marketers.

These studies examine the perspectives of two stakeholders groups, tourism product and tourism wholesalers, with respect to the brand itself, and to the role of the Australian Tourist Commission. The questions were developed to examine the core themes identified in Chapter 1. That is, the questions examine these two stakeholder groups' perspectives on: the nature of Brand Australia, the benefits of branding, the process of branding and their interaction with the Australian Tourist Commission. The study also examines the stakeholder's views on future brand directions and their views on the process in the future.

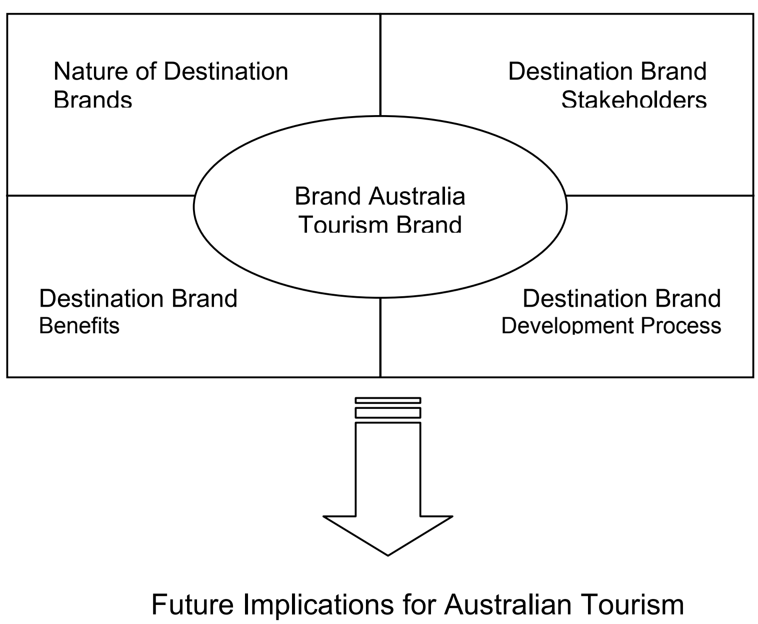


Figure 4.7: Thesis Issues – Brand Australia

The thesis issues model – Brand Australia shown in table 4.2 emphasizes the interaction of the 4 aspects of the brand examined through the two studies described in this chapter. These studies examine key questions regarding the nature of branding including addressing the importance of identification of the product's brand with Brand Australia. It also addresses the characteristics of the stakeholders and their interaction with the Australian Tourist Commission, the lead player in the Brand Australia branding process. The questions also explore the stakeholder's participation and engagement in the branding process. Finally, the studies examine the benefits accrued by the stakeholders from the branding process.

4.4.1 Methodology

An online survey was developed for each of the two key stakeholder groups, wholesalers of Australian travel product and tourism product sold in the United States. These groups were chosen because they are the directly involved in the marketing of Australian tourism product in the United States. They also have the most vested interests in the process. Both groups spend relatively large amounts of their budgets on marketing for the primary purpose of converting consumer interest in Australia to sales for Australia.

4.4.1.1 Participant selection – wholesalers

Travel companies operating in a source market that aggregate travel product and sell it to consumers either directly or via travel agents are called "travel wholesalers" or simply "wholesalers". A list of qualified wholesalers was developed through consultation with the ATC and North American based STOs. The list was compiled based on participation at major Australian travel tradeshows - including the Australian Tourism Exchange and Oztalk– the two major travel trade shows for the United States market, as well as brochured Australian travel product, and other marketing and sales activity. Individuals within the travel wholesalers were chosen on the basis of responsibility for the marketing of the Australian product sales. Depending on the size and scope of the wholesaler these individuals hold titles including President, Vice President of Marketing, Marketing Manager or South Pacific manager or similar. A total of 53 companies were identified.

4.4.1.2 Participant selection – tourism product

A similar process was undertaken to identify Australian tourist product (i.e. Hotels, attractions, tour operators) that were committed to the United States market. Companies were once again identified based on their involvement in ATE and Oztalk. Feedback was then provided by the regional management of each of the STOs in market on the level of involvement and commitment of each product to marketing and sales activity in the United States. STO managers were asked to identify product that were actively engaged in the market based on sales activity and level of distribution in the market. The individuals at these companies were identified who had responsibility for US sales and marketing. Depending on the size and scope of their organizations the individuals in the target group have titles that include Owner, General Manager/CEO, Director of Sales, Business Development Manager, International Sales manager or similar. A total of 235 companies were identified as fitting the criteria.

4.4.1.3 Online Questionnaires

Two questionnaires were developed; one for the product and one for the wholesalers. The majority of questions in each instrument were the same to allow for comparative analysis between the two groups. The questionnaires were placed on specially developed websites; respondents completed the questionnaire online and response data was collected on the website and transferred to excel files for analysis in SPSS.

The Questionnaire included questions addressing the following issues:

- Characteristics of the companies queried including marketing priorities and activities;
- The importance of "Australian" branding to their marketing communications;
- Their understanding of the contributing factors that lead to consumer awareness, desire and travel to Australia;
- The impact and benefits of Brand Australia on their marketing;
- Awareness of and involvement with the ATC's Brand Australia, and
- Their opinions of the importance and direction of brand Australia in the future.

The questionnaires were administered between August and November 2004. The distribution of the questionnaires was staggered with the product questionnaire being distributed first. Contacts were removed from the email list as they completed their questionnaires. Each contact received up to 3 emails requesting their response.

The first **product** questionnaire email was sent August 9, 2004; the final reminder for the product questionnaire was September 23, 2004.

In order to raise participation levels for the product version of the questionnaire a hardcopy version was developed and distributed to product in the target group participating in Oztalk 2004. Eleven operators responded in this way and their answers were added to the excel spreadsheet prior to analysis in SPSS.

The first **wholesaler** questionnaire email was sent August 31, 2004; the final reminder for the product questionnaire was November 3, 2004

4.4.1.4 Response Rate

Reponse rates were higher for the wholesaler group than for the product operators.

Table 4.7: Responses

Questionnaire	Number of potential respondents	Responses	Response rate
Product Operators	235	76	32%
Wholesalers	53	24	45%
Total	288	100	35%

4.4.2 Stakeholders

In order to better understand the organizations under examination a series of questions were designed to provide insight into the activities and roles of both the product suppliers and the wholesalers. As noted in figure 4.7, the topic Destination Brand Stakeholders is one of the four inter-related aspects of the brand analysis model used in this thesis. Understanding the characteristics of the stakeholders involved in these studies is a useful point of departure for this section of the thesis.

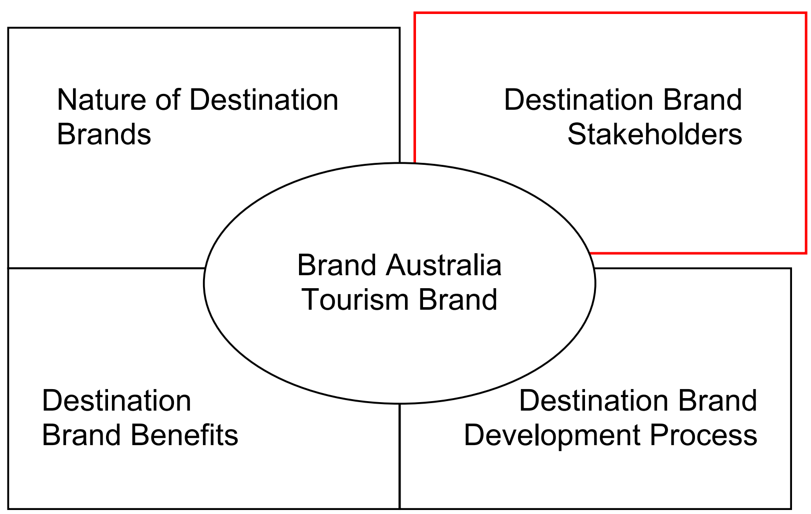


Figure 4.8: Thesis issues – Stakeholders – Brand Australia

Respondents to the questionnaires represented a spectrum of types of operations involved in the sales of Australian tourism product in the United States. As noted; there were 24 wholesale company respondents. In addition, Australian based companies representing tour operators, hotels, attractions and other operators were represented.

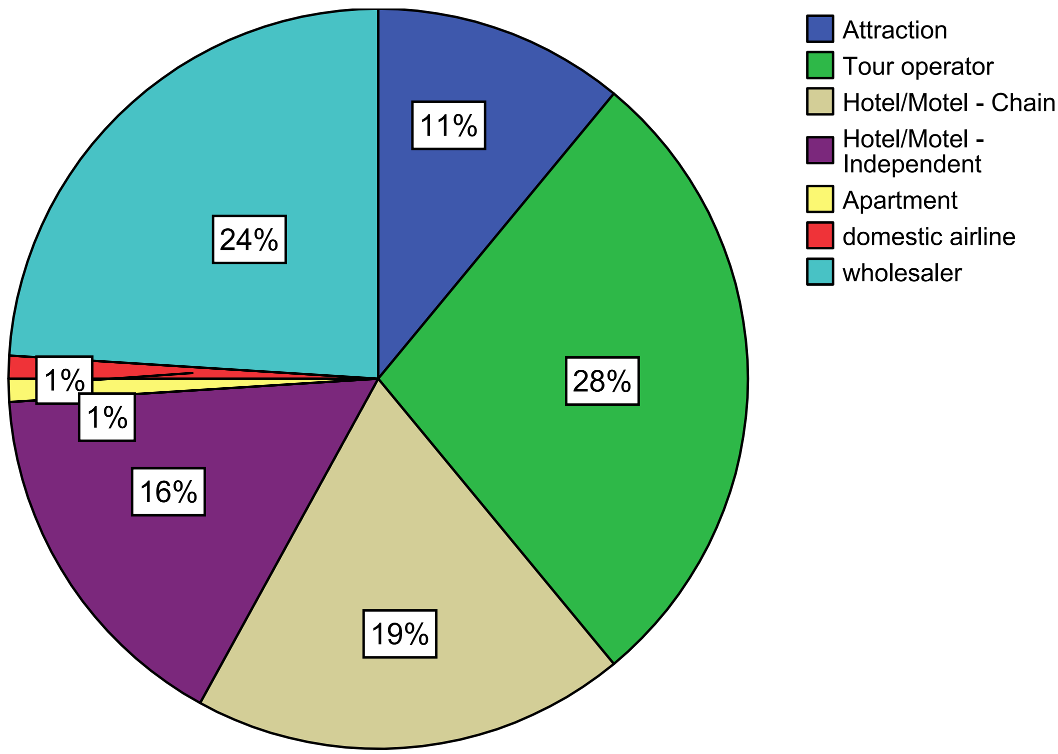


Figure 4.9: Respondents to Australian Tourism Market Study by Type of Company.
Sample size (n) = 100

4.4.2.1 Stakeholders: Australian Based Product

The 76 Australian-based product respondents shared the following characteristics. As noted in Table 4.2, as a group these companies rely heavily on overseas visitors for business. Almost 55% of respondents reported more than 41% of their business came from international visitors.

Table 4.2: Australian Product - What percentage of your total business came from international visitors in 2003?

Percent of business from International visitors	Response Percent
0-10	13.2
11-20	1.3
21-30	19.7
31-40	10.5
41-50	14.5
51-60	9.2
61-70	6.6
71-80	9.2
81-90	7.9
91-100	6.6
Missing	1.3
Total	100.0

Sample Size (n) = 76

When asked to rank 8 overseas source markets according to their importance. The product operators ranked markets as follows: UK, USA, Europe, New Zealand and Japan (Table 4.3). A Friedman test revealed that there were significant differences in the ranks.

Table 4.3: Importance of select international markets to respondents.

Rank	**Country**	**Average Ranking**
1	UK	2.35
2	USA	2.97
3	Europe	3.16
4	NZ	3.96
5	Japan	4.44
6	South East Asia	5.86
7	China	6.49
8	North Asia	6.59
Friedman Test Chi-Square = 227.688 Asymp. Sig. = .000		

Scale: 1 = most important international market; 8 = Least important international Market.
N=72

Even though the group was chosen for its commitment to the US market, the UK was still a more important market to these operators on average. Examination of these results, shown in Table 4.3, indicates a strong tie between companies marketing in UK, Europe and New Zealand.

The US is an important source of business for these products. Over 85% of respondents receive up to 30% of their international business from US with the median response in the range 11-20% of international business from the United States. The distribution of the responses on the percentage of business for these products from the United States is represented in Figure 4.10.

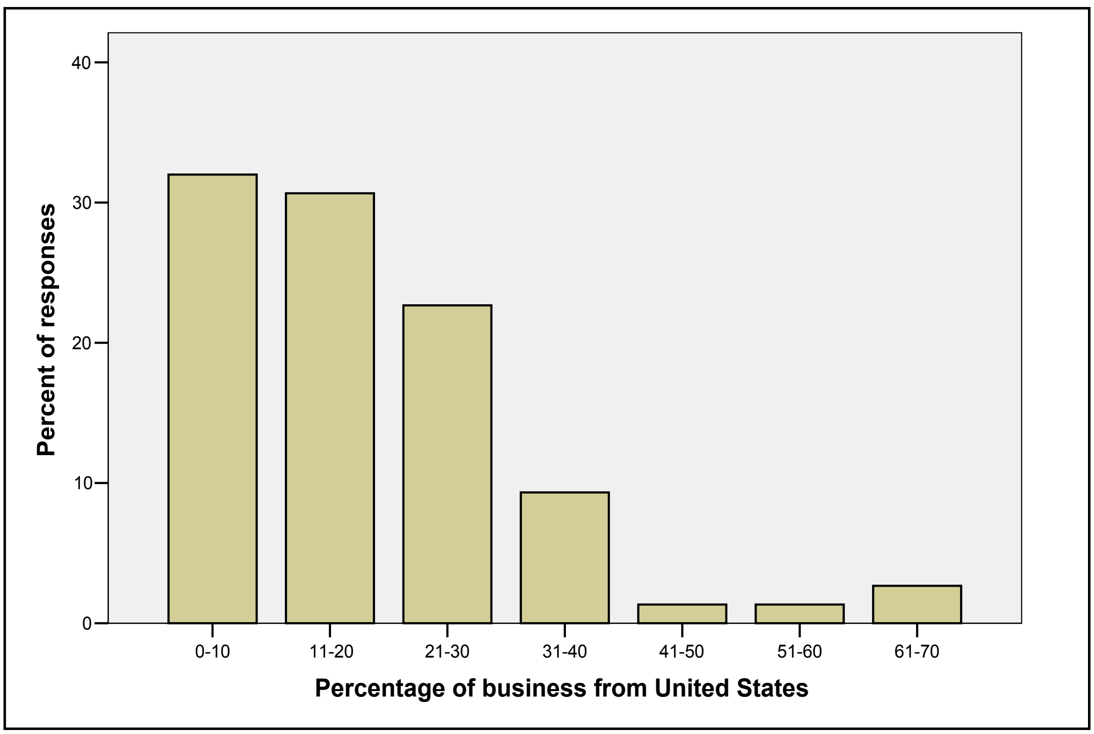


Figure 4.10: US business as a percentage of international business
Sample Size (n) = 75

In terms of visitors, 44% of product respondents report receiving up to 2000 US visitors and a further 20% receive between 2001 and 4000 passengers. Figure 4.6 indicates the distribution of passengers reported by product respondents. Nevertheless, a small number of operators receive large numbers of US visitors; 10% of operators receive over 18,000 passengers.

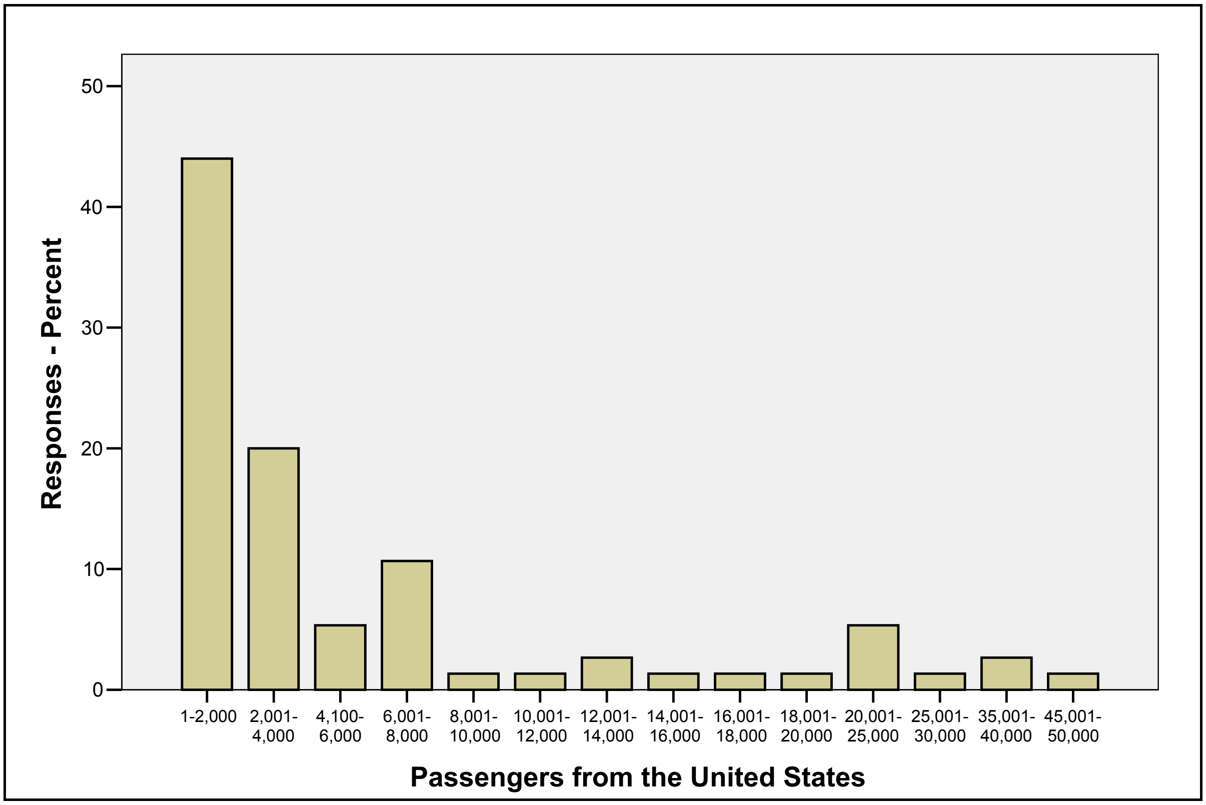


Figure 4.11: Product - How many passengers did you receive from the United States in 2003?
Sample size (n) = 75

Products marketing in the United States undertake a variety of activities to support the sales of their product as indicated in Table 4.4. Both sales calls and brochure support, that is contributing funds to wholesaler’s brochure production costs to ensure product placement, are done by 80% or more of the product operating in the market. Of product operators, 57% undertake some public relations and a just over 4 in 10 undertake sales incentives with intermediaries in the marketplace. A further 67% distribute general-purpose brochures in the market while just 20% produce and distribute brochures specifically designed for the US market.

Table 4.10: Marketing Activities undertaken in the United States by Australian tourism product.

Marketing Activity	Percent
Sales Calls	83%
Brochure support	80%
Distribute general purpose Brochures	67%
Public Relations	57%
Sales Incentives	41%
E marketing with Australia.com	33%
Advertising	32%
Produce and Distribute Brochures for US market	20%

Sample size (n) = 76

An analysis of responses to the query of what other marketing activities are undertaken by these product reveals web-marketing and trade related activities as important activities (Table 4.5) Web-marketing, other than through Australia.com, was identified as an important activity for these products. Organized trade sales activity, including participation in Missions and tradeshows (Oztalk, ATE, and Corroboree) were cited as other important marketing activities for product selling to the US market. Most of these activities are trade marketing activities and so would have limited consumer branding application. Of this list of marketing activities only web-marketing is likely to have a consumer focus.

Table 4.11: Summary of other marketing activities undertaken by product in the US market.

Activity	Frequency
Web-marketing	8
Oztalk	7
STO Missions	7
Other tradeshows	4
Familiarizations	4
ATE	3
Corroboree	3
Marketing to Inbound Tour Operators	1
Co-operative Marketing	1
In market representation	1

As noted in Figure 4.7, marketing expenditures by Australian products in the United States tend to be quite modest, with 50% of respondents reporting spending below $20,000 on marketing in the US, including sales call costs. Over 90% spend under $60,000. Four companies report spending in excess of $140,000 on the market.

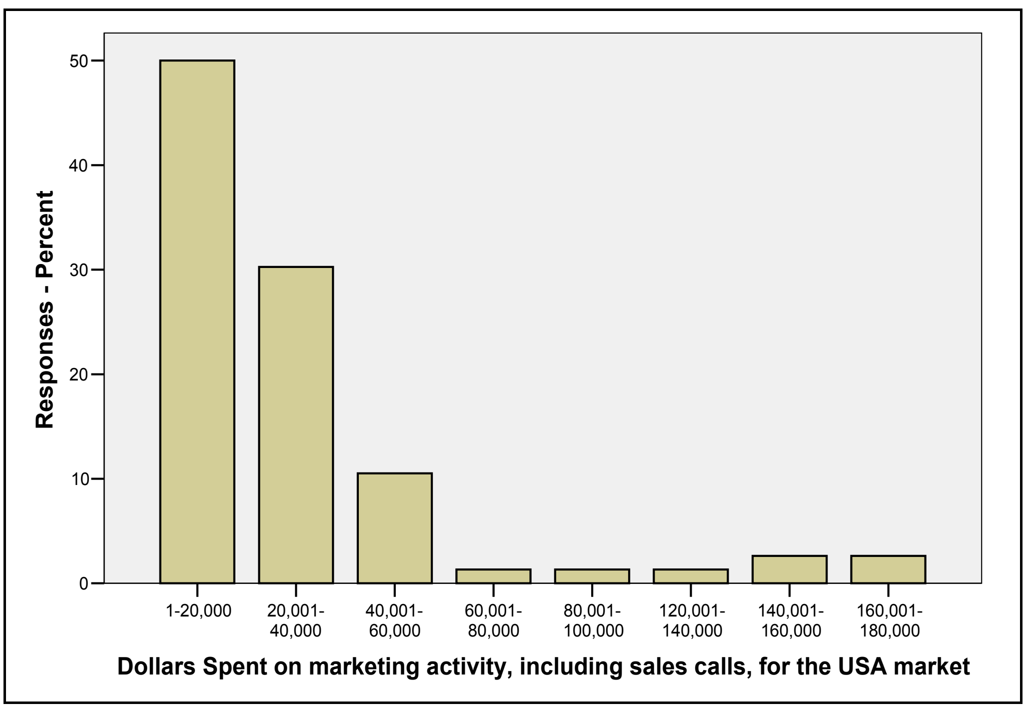


Figure 4.12: Marketing Spend in the United States by Australian Travel Product
Sample Size (n) = 76

4.4.2.2 Stakeholders - Wholesalers

The wholesalers responding to the questionnaire show significant commitment to Australian/US tourism. Australia was ranked as their most important market, followed by New Zealand (Table 4.6). As highlighted in Figure 4.12, Australia is an important part of their business of the respondents with 2/3^{rds} sending more than half of their international travelers to Australia.

Table 4.12: Destination Priorities of select wholesalers

Rank	Destination	Value
1	Australia	1.96
2	New Zealand	2.96
3	South Pacific Islands	4.04
4	Asia	4.48
5	Europe	4.59
6	UK	4.91
6	Canada	4.91
Friedman Test *Chi-Square = 34.227* *Asymp. Sig. = .000*		

Scale: 1 = most important international market; 8 = Least important international Market.
N=22

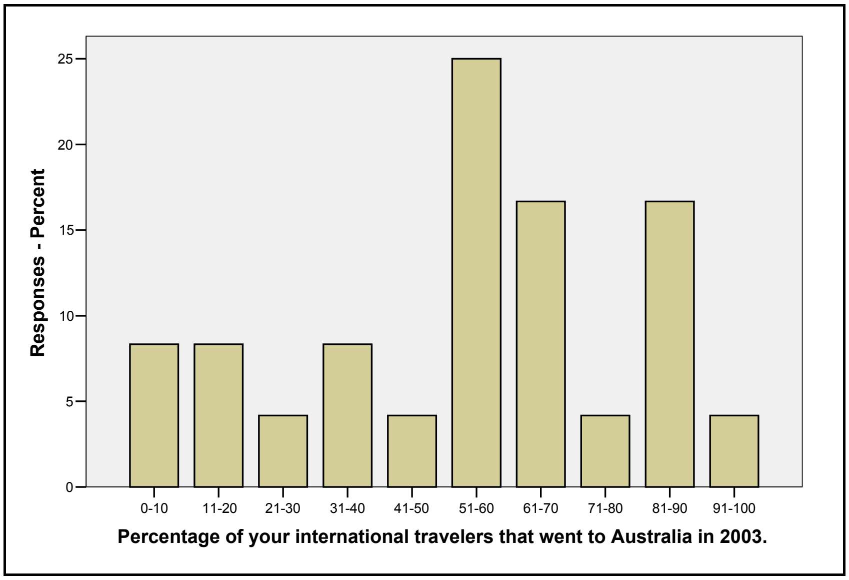


Figure 4.13: Wholesale - What percentage of your international travelers went to Australia in 2003?
Sample Size (n) = 24

In terms of actual passengers the wholesale companies responses skew to the lower ranges. Figure 4.9 shows that while two companies reported sending in excess of 22,501 passengers, more than 58% of companies report sending fewer than 2,500 passengers to Australia in 2004.

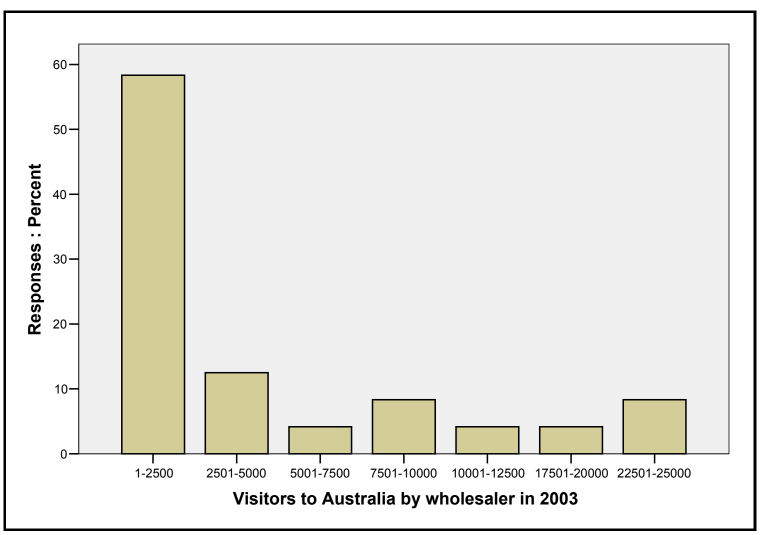


Figure 4.14: Wholesalers - Visitors sent to Australia
Sample size (n) = 24
Median Range = 1-2500 passengers.

Wholesalers rely heavily on traditional sales activity in bringing their product to market. Sales calls were the most important marketing activity undertaken by the wholesalers, although e-marketing also has a prominent place in marketing product in the market. Public relations followed by sales incentives and advertising, rounds out the top 5 most commonly undertaken marketing activities.

Table 4.13: Marketing activity undertaken by wholesalers in the United States.

Type of Marketing	Percent
Sales Calls	92%
E-marketing	83%
Public Relations	75%
Sales Incentives	71%
Advertising	71%
Distribute general purpose Brochures	67%
Brochure support	42%

Sample Size (n) = 24

Wholesalers marketing expenditure also skewed to lower ranges as can be seen in Figure 4.15. The median expenditure range was between $100,001 and $150,000 although over 40% of respondents reported expenditures under $50,000. Four companies reported expenditures on marketing in excess of $1,000,000.

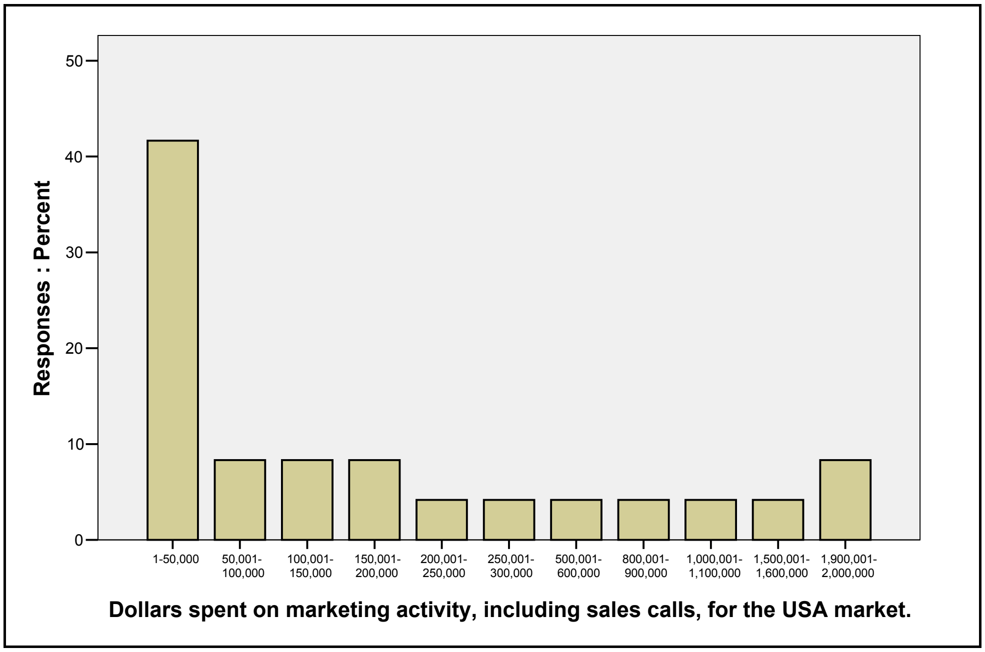


Figure 4.15: Budget spent on marketing activity, including sales calls, for the USA market by wholesalers.
Sample size (n) = 24

4.4.3 Nature of Destination Brands – Australia

Having established an understanding of the stakeholders being addressed in these studies it is worthwhile examining the nature of the destination brand, as illustrated by figure 4.16. The questions in this section relate to the stakeholders willingness to be associated with the “umbrella” brand of Australia.

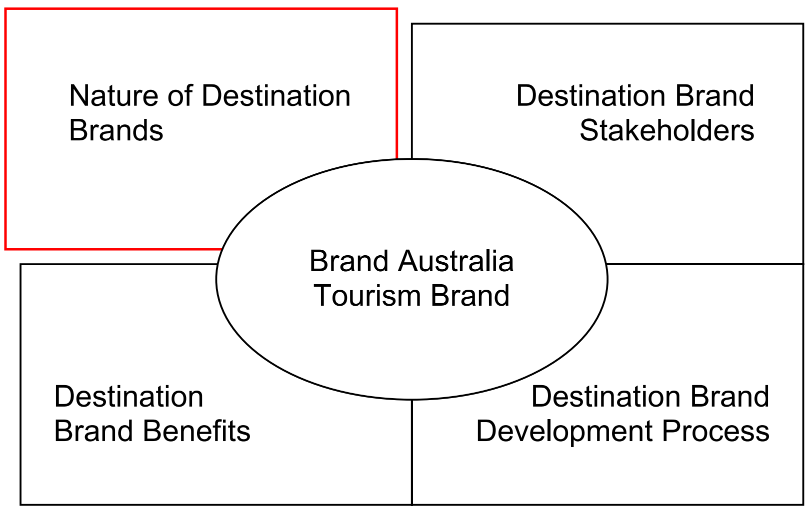


Figure 4.16 Thesis Issues – Nature of brands- Brand Australia

Although it is acknowledged that there are differences between the wholesalers and the Australian based product they share many similarities given their relationship in the product sales and delivery process. This paper will examine their response to a variety of questions associated with Brand Australia as a single group – Australian Tourism Marketers – as well as identifying any significant differences between the two groups.

Table 4.14 examines a number of ways that association with Australia impacts the companies participating in the study. When marketing their Australian product in United States these organizations, product and wholesalers, consider identification with Australia “very important”, with the median recording the highest level of importance on a 7-point scale and a mean of 6.32 on a 7 point scale. Also important, though less important than Association with Australia as a whole, was emphasizing the city or local region in which is located (mean 5.8 on a 7 point scale) and identifying the State of Australia in which is located (5.62 on a 7 point scale).

Although there is no significant differences between the means for the product and the wholesalers in the question “identifying your product with Australia or aspects of Australia (t value = -1.508, p = .143), the Australian based product clearly value association with their state (6.07) and local region/city (6.21) more than the US based wholesaler value the same associations (4.21 and 4.50 respectively). Using the same scale; in which 1 was “strongly disagree”, 4 was “neutral” and 7 was “strongly agree”; respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the question” it is important to emphasize the “Australian-ness” of my product to consumers in the United States”. The mean response to this question, indicating a strong agreement level of agreement, was 5.8. Of respondents, 81% agreed that emphasizing “Australian-ness” was important. A t-test of the two means showed no significant difference in the means of these the two product types.

Table 4.14: Marketing impacts of Association with Australia

	Combined	Product	Wholesalers	Significance
Importance of identifying your product with Australia or aspects of Australia	6.3	No significant difference between groups		
The importance of emphasizing "Australian-ness" of my product.	5.8	No significant difference between groups		
Importance of identifying your product with State	5.62	6.07	4.21	t=-4.732 p =.000
Importance of identifying your product with region	5.80	6.21	4.5	t=-4.738 p =.000
Being associated with Australia assists my marketing efforts	6.15	6.4	5.4	t=-2.931, p =.007

Scale: 1 = (Not important) to 7 = (Very Important)

Similarly, the question was asked regarding their level of agreement with the following statement: "being associated with Australia assists my marketing efforts in the United States". On a 7 point scale on which 1 was "strongly disagree", 4 was "neutral" and 7 was "strongly agree" the combined group's mean response was 6.15. This result is also represented in Figure 4.17.

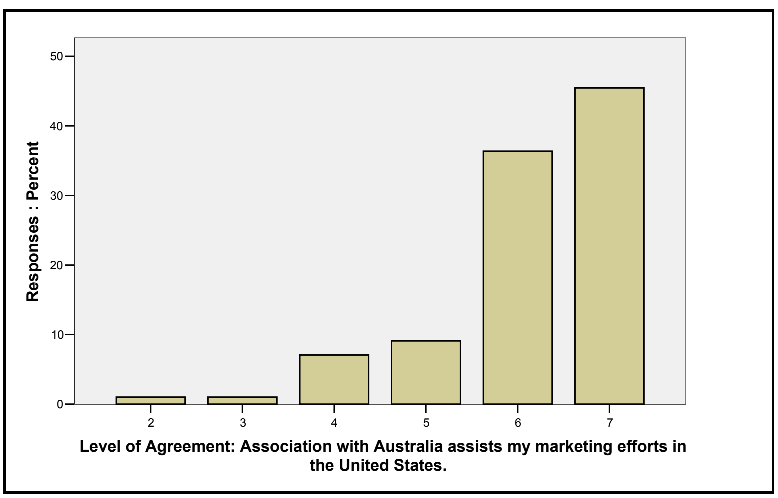


Figure 4.17: Level of Agreement: Association with Australia

Scale: 1= strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree

Mean 6.15

Median 6

Again, Australian based product responded with a significantly stronger level of agreement ($t= -2.931$, $p= .007$ mean 6.37) compared to the US-based wholesalers (mean 5.43) when asked if being associated with Australia assists their marketing efforts. It is also interesting to note the stronger value that product places on being associated with Australia and on the state and regional destination sub-brands. One possible reason for this difference is that the products "proximity", both literally and figuratively, may lead them to overvalue their destination brand's equity in the minds of international consumers.

The stakeholders involved in this branding process have differing roles in the destination branding process and differing expectations of benefits. They also have different relationships with the Australian Tourist Commission, the key developer of Brand Australia. As the thesis addresses the destination brand development process, one of the four key aspects of destination branding as noted in Figure 4.18, it will examine how these products integrate their marketing with Brand Australia.

4.4.4. Destination Brand Development Process

The Australian Tourist Commission has been the key driver in the deliberate development of Brand Australia. This section examines the extent to which the Australian Tourism Marketers are aware of and engaged in this process.

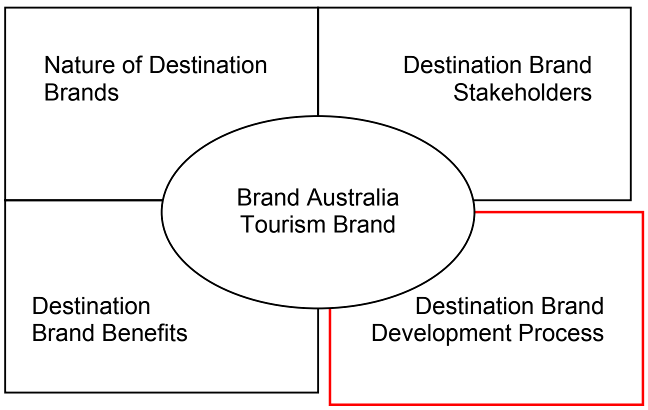


Figure 4.18: Thesis Issues – Destination Brand Process – Brand Australia

As noted previously, NTOs have limited resources and the American consumer market place is an extremely competitive environment. One way in which destinations can extend their reach is to provide a “branding platform” for other stakeholders to use in developing marketing campaigns. Of course, even in the event that such a platform is produced, adoption of the resources will only take place if they add value to the stakeholders marketing activity. In order to explore stakeholder attitudes to this issue questions were asked about the appropriateness of developing brand guidelines and going to market with a uniformed approach.

Table 4.15: Procedures and Protocols for Marketing Australia in the United States

	Combined	Product	Wholesalers	Significance
Australia's National Tourist office should present guidelines in presenting Australia.	4.76	No significant difference between groups		
Australian travel product should present a uniform message about Australia when selling in the United States.	5.01	5.34	3.96	t=-3.456 p =.002

Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)
Sample size "combined" (n-Combined) = 100
Sample size "product" (n-product) = 76
Sample size "wholesalers" (n- wholesalers) = 24

4.4.4.1 Stakeholder's acceptance of Guidelines and Uniformity of Promotion.

Using the scale in which 1 was "strongly disagree", 4 was "neutral" and 7 was "strongly agree"; the levels of agreement for "Australia's national tourist office should provide guidelines in presenting Australia in overseas markets was 4.76 for the combined group (Table 4.15). There was no significant difference between the groups on this question. Given that a grade of 4 on these scales is neutral these responses do not indicate particularly strong support for this concept.

The combined group showed marginal support for a "uniform" message about Australia when selling in Australia. Indicating their level of agreement to the statement "Australian travel product should present a "uniform" message about Australia when selling in the United States" the mean response was 5.01 as shown in Table 4.15. Australian based product showed significantly (t=-3.456, p=.002) higher levels of agreement (mean 5.34) compared to the "neutral" US based wholesalers (mean 3.96).

4.4.4.2 Stakeholders' Awareness of the ATC's Brand Australia program

The Australian Tourist Commission provides a significant amount of information to operators about their branding work, as well brand consistent images for product to use. A series of questions were asked to determine levels of familiarity with the Brand Australia and the results of those queries are displayed in Table 4.16. In these questions the respondents were asked to provide their level of agreement with several statements using a 7 point scale in which 1 represents "strongly disagree", 4 is "neutral" and 7 is "strongly agree". Respondents agreed (mean 5.89) that they were aware that the Australian Tourist Commission has developed a branding strategy for Australian tourism. Respondents also agreed they were aware of the key designs components of Brand Australia and its goals (5.46) and the key copy points of Brand Australia (5.43) although awareness of these specific aspects of the brand reported lower levels of awareness than awareness of the general strategy. Respondents were least likely to agree they were aware of the effectiveness of brand activity in the US market. This question had the lowest mean responses of this series of questions. There was no significant difference in the responses to these questions between the Australian Operators and the Wholesalers

Table 4.16: Stakeholders understanding of Brand Australia

	Combined	Product	Wholesalers	Significance
I am aware that the Australian Tourist Commission has developed a branding strategy for Australian Tourism.	5.99	No significant difference between groups		
I am aware of the key design components of Brand Australia	5.46	No significant difference between groups		
I am aware of the goals of Brand Australia.	5.43	No significant difference between groups		
I am aware of the key copy points of Brand Australia.	5.22	No significant difference between groups		
I am aware of the effectiveness of brand activity in the US market.	4.54	No significant difference between groups		

Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)
Sample size "combined" (n-Combined) = 100
Sample size "product" (n-product) = 76
Sample size "wholesalers" (n- wholesalers) = 24

Of all respondents, 63% reported having read the Brand Australia pages on the ATC's Australia.com in the last 12 months. This online resource is one of the chief sources of information on Brand Australia for the travel industry.

4.4.2.3 Stakeholders Utilization of Brand Australia elements

Only 21% of respondents report using Brand Australia elements, such as images from the ATC, suggested copy styles or other items provided by the ATC, in developing their collateral materials, such as promotional brochures or catalogs. In this respect North American wholesalers were far more likely to have used the resources than were Australian based product. As shown in Table 4.17, over 45% of wholesalers report using Brand Australia elements compared to just 13% of the tourist products (chi sq =11.739, p=.001). It is interesting to note that the wholesaler group, which is least supportive of presenting Australia with a uniform image, have a significantly higher utilization of the brand Australia elements provided by the ATC.

Table 4.17: Utilization of Brand Australia

		Wholesalers	Product
In developing collateral have you utilized Brand Australia elements? (e.g. Images from ATC, suggested copy style, other items provided by the ATC)	Yes	45.8%	13.2%

Chi sq = 11.739, p=.001
Sample size “product” (n-product) = 76
Sample size “wholesalers” (n- wholesalers) = 24

4.4.5 Destination Brand Benefits

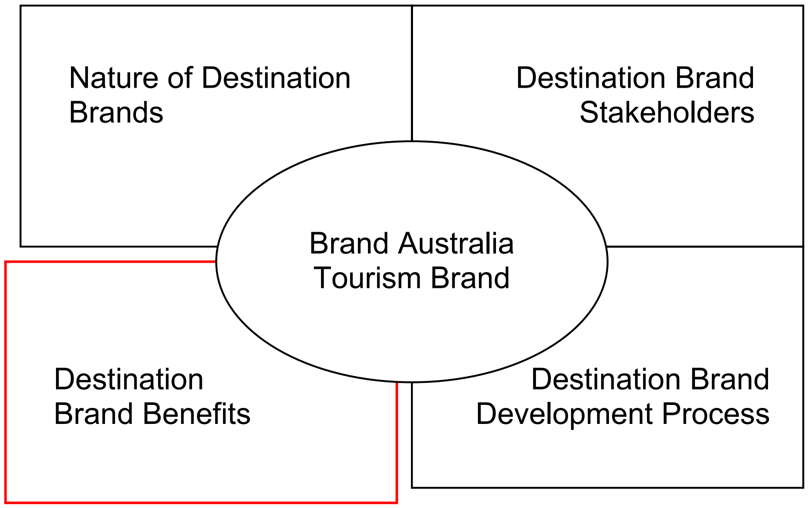


Figure 4.19 Thesis Issues – destination brand benefits – Brand Australia

It has been noted that the Australian Tourist Commission operates to generate economic benefits for Australia by stimulating travel by international visitors to travel to Australia. It does this by working with the tourism industry to facilitate increased sales of travel product in international markets. Given the ATCs stated role to work with industry to achieve these objectives it is important to understand stakeholders' perceptions of the benefits of the branding activity that is core to ATCs work in the international markets.

In addressing the perceived benefits the study took two distinct approaches. The first approach based itself in the consumer purchase process and addressed the stakeholder's opinions of consumer's awareness of Australia; desire to travel to Australia and conversion to travel factors. These questions were designed to give a sense of the stakeholders beliefs of the effectiveness of number factors related to destination image development. The second set of questions specifically addressed the stakeholder's views on the benefits they accrued from Brand Australia and its perceived value.

4.4.5.1 Stakeholder's perceptions of the image development factors on the consumer buying process.

As has been noted in chapter 1, simple consumer buying process models propose that the consumers move through stages of awareness and desire for a product before completing a sale. Based on this type of model the tourism industry respondents were asked their perception of where U.S. consumers were placed on the model. They were also asked what factors they thought contributed to the consumer's position on the model. The three questions were:

- In your opinion how aware are Americans of Australia as a vacation destination?
- How strongly do you think the desire to travel to Australia is amongst Americans?
- How well do you think Australian travel organizations are doing at converting desire to travel to Australia to actual visitors?

It is important to emphasize that this is the stakeholder's opinions and perceptions of consumer's information collection process.

Respondents placed awareness of Australia as a destination at 7 on a 10-point scale with 1 being not at all aware and 10 being very aware. It is noted that 85% of responses rated “awareness” at 5 or above on the scale.

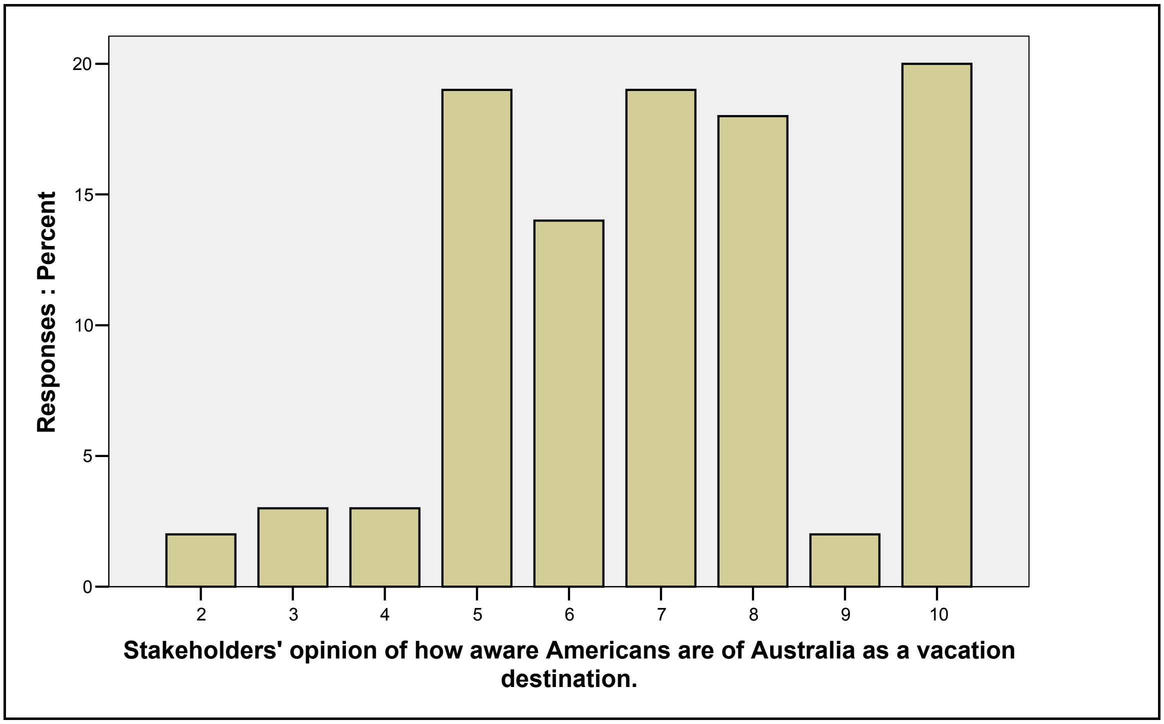


Figure 4.20: Stakeholders opinions of consumer awareness of Australia
Sample size (n) = 100
Scale: 1 = not at all aware; 10 = very aware.
Mean = 6.99
Median = 7.

When examining the information sources considered by respondents to create awareness, and in later examinations of desire and intention to travel, the study focuses on indices created from various sources of information. For example, the factor “culture” is a composite of responses to the importance of “school and education”; “documentaries and nature shows” and “current events and news stories”. The study focused on the contribution of these major information categories rather than the contribution of specific sources of information or any underlying dimensions or structure of the information sources.

When asked what were the most important sources of information contributing to the generation of awareness of Australia as a vacation destination “word of mouth” index were rated highest at 4.66 on a scale of 1(Not at all important) to 5 (very important). The components of the “word of mouth’ index includes the influence of friends, family, people who have traveled to Australia and Australians they have met.” The next index in importance was “travel media” (4.24) followed by the advertising undertaking by the Australian Tourism Commission (4.11).

Table 4.18: Information sources creating awareness of Australia

		Item Average	Overall Average
Culture			**3.66**
Which includes:	School and education]	3.16	
	Documentaries and nature shows	4.22	
	Current events and news stories	3.60	
Pop culture			**3.74**
Which includes:	Movies	3.96	
	Australian celebrities	4.10	
	Books – Fiction	3.10	
	Music	3.37	
	Sporting events	3.74	
	TV commercials – Australian or Australian themed products	4.12	
Word Of Mouth			**4.66**
Which includes:	Friends	4.68	
	Family	4.63	
	People who have traveled to Australia	4.79	
	Australians they have met	4.54	
Travel Media			**4.24**
Which includes:	Travel guides	4.18	
	Newspaper – travel stories	4.23	
	Magazine – travel stories	4.31	
	TV Travel shows/guides	4.46	
	Online travel guides	4.02	
Travel Advertising - TA			**4.11**
Which includes:	ATC major campaigns – TV	4.42	
	ATC major campaigns – Newspaper	4.06	
	ATC major campaigns – Magazine	4.10	
	Australia.com	4.09	
	Australia – destination brochures	3.89	
Travel Advertising – Other			**3.91**
	Qantas Australian travel advertising	4.06	
	Other airline travel advertising	3.81	
	Other travel advertising – wholesalers/hotels etc	4.00	
	Travel Product Brochures	3.79	
Travel intermediaries			**3.84**
Which includes:	Travel agents –travel agents	4.05	
	Travel wholesalers- reservations	4.21	
	Airline reservationists	3.44	
	Online travel agencies	3.66	

Table 4.19: Multiple Regression Analysis of stakeholder's opinion of awareness of Australia as a vacation Destination on factors generating awareness.

	Regression Model		
	Awareness of Australia		
Marketing Communications Dimensions	**Beta**	**t-value**	**Sig. t**
Australian Culture	-.002	-.022	.963
Australian Pop Culture	-.162	-1.412	.161
Word of mouth	.320	2.888	.005
Travel media	-.141	-.893	.374
ATC travel advertising	.058	.338	.736
Other travel advertising	.110	.698	.487
Travel intermediaries	.064	.431	.667
Multiple *R*	.349		
R^2	.121		
F test statistic/ significance	*F=1.797, p=.097*		

The overall means were used in a series of regression analysis regarding the tourism marketer's perceptions of the impact of these image formation agents in the aspects of the buying process. The first of these examined the impact of the agents on developing awareness of the destination. The regression analysis exploring the relationship of the overall marketing communications dimensions on perceived awareness of Australia as a holiday destination in the US, resulted in a relatively low R^2 *(.121)* indicating that the model explains only 12% of the variance. However, it does indicate that the tourism marketers in the US market perceive that WOM (t=2.888, p=.005) is the only set of information sources to have a significant influence on awareness of Australia.

Respondents placed desire to travel to Australia at 8 on a 10-point scale with 1 being “no desire” and 10 being “very strong desire” to travel (Figure 4.21). It is noted that 78% of responses rated “desire to travel to Australia” at 6 or above on the scale.

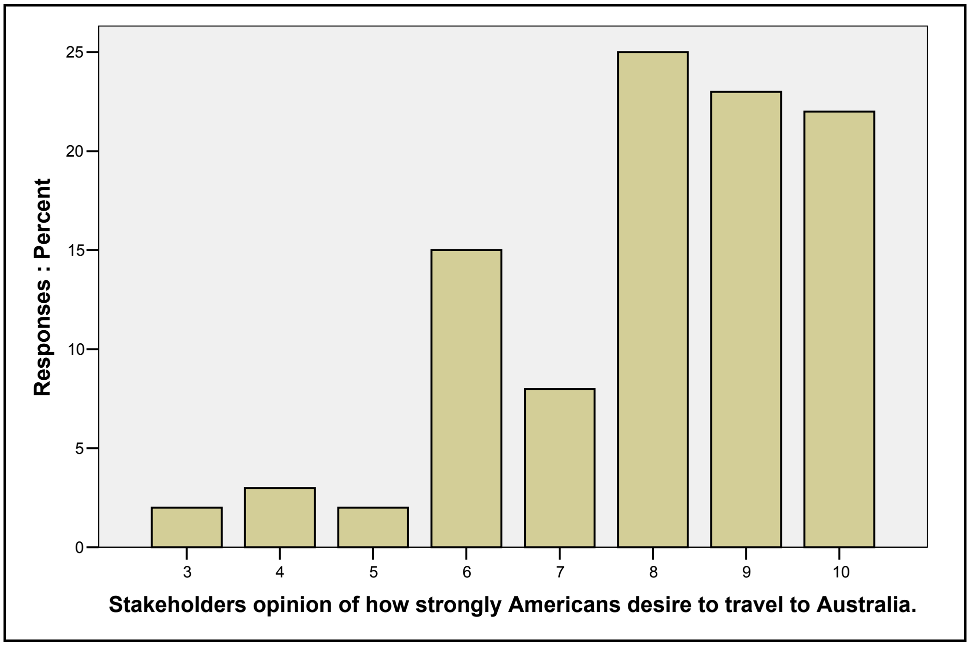


Figure 4.21: Stakeholder opinion: consumer desire to travel
Sample size (n) = 100
Scale: 1 = no desire; 10 = very strong desire.
Mean = 8.01
Median = 8.

When asked what were the most important sources of information contributing to the generation of desire to travel to Australia again “word of mouth” information sources were rated highest at 4.66 on a scale of 1(Not at all important) to 5 (very important). The components of the “word of mouth’ index includes the influence of friends, family, people who have traveled to Australia and Australians they have met.” The next index in importance was “travel media” (4.1) followed by the advertising undertaking by the Australian Tourism Commission (4.0). These results are presented in Table 4.20.

Table 4.20: Information sources generating desire for Australia

		Item Average	Overall Average
Culture			**3.64**
Which includes:	School and education]	3.20	
	Documentaries and nature shows	4.19	
	Current events and news stories	3.53	
Pop culture			**3.59**
Which includes:	Movies	3.96	
	Australian celebrities	3.78	
	Books – Fiction	3.08	
	Music	3.13	
	Sporting events	3.56	
	TV commercials – Australian or Australian themed products	4.00	
Word Of Mouth			**4.66**
Which includes:	Friends	4.73	
	Family	4.69	
	People who have traveled to Australia	4.75	
	Australians they have met	4.46	
Travel Media			**4.08**
Which includes:	Travel guides	4.01	
	Newspaper – travel stories	4.12	
	Magazine – travel stories	4.18	
	TV Travel shows/guides	4.36	
	Online travel guides	3.75	
Travel Advertising - ATC			**4.05**
Which includes:	ATC major campaigns – TV	4.35	
	ATC major campaigns – Newspaper	3.97	
	ATC major campaigns – Magazine	4.06	
	Australia.com	4.01	
	Australia – destination brochures	3.87	
Travel Advertising – Other			**3.79**
	Qantas Australian travel advertising	3.90	
	Other airline travel advertising	3.68	
	Other travel advertising – wholesalers/hotels etc	3.76	
	Travel Product Brochures	3.80	
Travel intermediaries			**3.62**
Which includes:	Travel agents –travel agents	3.86	
	Travel wholesalers- reservations	3.90	
	Airline reservationists	3.27	
	Online travel agencies	3.44	

Table 4.21: Multiple Regression Analysis of perceived desire to travel to Australia of Australia as a vacation Destination on factors generating desire to travel to Australia.

	Regression Model		
	Desire to travel to Australia		
Marketing Communications Dimensions	**Beta**	**t-value**	**Sig. t**
Australian Culture	-.069	-.568	.571
Australian Pop Culture	.052	.406	.686
Word of mouth	.448	3.975	.000
Travel media	-.207	-1.202	.232
ATC travel advertising	-.137	-.795	.429
Other travel advertising	.222	1.193	.236
Travel intermediaries	-.010	-.068	.946
Multiple *R*	.409		
R^2	.102		
F test statistic/ significance	*F=2.556, p=.019*		

The regression analysis exploring the relationship of the overall marketing communications dimensions with perceived desire to travel to Australia as a resulted in a relatively low R^2 *(.102)* indicating that the model explains only 10% of the variance. Results for this analysis are presented in Table 4.21. As in the previous analysis it indicates that the tourism marketers in the US market perceive that WOM (t=3.975, p=.000) is the only factor to have a significant influence on awareness of Australia.

The final question in this series addressed how well Australian Travel organizations are doing at converting desire to travel to Australia to actual visitors. Respondents placed Australian travel companies at 6.1 on a 10 point scale with 1 being not at all well and 10 very well (Figure 4.22).

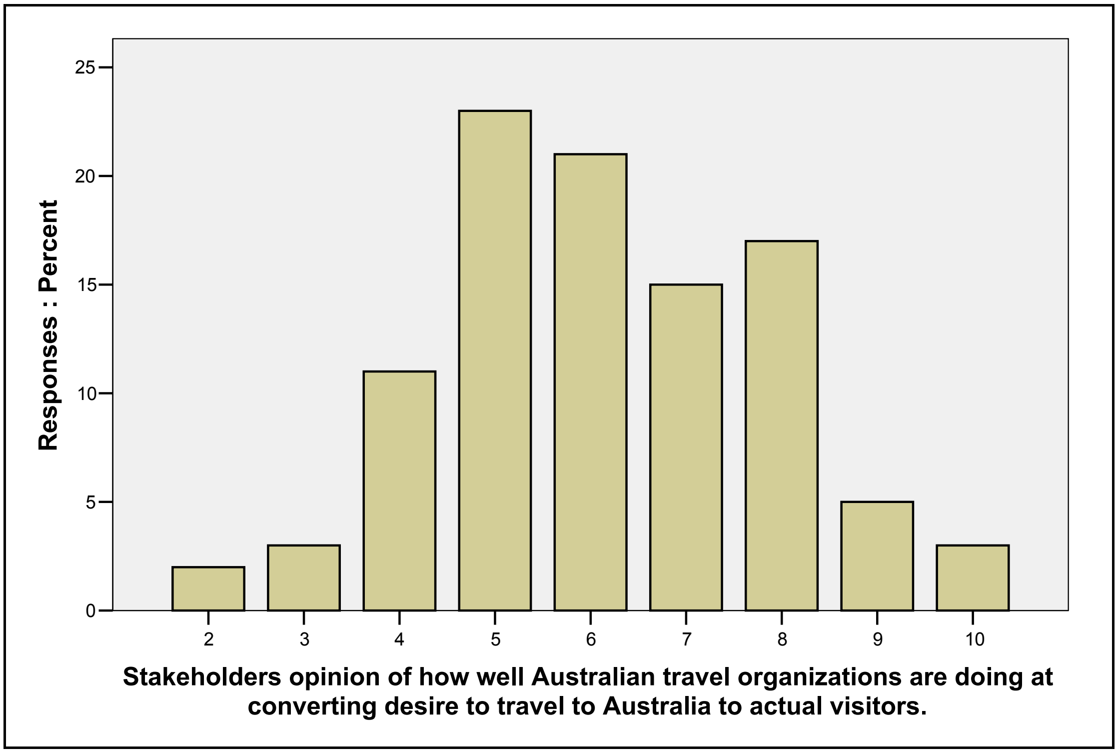


Figure 4.22: Stakeholders opinions on ability of Australian Travel organizations to convert interest in Australia to actual travel.
Sample size (n) = 100
Scale: 1 = not at all well; 10 = very well.
Mean = 6.14
Median = 6

When asked what were the most important sources of information contributing to actually get Americans to travel to Australia (Table 4.22), once again the "word of mouth" information sources index was rated highest at 4.5 on a scale of 1(Not at all important) to 5 (very important)." The next index in importance was advertising undertaking by the Australian Tourism Commission (3.9) followed by the "travel media" (3.8).

Table 4.22: Information sources stimulating travel to Australia

		Item Average	Overall Average
Culture			**3.28**
Which includes:	School and education]	2.95	
	Documentaries and nature shows	3.70	
	Current events and news stories	3.19	
Pop culture			**3.22**
Which includes:	Movies	3.48	
	Australian celebrities	3.35	
	Books – Fiction	2.73	
	Music	2.78	
	Sporting events	3.25	
	TV commercials – Australian or Australian themed products	3.73	
Word Of Mouth			**4.47**
Which includes:	Friends	4.52	
	Family	4.49	
	People who have traveled to Australia	4.54	
	Australians they have met	4.31	
Travel Media			**3.83**
Which includes:	Travel guides	3.83	
	Newspaper – travel stories	3.87	
	Magazine – travel stories	3.88	
	TV Travel shows/guides	4.07	
	Online travel guides	3.52	
Travel Advertising - ATC			**3.89**
Which includes:	ATC major campaigns – TV	4.16	
	ATC major campaigns – Newspaper	3.84	
	ATC major campaigns – Magazine	3.92	
	Australia.com	3.75	
	Australia – destination brochures	3.83	
Travel Advertising – Other			**3.77**
	Qantas Australian travel advertising	3.90	
	Other airline travel advertising	3.61	
	Other travel advertising – wholesalers/hotels etc	3.75	
	Travel Product Brochures	3.8	
Travel intermediaries			**3.72**
Which includes:	Travel agents –travel agents	4.01	
	Travel wholesalers- reservations	4.09	
	Airline reservationists	3.29	
	Online travel agencies	3.47	

Table 4.23: Multiple Regression Analysis of Opinion on effectiveness of travel organizations to convert desire to travel on factors generating travel decisions.

	Regression Model		
	Conversion to travel to Australia		
Marketing Communications Dimensions	**Beta**	**t-value**	**Sig. t**
Australian Culture	-.269	-1.775	.079
Australian Pop Culture	.200	1.409	.162
Word of mouth	.152	1.350	.180
Travel media	-.076	-.430	.668
ATC travel advertising	.256	1.403	.164
Other travel advertising	-.083	-.431	.667
Travel intermediaries	.261	1.777	.079
Multiple *R*	.432		
R^2	.186		
F test statistic/ significance	*F=2.976, p=.007*		

The regression analysis exploring the relationship of the overall marketing communications dimensions on the effectiveness of Australian Travel Organizations to convert desire to actual travel (Table 4.23) resulted in a low R^2 *(.186)* indicating that the model explains only 18.6% of the variance. The result indicates that the combined factors have an effect on the conversion process but none of the factors individually are perceived to have a significant impact.

Table 4.24: Summary of information source indices and their role in consumer purchasing.

	Topic Average		
	Awareness	Desire	Travel
Culture	3.66	3.64	3.28
Pop culture	3.74	3.59	3.22
Word Of Mouth	**4.66**	**4.66**	**4.47**
Travel Media	4.24	4.08	3.83
Travel Advertising – ATC	4.11	4.05	3.89
Travel Advertising – Other	3.91	3.79	3.77
Travel intermediaries	3.84	3.62	3.72
Friedman Test			
Chi-Square	*170.683*	*171.999*	*170.417*
Asymp. Sig.	*.000*	*.000*	*.000*
N	*99*	*97*	*99*

Scale: 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very Important)

It is noted that the perceived value of the Australian Tourist Commissions' marketing activities reduces as the Australian Tourist Marketers are queried about its impact at the different stages of the buying process. As noted in Table 4.24 the perceived importance of the ATC in generating awareness is 4.11 but this reduces to 4.05 in creating desire to travel and 3.89 in effectiveness to convert to actual travel. Friedman tests of these results show significant differences in the means (Chi-Square = 11.63; Asymp. Sig. = .003). At the same time the ATCs rank in contribution to these consumer actions increases. In generating awareness, the ATC is clearly ranked third behind word of mouth and other travel advertising; in "converting to travel" the ATC is ranked second behind "word of mouth". In other words, although the ATC activity is seem as less likely to "convert to travel" in absolute terms it is more likely than all but one other factor to convert relative to the other factors in this set.

Based on these findings it seems that there is a perceived hierarchy of information sources in the consumer buying process. At the top of that hierarchy and perceived to be most important to the process is Word of Mouth; followed by travel media and advertising and then by culture and popular culture. Furthermore, these factors can be related to Gartner's (1993) image formation agents, examined in detail in chapter 1. These findings suggest that word of mouth factors, described by Gartner as "solicited and solicited organic' image formation agents have greater weight in the buying process; that "induced" image formation agents are perceived to be less important and that factors such as culture and pop culture which we described by Gartner as "autonomous" image formation agents are considered least important in the consumer buying process. From a brand-marketers perspective this offers hope that the marketing and brand positioning activities are perceived to be somewhat effective in stimulating travel.

4.4.5.2 The Impact of Brand Australia on stakeholders.

A number of questions were asked to provide insight into the value products and wholesalers place on the Brand Australia activity. When asked their level of agreement to the question "success of my sales and marketing in the United States is closely tied to the success of the promotion of Australia as a vacation destination" both groups reported a positive response with the average response of 4.9 on a 7-point scale. As noted in Table 4.25 there was no significant difference between Australian operators and US based wholesalers.

Table 4.25: Importance of Brand Australia to marketing activity

	Combined	Product	Wholesalers	Significance
The success of my sales and marketing in the United States is closely tied to the success of Brand Australia	4.9	No significant difference between groups		
How important is Brand Australia advertising to your business in USA	4.4	4.68	3.5	T=-3.456 p =.002
Do you spend more or less in the United states because ATC has a branding campaign in the USA? □ More □ Not a factor □ less	 8% 89% 3%	No significant difference between groups		
Would you change your marketing activities if there was no Brand Australia advertising □ Yes □ No	 48% 48%	No significant difference between groups		

Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)
Sample size "combined" (n-Combined) = 100
Sample size "product" (n-product) = 76
Sample size "wholesalers" (n- wholesalers) = 24

Nevertheless the wholesalers are less likely to value ATC's Brand Australia activity. When asked "how important is ATC Brand Australia advertising to your business from North America", with 1 "not important" and 7 "very important", wholesalers give only a 3.5 average (mean) score whereas the Australian product's mean response is 4.68. (t value = -2.61, p = .014).

When asked what benefits they expected to receive from the Brand Australia activity there was general consensus between the Australian travel product and the wholesalers with one exception. As noted in Table 4.26 the Australian product (75%) perceived a significantly greater (Chi sq =9.166; p = .002) likelihood to be able to "focus on product sales knowing "destination image" had been "covered" than their wholesaler (42%) counterparts. Other benefits of destination branding identified by both wholesalers and product were that 61% expected sales as an indirect result of the brand advertising, and a further 44% expected sales as a direct result of the brand activity. Just under half, 49%, expected easier introduction of product to the American market because of the Brand Australia marketing. Almost 4 in 10 (39%) believe that brand Australian marketing makes it easier to convert sales to Australia. Just 10% of Australian products believe that brand Australia allows Australian tourism product to charge a "price" premium.

Table 4.26: Benefits of Brand Australia to Australian Travel Marketers

	Percent	Product	Whole-salers	Chi sq	Sig.
Ability to focus on product sales knowing "destination message" has been covered	67%	75%	42%	9.166	.002
Increased business as an indirect result of campaigns	61%	No significant difference			
Easier introduction of product to the US market because of brand Australia marketing	49%				
Increased business as a direct result of participation in ATC sponsored campaigns.	44%				
Brand Australia marketing makes it easier to convert "sales" to Australia	39%				
Brand Australia allows Australian tourism product to charge a "price" premium.	10%				

Sample size "combined" (n-Combined) = 100
Sample size "product" (n-product) = 76
Sample size "wholesalers" (n- wholesalers) = 24

Other benefits for Australian Tourism marketers, in order of frequency, were increased destination awareness (4 cases), creation of desire for the destination (2), and providing a foundation for conversion (2). It was also observed that destination brand marketing adds legitimacy and validity to product marketing efforts, generates demand in the distribution channels and creates marketing synergies.

One potential benefit of destination branding by the NTO is that it may reduce costs of operations for product by eliminating the need to spend as much on marketing. However, as noted by the NTO managers in chapter three, this does not appear to a benefit realized by the stakeholders. When asked whether they spend more or less in the USA because ATC has a branding campaign in the United States the overwhelming majority said it was "not a factor" as shown in Figure 4.23. Only 8% of respondents spend more on marketing because the ATC runs a brand campaign in the United States.

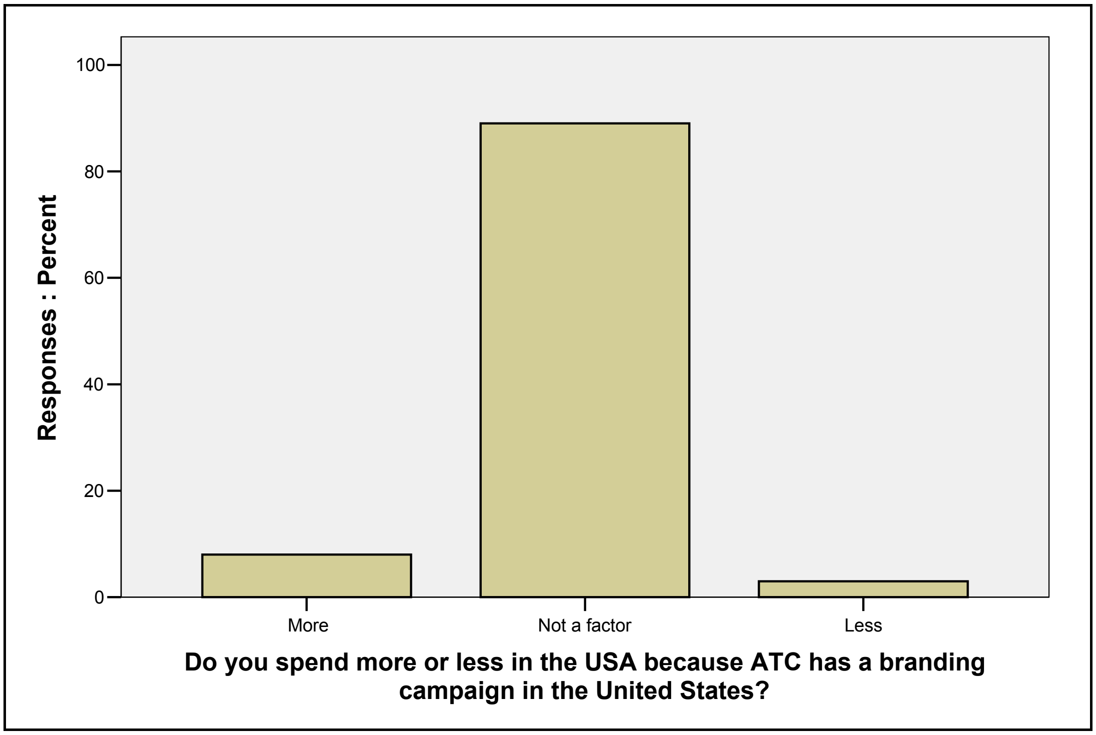


Figure 4.23: Spend more or less in the USA due to Brand Australia
Sample size (n) = 100

Table 4.27: Impact of Brand Australia on marketing expenditures

		Wholesalers	Product
		Per cent	Per cent
Do you spend more or less in the United States because ATC has a branding campaign in the United States?	more	12.5	6.6
	Not a factor	87.5	89.5
	Less	0	3.9
Chi sq = 1.755, p=.416			

Sample size "combined" (n-Combined) = 100
Sample size "product" (n-product) = 76
Sample size "wholesalers" (n- wholesalers) = 24

Results presented in Table 4.27 indicate that there is no significant difference between wholesalers and product as to whether they would spend more or less in the USA because the ATC has a brand campaign. Neither group believes ATCs brand campaign is a factor in their marketing spend.

When asked how much more they would have to spend to achieve current results if there were no “Brand Australia” products the median response range was $10,000. The speculative nature of this question appears to have proven difficult for many respondents.

In order to further examine the notion that branding activity undertaken by NTOs doesn’t increase or decrease marketing expenditure by the private sector but rather shifts the emphasis of different messages two questions regarding the relative importance of different types of messages were asked; one assuming brand activity and the other assuming no brand activity.

Table 4.28: Types of messages

	Australian Tourism Marketers			
Type of Message	Now	No Brand Australia	T value	Significance
Company /corporate message	29%	27%	2.838	.006
Individual product features	36%	30%	4.428	.000
Destination messages	30%	37%	-4.960	.000

This result confirms anecdotal feedback from NTO managers that destination branding frees product to focus on product messages. As noted in Table 4:23, in the absence of Brand Australia marketing, Australian Tourism marketers anticipate spending 7% more of their available resources, on average, to promote the destination. The consequence of this change is that space currently dedicated to specific product features and corporate messages would need to be reduced to allow space for these “destination messages”.

Respondents are split evenly on the question “Would you change your marketing activities if there was no Brand Australia promotion. Half responded they would not change their activity with the same number saying they would change their activity in some way.

Those that indicate a change would be required strongly indicate that the change would include increasing the destination focus of their marketing efforts. Content analysis of open responses to the query “how would your marketing change – please specify” shows the vast majority of respondents feel they would need to undertake more destination promotion. The results of this question are in Table 4.29

Table 4.29: Marketing response in the event of no Brand Australia by Australian Tourism Marketers.

Category of response	Number of responses
Increase Destination Branding	25
Increase marketing with distribution partners	6
Partner with other products and organizations	6
Reduce investment in market	5
Increase spend to compensate	5
Increase marketing direct to consumer	3

Multiple responses

4.4.5.3 The Value of Brand Australia to stakeholders

In examining the benefits of brand Australia it is interesting to attempt to place a dollar value of the benefits of brand Australia accruing to these stakeholders. In order to place a value on the benefits two approaches were taken. The first applies the stakeholder's stated marketing budget to the shift in marketing emphasis identified in the previous section.

Table 4.30 shows a 7% change, on average, in the resources that must be given to destination messages in the absence of Brand Australia by tourism product. With the median marketing budget for this group at $20,000 to $40,000 it can be estimated that for the average product marketing to the United States $1,400 – $2,800 that is currently directed at product and corporate messages would need to be allocated to destination messaging. Similarly Table 4.31 shows a 3% change in the attention that must be given to destination messages in the absence of Brand Australia for wholesalers. With the median marketing budget for this group at $1,000,000 to $1,500,000 it can be estimated that $3,000 – $4,500 in marketing budget per company is currently directed to product and corporate messages that in the absence of Brand Australia would be needed to promote the destination.

Table 4.30: Valuing Brand Australia - Product

Product				
Type of Message	**Now**	**No Brand**	**T**	**Sig.**
Company /corporate message	30	27	2.838	.006
Individual product features	36	30	4.428	.000
Destination messages	30	37	-4.960	.000

Median Marketing spend range: $20,000-$40,000
Value per operator: $1,400-2,800

Table 4.31: Valuing Brand Australia - Wholesaler

Wholesalers				
Type of Message	Now	No Brand	T	Significance
Company /corporate message	32	31	No significant difference	
Individual product features	26	24	2.632	.015
Destination messages	32	35	-1.941	.065

Median Marketing spend range: $100,000-150,000
Value per operator: $3,000- 4500

In a second approach to valuing Brand Australia, stakeholders were asked what their "replacement" value was for brand Australia if ATC no longer undertook brand advertising. The value for both product and wholesalers was $ 5,000 per company.

These estimates of the value of Brand Australia to these stakeholder groups are clearly extremely “rough” but there is some comfort that the two methods achieved similar results, particularly for the wholesalers. It should also be noted that this is not intended to provide a value for Brand Australia in the Americas as a whole; such a number would need to account for a far wider set of stakeholders than currently under consideration, not the least of which would be the value of the brand to the ATC itself.

4.4.6 Future of Brand Australia

In order to examine the perceived value of Brand Australia a series of questions were asked relating to Brand Australia 10 years in the future.

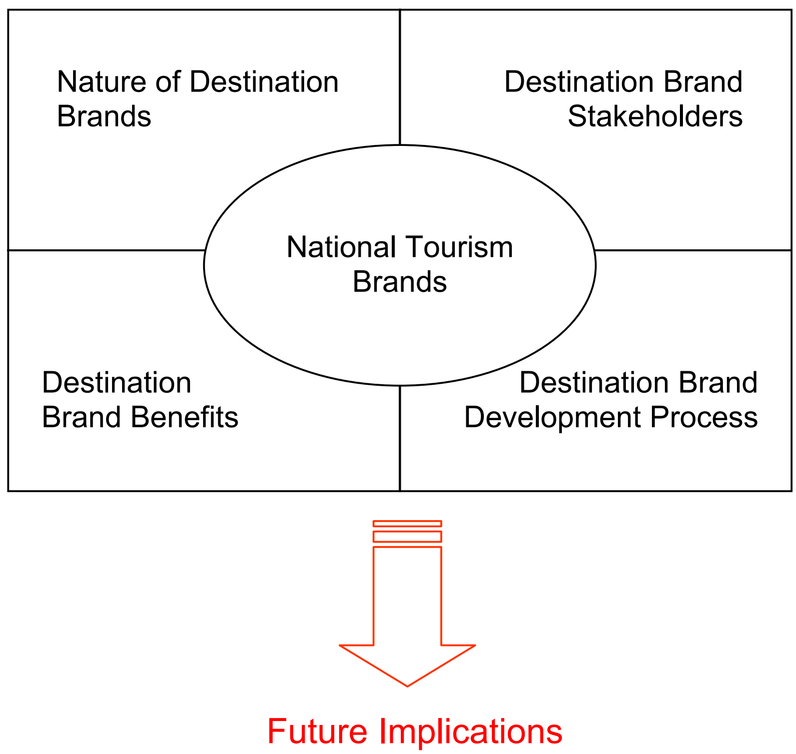


Figure 4.24: Thesis Issues – Future Implications – Brand Australia

Each of the four key components of the brand analysis, as noted in Figure 4.24, will be impacted as Brand Australia adapts to the challenges of the future. In order to better understand key stakeholders perceptions of the future of Brand Australia, a series of questions were asked that addressed topics including creative direction, brand architecture, competitive challenges, and expected future importance.

4.1.6.1 Stakeholders expectations of the Future Positioning of Brand Australia

Two questions were asked to elicit expectations of how brand Australia should be presented in the coming ten years. The first asked “What position should Brand Australia be pursuing in the minds of consumers 10 years from now?” The second question asked “what 5 words do you think should reflect Brand Australia 10 years from now? As expected there was overlap in these two responses. When respondents were asked what position Australia should be pursuing in the minds of American consumers 10 years from now the three key points for which stakeholders felt the destination should be known were safety, diversity and variety, and nature as noted in Table 4.32. When asked the words that should be used to promote Australia Figure 4.25 clearly illustrates the importance of the words “unique” “friendly”, and ”safety” as future descriptors for Australia and Brand Australia. An examination of the responses shows there is substantial consistency with the current positioning suggesting the current branding resonates with the stakeholders.

Table 4.32: Words describing the position of Brand Australia in the minds of consumers in 10 years.

Description	Frequency
safe	19
diverse/variety	12
nature	12
friendly and welcoming	9
affordable	8
No 1/top of mind	7
unique	4
different	4
accessible	4
must see	4
focus on specific destinations	3
multicultural	3
sophisticated	3
relaxed and relaxing	3
quality	2
open	2
fun	2
clean	2
active	2
luxury	2
entrepreneurial	1
vacation destination	1
beauty	1
adventure	1
aboriginal culture	1

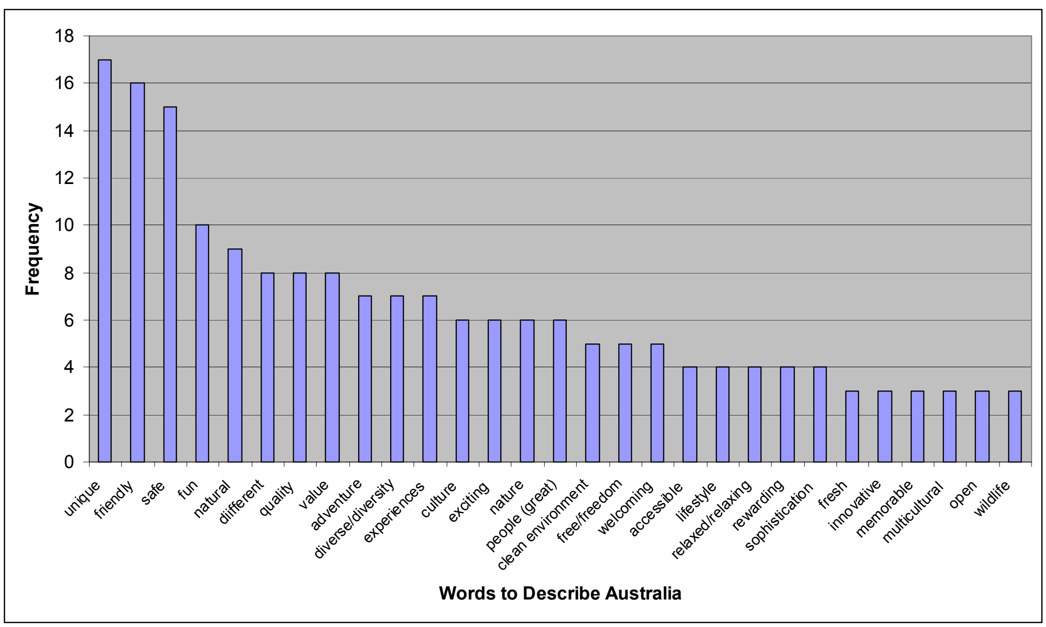


Figure 4.25 Words Describing Consumers perceptions of Australia in 10 years time.

The stakeholders hold clear views on the actions Brand Australia will need to take in order to remain competitive in the coming years. Of primary importance will be adapting to changes in consumers during the next 10 years. A second important theme is that the brand must work harder at moving consumers up the purchase cycle; that is moving consumers from simple awareness of the destination to facilitating conversion to sale/travel. These stakeholders, while appreciating branding activity, are keen to focus attention on creating immediate sales. They are also keen to see the brand engage with a broader set of partners – both within the distribution network and with strong complementary brands. Finally, rounding out the four most frequently addressed topics the stakeholders believe consistency of message is important for future success.

Table 4.33: The Evolution of Brand Australia

How do you think Brand Australia will need to evolve over the next 10 years to remain competitive?	
adapt to consumers	9
move up the purchase cycle	8
broaden partners	8
consistency with core message	7
achieve competitive advantage	5
niche	5
broaden message	4
freshness of message	4
technological superiority	4
accountability	3
barriers	3
yield	3
larger budget	2
safety focus	2
creative message	2
adapt to changing distribution	2
move up market	2
remain strategic in approach	1
authenticity	1
internet	1

The endorsement of these stakeholders in future Brand Activity is important as it implies that expenditure on branding activity is valued, even over other activities that may have a more tactical benefit to wholesalers or product. As noted in Table 4.34, these stakeholders see value in branding activity, not only for the national brand level but other levels of the destination brand hierarchy including state and regional brands.

Table 4.34: The Future of Brand Australia

	Combined	Product	Wholesalers	Sig.
10 years from now should Australia – through its NTO- spend more or less time and/or money on developing Brand Australia?	**5.3**	No significant difference between groups		
10 years from now should State Tourist Offices be more or less involved	**5.4**	No significant difference between groups		
10 years from now would you like to be working more or less closely with Australia's National Tourist Office in branded campaigns?	**5.4**	No significant difference between groups		

Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree

Respondents were asked to indicate on a 7 point scale with 1 being "less involved"; 4 "about the same and 7 "more involved", whether "10 years from now should Australia – though its national Tourist Organization – be spend more or less time and/or money on developing Brand Australia?". The response tended toward increased activity, with an average response of 5.3. There was no significant difference between the Australia product and US based wholesalers.

Both product and wholesalers indicated they would like State tourist organizations to be more involved in branding Australia.

An important indicator of the success of the Brand Australia activity is the desire of the stakeholders to engage with the Australian Tourist Commission in brand activity in years to come. Both groups – product and wholesalers – indicated that would like to be working more closely with Australia's National Tourist Organization in branded campaigns in 10 years time. Responding on a scale where 1 was "working less closely with Australia's NTO"; 4 was "neutral" and 7 was "working more closely with Australia's NTO" product responded on average (mean) at 5.47 while wholesalers responded with a mean of 5.04.

4.5 Study: State Tourist Office Opinion Leaders Study

A series of telephone interviews was conducted with the Senior Management of the State Tourist Offices in North America to examine the role Brand Australia plays in each of these organizations marketing activity and to further understand the brand development process as it relates to STO operations. Questions asked to this group focused on their involvement in the Brand Australia development process; their levels of agreement with the presentation of Brand Australia; the benefits they receive from Brand Australia, their own branding activities and how they view perceive the interaction of their branding efforts with Brand Australia. A copy of the survey guidelines are in Appendix G.

4.5.1 Interview Targets

In late February 2005 the interviews were conducted by phone with senior US based members of the following State Tourist Offices

Participants in the survey are listed in Table 4.35.

Table 4.35 STO participants in opinion leaders survey.

State Tourist Organization	**Title of respondent**	**Name of respondent**
Tourism New South Wales	Regional Director - Americas	Irene Morgan
Tourism Victoria	Regional Manager	Leigh Arredendo
Northern Territory Tourist Commission	Sales and Marketing Manager	Kate Shilling
Tourism South Australia	Regional Director	Mike Smith
Tourism Tasmania	Regional Manager North America	Daryl Hudson

The Western Australia Tourist Commission is not represented in North America. It is noted that the author is the Regional Director, Tourism Queensland. As such Queensland did not participate in the questionnaire.

4.5.1.1 Brand Australia Development

The STO management reported that they did not feel that they were involved in the development of the ATCs Australia Branding in North America. Two cited marginal involvement in the process.

As a group there was general agreement with the ATC's definitions of Australia's key brand elements over the last 10 years. A number of qualifiers were added by respondents including concerns that the brand was defined too narrowly, and that emphasis between attributes and experiential components of the brand were out of balance. Two STOs expressed concerns that the brand was more directed by Australian's perception of themselves than by elements that would motivate potential consumers to travel and that it was important that brand creative be directed by US agencies. One STO also raised concerns that the execution of the message failed to deliver on the brand elements.

There was also a general consensus that the ATC had correctly identified the target market for Australia, a key part of the brand development process. One STO respondent considered the target groups too broad to provide marketing focus and another expressed concerns that although the target markets were correctly defined the execution of the creative to address those markets were inadequate.

Two of the five States noted concern regarding the brand development process with respect to the perceived inconsistency of the campaigns. As noted earlier , although the brand elements remained constant through the period 1996-2003 the creative execution of the brand changed each year in that time. Interpretation of the brand elements differed significantly during that time, from celebrity endorsements to destination and experience focused creative executions.

An issue that emerged through several questions was differing opinions on the impact of the mix of iconic images with less well know attributes. States with iconic attractions were satisfied with the marketing undertaken by the ATC where as states without readily identifiable physical attributes were less satisfied with the executions of the campaign creative. Tourism Victoria was concerned that the creative lacked a balanced representation of urban locations and Northern Territory identified concerns that lifestyle, aboriginal culture and Australia's multicultural society was not reflected. The brand advertising was generally seen as effective in representing States interests.

The STOs were positive about the benefits they gain from the campaign. Comments included:

- "Icons reinforce message and campaign delivers a good foundation";
- "(State) gains from consistent platform for business development";
- "(Campaign) recognition and recall, credibility"; "Good for overall Australia".

Despite this generally positive response it was noted that the campaign was not always the greatest fit for state marketing objectives and that it is hard to determine actual benefits.

The majority of state respondents identified positive benefits from the brand for their product. It was stated that the brand campaign created a “foundation” for other marketing activity and generated “consistency and focus” to marketing efforts. Only one respondent saw a link between the brand activity and the product. Respondents also agreed that wholesalers of travel benefited from the brand campaign.

Four of the five state respondents affirmed that brand development was an important activity for them in North America. Branding activity is limited, with STOs who are not funded at the same levels as the ATC. PR was the most frequently cited branding activity and support through image resources. Two of the STOs stated they deliberately leveraged Brand Australia for their own branding activities.

Each of the states affirmed they worked with tourism wholesalers to develop their brand. They indicated that this was achieved through working with the wholesalers on image selection in brochures, consulting on copy development in brochures and encouraging product development that supported brand objectives.

The degree to which product contribute to state brand development is less clear to the STOs. Three of five said they work with product to encourage them to promote product that contribute to the states brand positioning. A fourth respondent indicated dissatisfaction with the current degree product supported the state brand and advised they were working to increase products engagement in the process.

4.6 Summary and Observations

Studies 4 and 5 provide a new and interesting perspective of destination branding by examining product and channel member's relationship to the brand. These stakeholders, while acknowledging that consumer awareness, desire to travel and actual conversion to travel is attributed to external factors, such as "word of mouth", still value the destination branding undertaken by the NTO. Indeed, these stakeholders, particularly the product providers, see their success tied to the effectiveness of Brand Australia.

Indeed, products indicate that they believe the brand activity of states and local regional brands are also important to their marketing success. Channel members on the other hand do not value this level of branding. This may be attributed to point of view. Products, being resident in the destination hierarchy, see the value of local and state branding in addition to the national branding. Channel members looking at the destination hierarchy from the "outside", may recognize that national brands are often strongest and therefore "drivers" of consumer interest. This effect is clearly worthy of additional research in future studies.

Despite the value that products state they place in the NTB they are less likely than the wholesalers to actually use the branding. Neither group is particularly enthusiastic about complying with guidelines set by the NTO or presenting a “uniform” image.

The study disproves one expected benefit of branding, which is that the activity would stimulate additional marketing expenditure for the destination. Rather, the studies indicate that the destination branding undertaking by the NTO, a non-commercial organization, allows the commercial organizations to focus their sales messages on features of their specific offerings without having to “explain the destination”.

Another clear measure of value attributed to the brand building endeavors is the support of the activity into the future and the desire to engage with not only the NTO but State and local branding efforts into the future. Both sets of stakeholders, product and wholesalers, expect the NTO to maintain its role as brand builder for the destination during the coming decade.

Finally, the content analysis presents two key findings. The first is that it is important to manage the mix of “colloquialisms” in promotional copy, so as not to alienate readers unfamiliar with the local terms. The second is the proof of the old saying: a picture is worth a thousand words. Examination of the wholesaler’s brochure reveals that the most effective means for NTOs to extend their brand message is through the provision of images that convey brand elements.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Overview

This research provides a number of insights into the importance of National Tourism Branding and reveals it to be a topic which is a rich area for future study. National Tourism Brands in themselves are worthy of study from the perspective of their nature and architecture, their development process, the role of stakeholders and the benefits they generate for various stakeholders. From the perspective of international tourism marketing National Tourism Branding raises questions regarding the role of National Tourist Offices in the tourism system, and the role and marketing activities of both tourism product and travel wholesalers in developing international tourism. The National Tourism Branding process integrates with other research topics including public policy issues in tourism and broader national economic and development issues. This study examines some of these questions with a focus on the Australian Tourism Branding activities undertaken in the United States.

This chapter will undertake an examination of the key findings of the studies undertaken in this thesis. It will also review the key findings from the literature review that provide new insights into the destination branding process. The study will also detail the additional research that has been identified for this field.

The chapter is organized as follows:

5.1 Introduction.

5.2 Study Findings.

This section incorporates summaries of the key findings of the studies of the thesis including the NTO studies (Study 1-3), the content analysis (Study 4), the Australian Tourist Marketers Studies (Study 5 and 6) and the State Tourist Office Leadership Opinion Study (Study 7).

5.3 Observations and Discussion Points.

This section incorporates a review of key insights from the literature review and their implications to destination branding.

5.4 Key contributions of the Study.

This section will highlight the key contributions of this study to the field of tourism research with a particular focus on destination branding.

5.5 Limitations of the Study.

This section examines the limitations of the study.

5.6 Areas for Future Study

This section examines the future study directions identified as a result of conducting this thesis.

5.7 Conclusions

The conclusion provides final assessment of the information and insights identified by this thesis.

5.2 Key Findings

National Tourism Branding is an activity that is undertaken by national governments in order to generate benefits for their communities through increased international tourism. National Tourism Branding, and the broader topic of destination branding, is now well documented. In most instances the National Tourist Office is the primary driver for the national tourism branding process. These organizations are also key beneficiaries of the national tourism branding process. A variety of other stakeholders, both commercial and non-commercial, are involved and/or impacted by the National Tourism Branding process. This thesis examined the role of National Tourism Offices in the branding process through a series of three studies (Studies 1-3) addressing NTOs operating in the United States. The study then focused attention on the Australian experience of destination branding in the United States. Through content analysis the thesis examined the execution of Brand Australia in brochures created by the Australian Tourism Commission to motivate consumers to travel to Australia and the representation of Australia in travel wholesalers brochures designed as sales support material for the wholesalers of travel to Australia. The study then examined the marketing efforts of travel wholesalers and tourism product in the United States; their relationship with brand Australia, the benefits they accrue from brand Australia and their expectations for the future of Brand Australia.

5.2.1 Key Findings: National Tourist Office Studies.

As noted previously National Tourist Offices are the primary drivers of National Branding activities. This study limits its scope to the branding efforts undertaken in the United States and so only the American operations of the NTOs have been addressed.

5.2.1.1 NTO Operations in the United States.

Based on the most recent study, unless otherwise indicated, it is noted that National Tourist Office's have relatively small operations in the United States. The have one or two offices, most commonly in New York or Los Angeles, and 8 to 9 staff working in the United States. They have an average budget between $US 750,000 to $US 1,000,000 with marketing budgets in the range of $250,000-499, 000 (2001 Study). Of course, within the group of NTOs there are a few operations significantly bigger than the average: One operation reported 8 offices; several reported budgets in excess of $5,000,000 (2001 Study) and there were reported cases of operations of over 30 staff. These organizations were exceptional in the group and it is noted that even the largest of the NTO operations are still not large businesses measured by either employees or financial resources. These findings were consistent with an earlier study undertaken by Morrison et al (1995).

With limited resources these NTOs have ambitious goals. Consumer marketing is ranked their highest priority market in the most expensive and complex consumer marketplace in the global economy. As such the challenges they identify are consistent with challenges identified by consumer marketers in other fields. That is – they are concerned with providing proof of return on investment, maximizing the benefits of new marketing techniques and reaching their target markets efficiently and effectively. Destination Brand marketing ranks after these challenges.

5.2.1.2. NTO Branding in the USA

Destination branding is considered an important marketing objective (6.3 on a scale of 1-7 with 7 being "very important"). The key issue of "why" NTOs undertake branding reveals both an expectation of general benefits that are accrued from awareness and specific benefits to stakeholders. Destination branding is undertaken for a variety of reasons including, in order of importance, to raise the profile of your country in the United States, to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of NTO marketing efforts, to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of tourism product marketing in the United States and to increase the effectiveness of travel wholesalers. The specific goals most commonly identified by the NTO include raising awareness of the destination (67%) and increasing intention to travel (60%). Changing consumer perceptions is the least commonly stated goal, cited in 50% of cases.

Each NTO operation based in the United States is a part of a larger international marketing organization charged with the global marketing, and branding, of the destination. As such it is expected that these organizations would need to manage both the challenge of interpreting marketing messages internationally, and the tensions typically associated with centralized/decentralized decision making in a multi-national organization. The studies showed that the NTO operations had considerable control of their branding activity. Over 77% have at least some input in the branding development and over half report great flexibility in interpreting the brand in the USA. Over ¾ of the NTO produce their own marketing materials for the US target markets and most of the NTOs produce web pages especially for the US market. This is important as the NTOs rate web marketing and brochures, not television advertising, as their most important branding tools.

5.2.1.3 Stakeholder involvement in National Tourism Branding

NTOs leverage their marketing and brand activity with commercial partners to extend both their effectiveness and their reach. Almost 8 in 10 develop their marketing plans with the industry they serve, although it is noted that this planning tends to be informal in nature. In addition to planning they also execute their marketing activities with industry partners. This investment with industry, 43% of NTOs spend between 25% and 50% of their marketing budgets with partners, enables the NTO to control he imagery and messaging of the joint marketing. Almost all (96%) of NTOs confirm they maintain at least some control of advertising images and messaging in cooperative marketing. In addition to this explicit control through the use of cooperative funding to extend brand reach, almost all (96.7%) of the NTOs also encourage use of brand elements in their own marketing by providing to stakeholders images, suggested copy, logos and seminars on how to best use the brand. The importance of these tools to the NTO is emphasized by the strong opinion (5.7

on a 7 point scale with 7 being “very important”) of the NTOs that business providing travel product should present a “uniform” message when selling in the United States.

Given the effort by the NTOs to encourage the adoption of brand elements in marketing by these third parties it is not surprising that NTOs consider travel product personnel to be aware of their countries key brand messages (5.41), its brand’s design components and the branding undertaken by the NTO (5.04). Nevertheless NTOs do not consider that the product have a strong awareness of the goals of the national tourism branding (4.68), a factor that may constrain broad support for the destination branding process. This assessment is confirmed accurate by the Australia Tourism Marketer Study which showed understanding of the goals of the program to be relatively low.

5.2.1.4 Benefits of National Tourism Branding

NTOs consider that their branding work is important to both the tourism product (6.45) marketing in the United States and to travel intermediaries (5.55) who are selling product from their country in the United States. The benefits they cite in addition to increased business, either as a direct or indirect results of the marketing activity, include easier introductions of product to the US (lower barriers to market entrance) and an ability to focus on product attributes rather than the “destination message”, and easier conversion to sale. They do not believe that it creates an ability to command a price premium – a sentiment that is echoed by the product related businesses themselves in the following studies. This list of benefits differs slightly from lists developed by both brand specialists focused on consumer product marketing. Both Aaker (1996b) and Keller (1998) cite the ability of a company to charge a premium is an important factor in measuring brand equity; these authors also cite brand equity as a means of raising barriers to entry for competitors as a benefit of brand equity

The distribution of resources to different aspects of the marketing process, particularly with regard to the conversion process, is a key theme of the findings. It is important to note that NTOs do not consider marketing expenditures per se would change if the NTO were not involved in destination branding. Rather they believe these marketers would need to reallocate funds from the existing "pool" from focusing on product information to providing "background" information on the destination. There is also some expectation that the removal of NTO funding would lead to redistribution of funds from wholesalers to other competitive destinations. With these results in mind it is not surprising that NTOs projected that they should be more active in National Tourism Branding in 10 years from now.

5.2.2 Key Findings: Content Analysis

The content analysis provided a number of insights into the branding process. The first is that the National Tourist Office has great flexibility to craft a detailed brand message through the use of their promotional materials. In the case of the 1999 Motivational Brochure they were able to employ a number of techniques in their use of both language and images to convey their brand message. The copy used in the brochures reflected brand values including humor, unique “Australian” language and friendly hospitality. The images also, conveyed a complex tapestry of brand messages. Destination images – both iconic and non-iconic – provide deeper appreciation for the diversity of the potential visitors’ experience. The use of people in the images conveyed a number of messages including the friendliness of the Australians, the way Australians and visitors can expect to interact, and the way people interact with the destination. The brochure also uses people who “fit” the target demographic reinforcing the appropriateness of the destination to potential passengers. This approach provides some level of support for Ekinci’s (2003) proposal that destination images must reinforce the self image of potential consumers.

The second note is that the NTO clearly endeavors to provide information on the destination at both an attribute level and a “holistic” level. The NTO is clearly attempting to convey not only information but what Pritchard and Morgan (1998) describe as the “mood” of the destination. The inclusion of specific geographic information, explanations of specific sights and attractions and the extensive use of maps provides the potential traveler with specific destination information. The combined impact of the destination brochure – the use of language, graphic layout, and the images – provides readers with a distinctly “Australian” impression of the destination. In this way the ATC is addressing the assertion by Echtner & Ritchie (1991) that effective image development must include both attribute and holistic messaging. In contrast, the wholesalers’ brochures rely almost entirely on images to convey their relationship with Australia. In this respect they provide information on the specifics of destinations but, in general, do poorly in conveying the brand image “holistically”.

The challenge for NTO marketers wishing to extend their reach is two-fold. They need to engage the wholesalers in communicating the essence of the brand more effectively and provide image resources that better allow the wholesalers to convey the image of the destination through the images they use on the printed page.

5.2.3 Key Findings: Australian Tourism Marketers Studies

The two studies examining the marketing activities of Australian Tourism Product and Tourism Wholesalers selling Australian travel products provide insight into three important aspects of the tourism system. First – it addresses the international marketing activities of tourism product. Secondly – it addresses the operations and marketing activities of tourism wholesalers selling in the US consumer market. Neither of these topics, critical to the growth of international tourism have received analysis in tourism literature to this point. The third aspect the study addresses is the interaction of the commercial stakeholders with the destination brand itself.

5.2.3.1 Australian Product Marketing in the United States.

The product most active in the international marketing process, as identified in this study were hotels, both independent hotels and hotels associated with chains, tour operators and attraction operators. These organizations rely heavily on international business; over 55% reported that more than 41% of their total business came from international business. Of these respondents UK, USA, Europe and New Zealand ranked highest (in order of importance) in terms of source markets. It is noted that these products are not representative of all Australian product, or indeed all Australian product marketing internationally. These products were chosen on the basis of their involvement in the USA market. The business from the United States as a proportion of total business reflects a balanced mix between sources markets. Approximately 1/3 receive up to 10% of their international business from the US but only 15% receive more than 30% from the US. In terms of numbers of visitors the majority of products (80%) receive less than 8000 passengers from the United States each year.

These operators have modest marketing budgets to attract the US visitors to their Australian products; half of them spend less than $20,000 per year in the USA on marketing, including sales calls costs. Even the largest of the marketing budgets is relatively small compared to the costs of marketing in the United States. The largest budgets reported were between $140,000 and $180,000. This expenditure can be compared to $132.6 Million spent by Southwest Airlines or $23.8 Million spent by Holiday Inn 2003/2004 according to Brandweek (Brandweek, 2004). The most common marketing activities undertaken by these tourism operators, in order of importance, include: personal sales calls, brochure support for travel wholesalers, public relations and tradeshow participation.

5.2.3.2 Wholesalers of Australian Tourism Marketing in the United States.

The wholesalers participating in this study are all committed to selling Australia and that is reflected in the destination priorities they report. These wholesalers are not representative of all wholesalers operating in the United States; in general these wholesalers are relatively small operations with a strong focus on Australia and the South Pacific. Australia is the most important international destination for these wholesalers, followed by New Zealand and the South Pacific. Indeed, over 2/3 of the respondents report sending more than half their business to Australia, although, as most of these companies are quite small, this focus on Australia does not translate into large numbers of passengers per wholesaler. In fact, 58% reported sending less than 2500 passengers to Australia in 2004.

While wholesalers tend to spend significantly more than product personnel on marketing in the United States they also have relatively modest budgets. The median marketing budget reported was in the $100,001 - $150,000 range and only 4 companies reported marketing budgets in excess of $1,000,000. 40% reported marketing expenditures, including sales calls, under $50,000. The most important marketing activity identified by these respondents was sales calls followed by, in order of importance, e-marketing, public relations, advertising and sales incentives. This focus on sales suggests that the National Tourism Branding enables both wholesalers and product to undertake a “push” marketing strategy. Assael (Assael, 1985) notes that a “push strategy uses intermediaries to stimulate customer demand where a “pull” strategy uses marketing activity outside the distribution network to drive sales. The intermediaries are “pushing” the product to consumers knowing that, at least to some degree the “pull” is being generated by the National Tourism Branding activity.

5.2.3.3. Australian Tourism Marketers – Nature of the Brand.

Despite the differences noted above these two commercial stakeholder groups – the product and the wholesalers – work together to generate travelers to Australia and share similar objectives and goals in the marketplace. For this reason the two groups were combined and examined as a single group of Australian Travel Marketers for the purpose of this study. Differences between the products and wholesalers are identified where they are significant.

Australian Tourism Marketers express the importance of Brand Australia to their marketing in a number of ways. They consider it very important (6.32 on a 7 point scale) that their products identify with Australia; they consider it important to emphasize their “Australian-ness”; and importantly from a branding perspective, they strongly agree (6.15) that being associated with Australia assists their marketing efforts. In each of these cases, the Australian product personnel value association with Brand Australia higher than the wholesale companies.

5.2.3.4 Australian Tourism Marketers – Destination Brand Development Process

The examination of the relationship of the Australian Tourism Marketers with Brand Australia raises some interesting points. The Australian Tourism

Marketers generally agree (4.76 on a 7 point scale) that Australia's NTO should present guidelines in presenting Australia. Tourism Wholesalers are significantly less likely to agree with the statement 'Australian Travel product should present a uniform message about Australia when selling Australia in the US, than their product operator colleagues. And yet – in actual utilization of the brand elements it is the wholesalers who use the elements three times more frequently than product operator counterparts.

The Australia tourism marketers report high levels of familiarity with a number of components of the Brand Australia strategy. Using a 7 point scale they register strong awareness with the branding strategy (5.99); the design elements (5.46), the goals (5.43) and the key copy points (5.22). It is interesting to note in light of enthusiasm for the program that the element of the brand process they are least aware (4.54) of is its effectiveness.

5.2.3.5 Australian Tourism Marketers – Destination Brand Benefits

The uncertainty of the effectiveness of the destination branding process can be tied to the Australian tourism marketer's perception of consumers' awareness of the destination, desire to travel to the destination and the effectiveness of the distribution network to convert interest to actual travel.

Australian Tourism Marketers rate consumer's awareness of Australia at 7 (on a scale of 1 through 10 with 10 being "very aware"). They consider that Word of Mouth (4.66 on a 7 point scale) is by far the most important factor in creating this awareness, followed by the travel media (4.24) and then Tourism Australia's marketing (4.11). Regression analysis shows that only 12% of the variance is explained by the factors identified and that Word of Mouth is the only significant factor.

Australian Tourism Marketers rate consumer's desire to travel of Australia at 8 on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being "very high desire"). In a similar set of results to the awareness question, they consider that Word of Mouth (4.66 on a 7 point scale) is by far the most important factor in creating this awareness, followed by the travel media (4.08 on the 7 point scale) and then Tourism Australia's marketing (4.05 on the 7 point scale). Regression analysis shows just over 10% of the variance is explained by the factors identified and that Word of Mouth is the only significant factor.

Results for the series of questions addressing effectiveness to convert interest to actual travel show slightly different results. Australian Tourism Marketers rate the ability of the market to stimulate travel to Australia at just 6.1 on a scale of 1-10. They consider that Word of Mouth (4.47 on the 7 point scale) is by far the most important factor in creating this awareness, followed by Tourism Australia's marketing (3.89 on the 7 point scale) and then the travel media (3.83 on the 7 point scale). Regression analysis shows that only 18.6% of the variance is explained by the factors identified but that no single factor is considered significant.

Given these results it is clear that Australian tourism marketers, while acknowledging ATC marketing as a factor in creating consumer understanding of the destination, do not perceive it to be the most importantfactor moving consumers through the purchase process – from awareness and desire to actual conversion. These results are particularly interesting given the perceived impact of Brand Australia on the marketer's success. Australian Tourism Marketers agree (4.9) with the statement “the success of my sales and marketing in the United States is closely tied to the success of Brand Australia” and rate Brand Australia as somewhat important (4.4) to the business in the USA.

The benefits that these marketers expect to accrue from Brand Australia become instructive in understanding the value they place on the branding process. Product place significantly higher value on the brands the ability to cover the “destination message” allowing them to focus on the product sale. (75% compared to 42%). In respect to other benefits expected from the branding activity there was no significant difference between the product and the wholesalers. Both groups registered an expectation they would generate business as either a direct or indirect result of the advertising; that they would benefit from easier introduction of product to the market and would be able to convert interact to actual travel more easily.

Given that branding is often undertaken in consumer marketing to allow product to charge price premiums it is interesting to note that neither group felt that this was particularly likely. As in the case of the NTO's expectations of benefits there is no expectation that branding will generate a price premium, as Aaker (1996b) and Keller (1998) would expect.

The notion that destination branding relieves commercial actors, in this case product and wholesalers, of destination marketing and allows them to focus efforts on product sales is reinforced by questions regarding changes in marketing in the absence of Brand Australia. Almost 90% of respondents reported that they would not change the amount of marketing expenditure they undertook in the United States even if there was no brand Australia advertising. They did however indicate that they would reallocate resources from company/corporate messages and product features to increase destination messaging in their marketing activities. It is reasonable to propose that destination branding by the NTO increases the efficiency of the destination marketing system. Tourism product and intermediaries can focus energies on product delivery and sales and NTOs can build expertise in advertising and brand building. In the Australian experience this role definition became explicit during the 2004 “Have You Ever” campaign when the ATC clearly expressed their private-sector campaign partners were sales partners and not marketing partners.

5.2.3.6 Australian Tourism Marketers – The Future of Brand Australia

Australian travel marketers are clearly supportive of the continuing development of Brand Australia. They agree (5.3 on a 7 point scale) that more time and/or money should be spent on developing Brand Australia 10 years from now and would like to be working more closely with Australia’s National Tourist Office in branded campaigns 10 years from now.

The study identifies through two different questions the creative direction these products feel the brand should be pursuing. The response to these questions both includes a strong focus on safety, friendliness and nature and the uniqueness of the Australian experience. It may be assumed that the focus on safety and friendliness is a reaction to increasing instability and violence in the world since 2001. Nature and the Australian experience represent unique selling propositions for the destination.

The Australian tourism marketers identify several important ways Brand Australia must evolve over the coming decade to remain competitive. The issues identified include:

- Brand Australia must evolve to adapt to changing consumers. As consumer tastes change Brand Australia must continue to modify its creative approach appeal to consumers. Additionally, as consumers become more sophisticated Brand Australia must use new techniques to reach these potential customers.
- Brand Australia must "move up" the purchase cycle. The conversion of interest and appeal in the destination to actual travel is an important role for Brand Australia. Brand Australia must identify the "conative" messages that stimulate action to travel is critical to ensure Brand Australia remains relevant in the years to come.
- Broaden the partnership. This point can be interpreted in two ways. In the first way it is expected that Brand Australia will need to continue to develop partnerships and co-brand with other consumer brands to maintain the high level of exposure it has achieved in recent years. The

second aspect is an expectation that the ATC and Brand Australia should engage with a broader group of partners when developing brand campaigns.

- Brand Australia must achieve consistency with its core message and its creative execution. The product recognizes that the most effective creative executions of brand positioning remain constant over extended periods. Although Brand Australia has been consistent in its core values over the period it had a different creative execution almost every year.

5.2.4 State Tourism Branding and Brand Australia

5.2.4.1 Australian Tourism Marketers perceptions of Australian State and Regional branding.

The Australian Tourism Marketers studies identify two key points regarding the interaction of the Australian State Tourist Office's branding activities and Brand Australia. The first is that marketers consider it important to identify their product with both its state and its local region. In both these respects product rate the importance significantly and considerably higher than wholesalers. The second key point is that is that in 10 years time Australian Tourism Marketers want to be more involved with state tourism offices on branding activities. Both these points confirm the importance of state/regional branding in the development of Brand Australia.

5.2.4.2 Key findings – Australian State Tourist Office leadership Opinion Survey.

This survey provided some preliminary insights into issues associated with the STOs involvement in the National Branding process and in the roles of the State tourist organizations in branding their own parts of Australia with American consumers.

STOs mainly agree with the strategic components of the ATCs branding strategy. They generally accept ATC interpretation of Australia's brand image, the brand identity and the definition of the target market. Within this framework there are tensions in interpretation and prioritization of messages.

There is concern expressed by the representatives of the STOs that there is insufficient collaboration in the brand development process and that the execution of the brand message has been inconsistent. This is a point that also came from the Australian Travel Marketers. Nevertheless, the STOs confirmed the Brand Australia activity was generally effective in representing their interests.

The STOs as a group consider brand development for their state as part of Australia is an important activity. These organizations work with tourism wholesalers and product to achieve their brand objectives. They use many of the same techniques as National Tourist Offices to achieve these goals, including image libraries, and cooperative marketing.

5.3 Observations and Discussion Points

Chapter 1 set the goals of this thesis as follows:

- To clarify the role of National Tourism Brands in the development of successful and sustainable destination marketing programs,
- To understand the process of developing destination brands; and
- To understand the benefits generated by destination branding for the key stakeholders in the destination system.

The findings related to these goals are best discussed in the context of the 4 inter-related aspects of destination branding first established in Figure 1:1. These aspects include – the nature of destination brands; the destination brand stakeholders; the benefits of destination branding and the destination branding process.

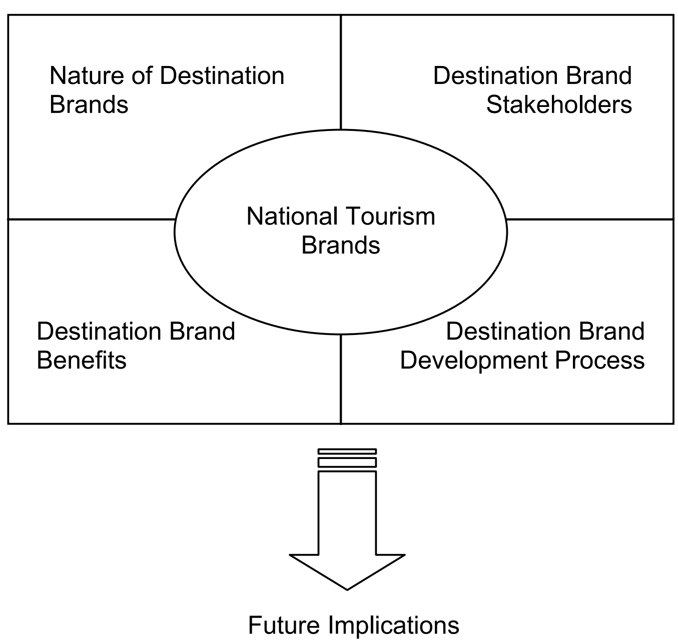


Figure 5.1 Thesis Issues

5.3.1 Nature of Destination Brands

Examination of the nature of brands commenced with a review of the definition of “destination” and it’s implications to destinations. It is the definition of destination, which simultaneously allows us to look at the destination both as a single entity and as a composite of many components that gives insight into the function of the destination brand and specifically the NTB.

5.3.1.1 National Tourism Brands are Public Assets.

Although there is little dispute that destinations can be treated as brands there is little discussion of what building a brand means to a National Tourist Office. The general acceptance of the notion of brand equity supports the notion that brands are assets. There is strong support of this position from authors including Ambler (2000), Srivastava et al (1998), Kotler (1994), Aaker (1991) and Keller (1998) to name a few. Given a brand is an asset then it must be concluded that National Tourism Brands are public assets developed for the benefit of the nation. The asset has multiple uses and multiple stakeholders. The NTO is therefore the steward of a national asset. The NTO is a key beneficiary of the asset in that it assists in the effectiveness of ongoing economic development through tourism. The NTO is not, however, the only organization that will utilize the asset – the brand equity of the destination – in their marketing activity. Even individual residents within the nation gain benefit from the asset through national pride. It is in this context – of a public asset with multiple users – that aspects of branding such as stakeholder engagement in the process and the flow of value from branding activities can be conceptualized.

5.3.1.2 National Tourist Brands are both "Brands" and "Composite brands"

There is also little dispute, either from academia or practitioners, that destinations can be considered brands. There is a growing body of research that supports the notion. In addition, marketing practitioners from a variety of destination marketing organizations, including NTOs, STOs, RTOs and CVBs are undertaking destination branding activities. Destination brands, including NTB can be considered as "single" or "whole" brands. Brand Australia can be viewed as a "whole", with its own set of associations and its own brand equity. From this perspective, Brand Australia has been developed as a unique brand, competitive with other nations in the marketplace.

However, a second important concept proposed in this thesis is that destinations are composite products and so destination brands are composite brands. As such destination brands can be considered as composite brands in which many component brands influence the consumer perception of the whole. The composition of this new complex brand can be considered in a number of ways. Two perspectives have been considered in this thesis in some detail – the destination brand hierarchy and the product/service/attribute portfolio. Products, as "ingredients" of the destination can increase their benefits from destination branding by learning from the best practices of other "ingredient" brands. For instance the insights from Intel's experience with branding their chips as "Intel inside" include the observation that the program was effective because Intel worked closely with suppliers/original equipment manufacturers (OEM) in product improvement, promotion and production; it worked hard to understand its customers consumers and it recognized that the branding campaign had limited, although significant benefits (Norris, 1993).

5.3.1.3 National Tourist Brands are Driver Brands.

The brand architecture of the national tourist brand helps to answer the underlying question of why the destination branding activity is considered important. Whether the NTB is considered as a single entity, a component of a destination brand hierarchy, co-branded with another product or as a part a composite brand or brand family – the underlying assumption is that the NTB plays a driving role in the consumer purchase process. A “driver role’, as defined by Aaker (2004), is the “degree to which the brand drives the purchase”(p19) and it is clear that it is the brand equity of “Australia”, not brand equity of specific hotels or tours, that is the primary motivator for sales of tourism product to the destination.

It is apparent that this is the working assumption for not only from the ATC, but also product and distribution network members, is that Brand Australia is the brand driver for American travelers to Australian vacations. As noted, the national tourist brand tends to have greater brand equity than either individual products or even tourism wholesalers and so in effect the national tourism brand is enabling the product and the channel members to use a “push” marketing strategy. At the very least the NTB is allowing these commercial stakeholders to deploy resources to activities they consider to be important to converting interest to sales and reducing the necessity of providing general background information on the destination.

5.3.1.4 National Tourism Brands are Destination Master Brands.

Observation of the role of National Tourism Brands suggests that they are best categorized as “Master Brands” in the context of the consumer purchase. As noted earlier Aaker (2004) describes the master brand as the “primary indicator of the offering, the point of reference”. The NTB assumes this master brand role both in the brand/product portfolio and the destination brand hierarchy. When visiting a destination consumers will experience a specific set of product and services. That experience will take place at a town or specific region, in a state, in a country of nation. The nation brand will provide a set of associations for the consumer, as will the state brand, regional brand and product brands. It is proposed that the value of the National brand reduces as the consumers understanding of regions/cities and product increases and vice versa. For example, Americans in general are not familiar with specific destinations within Australia and so the nation brand is important.

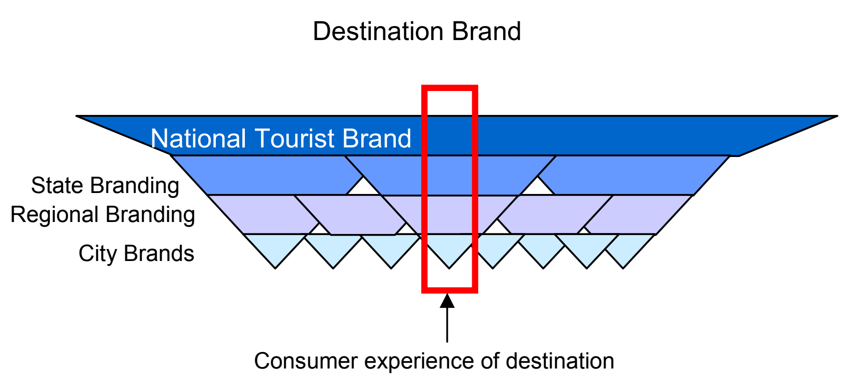


Figure 5.2 Consumer Experience of Brand Hierarchy

5.3.2 Destination Brand Stakeholders

As noted previously a national tourism brand can be considered a public asset with multiple “users” of the asset including tourism organizations, tourism products, other organizations and individuals. Each have claim to the common asset. The NTO is an actor but it is incorrect to consider that NTO is not the only actor or the only beneficiary. As a public asset the NTB is analogous with roads and freeways. The department of main roads may be the key driver of the development of this public asset, and the government itself may be a key user of the asset, but it is not the only beneficiary. Clearly many stakeholders seek input into the development of the roads and highways. There is evidence that NTO’s are engaging with stakeholders in a variety of ways. They are incorporating stakeholders into planning meetings, promoting participation in the branding process through brand tools and involving them in cooperative marketing programs.

This is not to say that every stakeholder should be engaged in every aspect of the destination branding process. Stakeholders should engage in the process where they can add greatest value. In the brand development process the most obvious stage of engagement is the “brand analysis” stage of the process where assessment is made of destination image, destination identity, and destination positioning and target market identification. Stakeholders clearly have valid input into how the destination should – from their perspective - be positioned and who should be targeted as potential consumers.

These stakeholders offer less “value-added” to the process of creative development and media planning. These activities, based soundly on the analysis of the strategy development process, should be undertaken by professionals, normally in concert with the NTO that is ultimately responsible for the brand strategy. It is the role of the NTO at this point to enhance the value of the brand, creating images that support goals for awareness, consideration and consumer action through enquiry. The key deliverables from the NTO perspective can be seen as brand health and enquiries and/or sales leads. Subjective feedback from stakeholders at this stage of the process should be limited and analyzed against the strategic objectives of the plan. Commercial stakeholders play a critical role in the “outcome section” of the Destination brand process by converting leads to actual sales. As commercial entities their expertise is in maximizing return from the consumer contact.

This research focused on four key stakeholders in the sales of Australia’s tourism product and services: National Tourism Offices, State Tourist Offices, tourism product, and tourism wholesalers. Each of these groups interact differently with the brand as it develops, each supports the brand building process in a different way and each accrues different benefits from the branding process. Nevertheless each of these groups places great importance on Brand Australia.

The “learning curve” is making it harder for the ATC to engage meaningfully with some stakeholders. As noted earlier, by the Have You Ever campaign, ATC had embarked on an approach that treated wholesalers as sales partners – rather than marketing partners.

The commercial stakeholders in the NTB are for the most part small businesses. Most of these operators of products have little brand awareness within the US target market and limited budgets to undertake this activity. As such they place high reliance on the brand awareness to provide them access to the target market. It is noted that it appears tourism marketers perceive that the further from the target market; the greater the perceived value of the National Tourist Branding. At the same time NTOs consider their branding activity to be very important to both tourism product operators and wholesalers. In study 3, NTOs rated the importance of their branding activity for travel product at 6.45 on a scale where 1 is not important at all; 4 is neutral; 7 is very important. On the same scale NTOs rated the importance to travel intermediaries as 5.55. Investigation of the Australian stakeholders shows both product and wholesalers consider that it is important to be associated with Australia (6.3) and that it is important to emphasize "Australian-ness". Product consider Brand Australia advertising is more important (4.68) than wholesalers (3.5).

There is great concern on behalf of the destination marketers to undertake marketing efforts that not only build the image of the destination but also generate sales. Despite the high value the placed on destination branding there remains a tension between the brand development activity and tactical, lead creating, sales generating marketing. As outlined in this study the

Australian Tourist Commission is going to lengths to understand the role of brand in the consumer buying process. Further, they have worked to explicitly state their role in both the branding process and to identify the areas in the consumer buying process in which they believe they can have the greatest impact. This is important for an organization that could be argued is the “custodian” of an extremely well known brand that does not convert interest and appeal to sales and market share.

Two other points are worth noting about the destination branding process. Firstly, the studies undertaken on NTO’s confirm that these organizations are driven by consumer marketing goals. Study 3 confirms NTOs highest priority markets are consumers of travel to their destination – either leisure consumers or special interest travelers. Fortunately NTOs benefit from established destination images and leverage small budgets to modify established images with the intention of stimulating travel. Nevertheless, the second point that must be made is that this is an extremely large task for these organizations to undertake given the small budgets with which they operate.

Finally, it is clear from the study that while the NTO is often the initiator and a key player in the destination branding process, destination branding campaigns are not sustainable without both the support of a variety of stakeholders and the ability to move the consumer through the purchase process. Failure to come to terms with these prerequisites will significantly limit the life of the branding campaign and the benefits it will deliver to the destination.

5.3.3 Destination Benefits

As noted, the development of the NTB is an exercise in building a public asset. This public asset creates benefits for the people, and for the economy through the government's tourist organization (NTOs) and for private enterprises.

NTO's undertake branding to increase the profile of the country in the United States; to increase the effectiveness of their NTO marketing efforts and those of their destinations' products and wholesalers.

5.4.3.1 Brand Benefits Models

It is noted that many of the discussions to date focus on the benefits branding activity accrues to the destination marketing organizations such as NTOs, and to a lesser degree consumers themselves. This is represented in Figure 5:2 by the blue box. This adopts approach is consistent with models currently used in consumer product marketing. Keller (1993), in particular, has been a strong proponent of Customer Based Brand Equity approaches as a means to measure equity and a number of authors including Keller (1998) and Aaker (1996b), Ambler (2000) and Srivastava (1998) have identified the benefits to the company of strong brands. Nevertheless, as is noted in Figure 5.2, destinations branding, impacts many stakeholders, and so complete examination of destination branding requires examination of benefits accrued along a variety of dimensions. This thesis examined the benefits accrued to the NTO, tourism intermediaries, tourism operators and STO's. These are identified in the red boxes in the diagram.

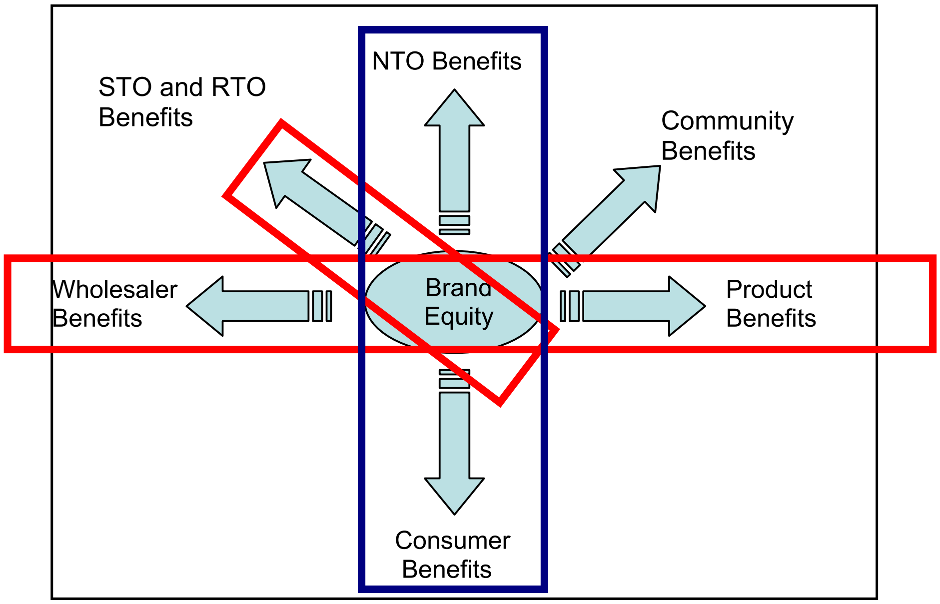


Figure 5.3 Destination Brand Beneficiaries

Based on this examination a schematic of the benefit flows has been developed. The benefits of Nation Tourist Branding extend to a variety of stakeholders. Based on the studies in this thesis benefits can be seen to accrue to the NTO, State tourist offices, products and wholesalers. Some of the benefits are illustrated in Figure 5.4.

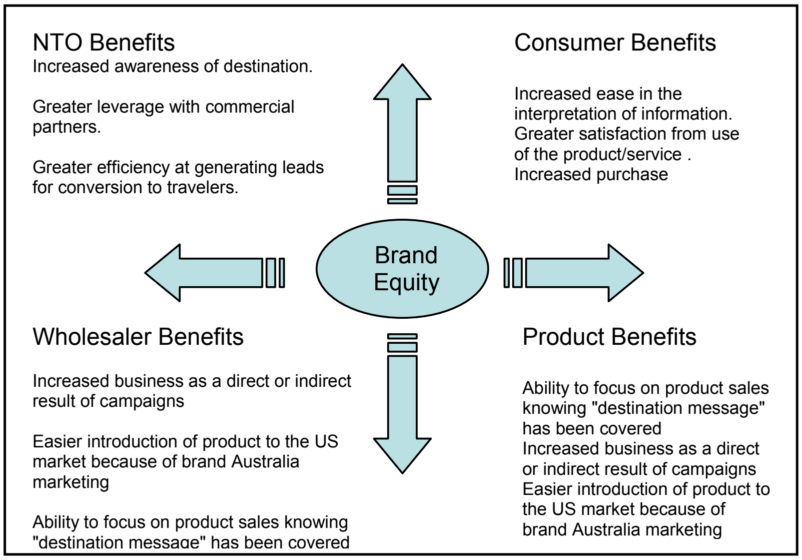


Figure 5.4 NTB Benefits Model

5.3.3.2 Measurement of Brand Values and Benefits

Like many marketing organizations, NTOs and other destination marketing organizations, are increasingly being asked to justify their expenditures and provide return on investment information. As noted previously, based on responses from the NTO studies providing ROI information on marketing activity is a challenge for NTOs.

The measurement of image, brand awareness and brand health is a challenging process for National Tourist Offices and although many report tracking brand awareness the effectiveness of this tracking based on the total budgets reported by the same organizations must be brought to question. At the same time, success for a national tourist office is often defined by external parties in terms of the number of passengers generated by a particular campaign or worse still by overall market performance, as suggested by Lavery (1992). As a result of this pressure to perform against immediate sales figures there is a challenge to measure leads and conversions rather than brand measures. NTOs must be vigilant to ensure they are measuring results against objective, as opposed to measuring what is easy to measure.

The ATC provides measures for a number of brand health metrics as well as tracking the brand health against consumer purchase measures. While ATC is capable of measuring changes in image against brand identity guidelines it is hard to assess increases in year on year effectiveness. This is due in part to the large number of variables that contribute to results. While the core components of brand identity have remained constant, brand creative, media and product offerings have all changed each year. Increases or decreases in marketing efficiency – measured in cost per response – could easily be attributed to any of these factors.

If the development of an NTB is the development of a national asset it should be possible to value the asset. This is challenging as the brand itself is not transferable or transactional. Valuation methods are problematic at best. Nevertheless it is possible to attach some value to the brand. While it is acknowledged that the brand creates many benefits for the NTO, it also creates value for products and wholesale sellers of destination based travel packages.

One benefit of brand equity is the ability to attract additional resources from brands that are prepared to co-brand. Brand Australia has been effective in attracting and managing these types of relationships.

5.3.4 Destination Brand Process

Brand analysis and Communication Strategy Development are a critical part of the branding process and comprise four key components:

5.3.4.1 Image Analysis

An important insight from the branding perspective is that Destination image is essentially established for many destinations and those images may include a variety of strong associations that are not tourism related. Destination brands are impacted heavily by factors external to the deliberate branding process that generate consumer's destination image. These factors were described by Gartner (1993) as organic image formation agents. Factors ranging from popular culture to history; education to the experience of family and friends impacts the consumers understanding of the destination. Nevertheless, in the conscious process of creating National tourism brands, National Tourist Offices tend to take the leadership role in brand development. A NTO has limited ability to impact or change the image and some activity has the potential to have greater impact than others. It is to the advantage of the NTO to extend its branding activity to as many partners as possible and to undertake public relations activities. It is also important to undertake quality assurance activities to ensure the destination continues to deliver on the brand positioning.

Several authors express frustration in the image measurement process. Clearly image can be measured along any number of variables. Nevertheless challenges in measuring image can be overcome in the context of tourism brand and consumer buying process.

5.3.4.2 Target market selection

The identification of the appropriate target markets is a key to the branding process. Marketers rarely have resources to communicate messages to “the world”. Identifying those consumers with the highest likelihood of traveling to the destination and ensuring the effective communication of the appropriate positioning to that group is fundamental to the destination branding process. It is not surprising that the NTOs in study 1 and 3 identify target marketing as one of their greatest challenges. In a complex market like the United States market research to identify appropriate target markets is expensive and yet critical to the operations of the NTOs subsequent marketing activities.

5.3.4.3 Positioning Strategies and Marketing Communications.

There is little doubt that brand creative and execution makes a big difference in the overall acceptance of the brand positioning. From a creative perspective Hall (2004) notes that the importance of the creative expression of the campaign cannot be underestimated. Clearly success breeds success and the success of creative will stimulate positive outcomes in other areas of the execution of the brand strategy. Beyond creative issues there are many other factors associated with the execution of the brand strategy that must be addressed to ensure effective marketing. There is evidence in the Australian experience that the NTO benefits from a learning curve effect in the brand execution. Through analysis of marketing metrics and the experience of developing and planning these brand campaigns their level of expertise is high relative to other stakeholders. It is hard to underestimate the importance of the Australian Tourist Commission to the Brand Australia process. The Australian Tourist Commission plays a key leadership role in the process. Since 1996 the ATC has invested tens of millions of dollars in the development of Brand Australia. Their expenditure is significantly greater than either the product or the wholesalers identified in this project. As a result the ATC as an organization benefits from the experience curve derived from years of developing and honing the branding process. In addition, they have resources to work with leading advertising agencies, with cutting edge creative talent and expertise in brand development.

The communication of the positioning to the target market can incorporate a wide variety of marketing techniques. It is noted that some techniques are more effective in the creation of brand. At this point it should be noted that not all marketing is undertaken for the purpose of “brand building”. Some marketing is undertaken for purely “tactical” reasons – in order to stimulate immediate sales of a product. Tactical advertising tends to focus its message in price and availability and places less emphasis on building complex messages about the product or destination. One way to frame this conversation is to propose that some tactical marketing activity is best described as a “cost of goods sold” and should be accounted for on the profit and loss statement. Other marketing, specifically marketing designed to build the brand, is asset development and maybe included on the balance sheet.

Nevertheless tactical marketing and brand building are not mutually exclusive, brand campaigns can and do stimulate immediate sales and tactical campaigns convey information about the brand positioning. Many marketing campaigns deliberately incorporate both brand building and tactical marketing activity. In the Australian context, branding in the United States was not undertaken during the time frame examined without a commercial call to action and an expectation of immediate product sales. The marketing therefore always had multiple objectives, including raising brand awareness and strengthening key brand associations whilst also stimulating immediate sales.

Finally, in assessing the brand development process, there is acknowledgement that the distribution network is an important actor in the "product" consumed by travelers. Destinations can maximize the benefit of destination brands with strategies designed to encourage brand utilization by stakeholders.

5.3.5 Future of National Tourism Brands

Developing strategies that maximize brand congruency with the destination hierarchy is an obvious advantage to destinations selling under the "umbrella" of the NTB. The NTB, and its stakeholders, will be challenged to ensure they achieve brand alignment within the destination hierarchy and within the composite destination to ensure maximum benefit from limited resources dedicated to these activities.

Pressure will continue to be applied to destination marketing organizations to provide evidence of their return on investment. NTOs will need to develop measurement regimes that capture the growth in the destination asset as well as show immediate short term (sales) results. In addition brands will become increasingly tied the consumer buying process and the brand's contribution to future sales – medium and long term will become increasing important. NTOs will need to become increasingly more sophisticated in communicating the benefits of their branding activity.

In describing the benefits of the branding process, NTOs will need to engage product, the distribution network and other stakeholders in the process and execution of NTB and show the value their leadership in the branding process provides a broad group of actors.

Two final observations can be made in this review of the key insights of the study. The first is that great branding creates what Gilmore (2002a) describes as a "virtuous" cycle for destinations and their stakeholder. The development of great branding has the effect of gathering around the stakeholders. As such it gives momentum to the branding initiative.

Secondly, if the challenge of National Tourist organizations is to focus high, positive awareness of a destination to stimulate travel it is clear that there are many destinations that have the potential to brand themselves far more effectively in the future. These destinations have established images and are waiting for brand strategists to manage the latent asset they possess.

5.4 Key Contributions of this Thesis

This thesis has examined the destination branding process in a variety of new ways that have yielded interesting contributions to the field of study. Some of the key concepts that this thesis contributes to understanding of destination branding include:

- Brand is a public asset used by tourism organizations. The development of this asset generates benefits for a number of stakeholder groups, both commercial and non-commercial. As such the asset, often managed by the NTO, should be considered a shared resource.
- Tourism brands are composite brands. As destination brands provide a single focus for a geographic area they are also composite brands comprised of a portfolio of brands for the products that make the destination brand. These brands contribute to the destinations brand and benefit from the destination brand's equity. Products can consider themselves as "ingredient" brands or co-branded with the destination and should employ strategies to maximize the benefits from the relationship.
- Tourism brands assume a number of roles within the architecture of the tourism commerce. This thesis explicitly acknowledges that destination brands are "driver brands" for many tourism products and as such are the generate demand for many tourism products. Tourism products and intermediaries are able to employ "pull" marketing strategies because of the demand generated by these destination brands.

- The National Tourism Brand creates value for a variety of stakeholders and the value of the brand is greater than the benefit to the NTO. In this respect the general brand benefits model – Figure 5.5 is a useful contribution to future assessments of destination branding activity. Understanding the value of the brand to a variety of stakeholders will enable public policy makers, destination marketers, products and other stakeholders better understand the value of destination branding.

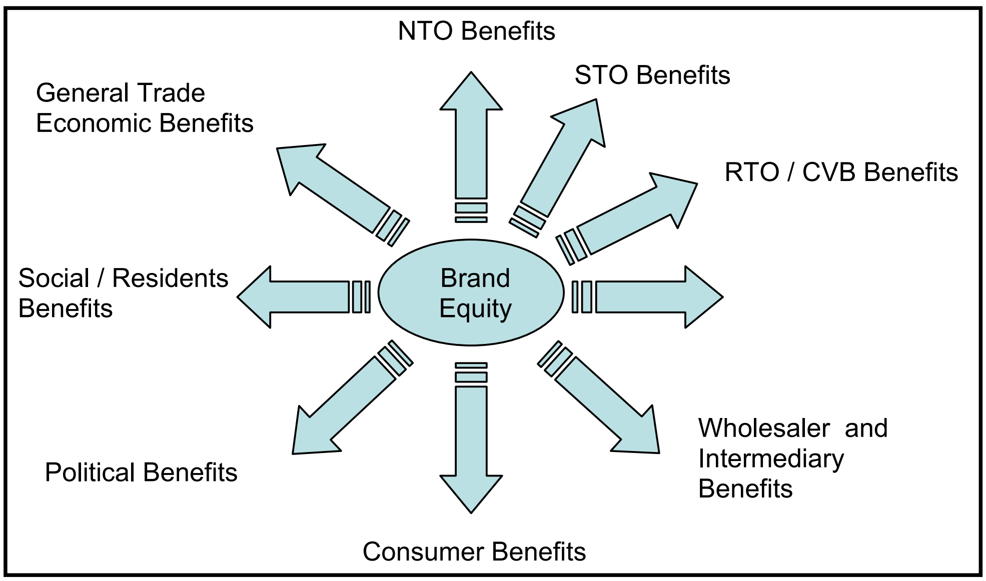


Figure 5.5 General NTB Benefits Model

- The explicit branding process is only a component of the image formation process and the NTO does not do the whole job of creating the destination image. Destination branding literature has implicitly assumed a direct relationship between the destination image and the destination image development activities of the destination management organization. This study provides a reality check for this assumption. It is clear from the Australian stakeholders' perspective that the activities of the ATC are only a factor in the development of destination brand.

- Destination Branding is an exercise in both marketing communications and destination development. Although most studies focus on the communication and the positioning of brand identity in the minds of the consumer a clear consequence of the image development process outlined by Gartner (1993) is that image is created "organically" through experience. This is a logical extension of consumer branding. Clearly using the Apple Ipod is as important as its billboard advertising in the Ipod brand experience. The implication is that effective branding requires investing to ensure the destination delivers on the brand positioning to travelers "consuming" the destination as well as communication of the brand positioning to potential travelers.

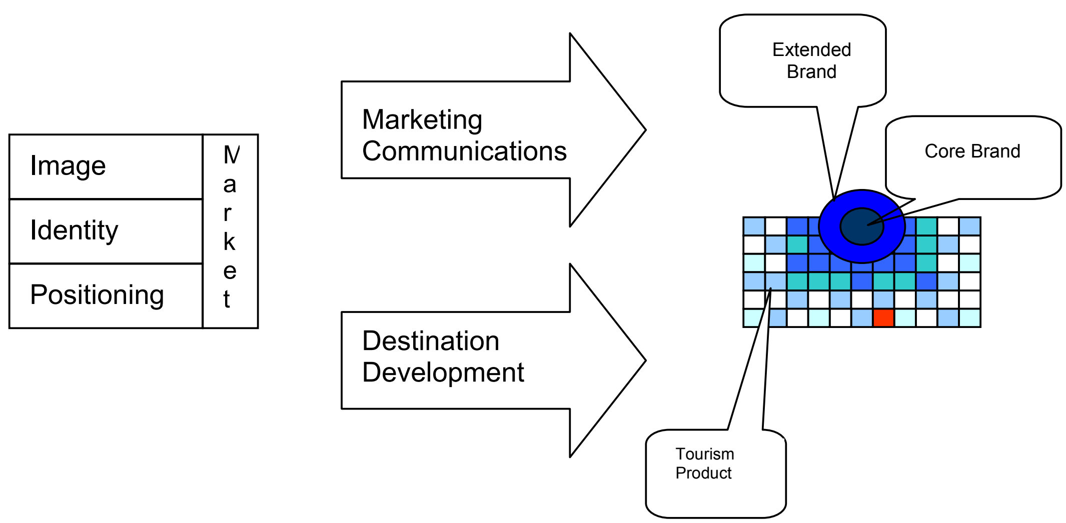
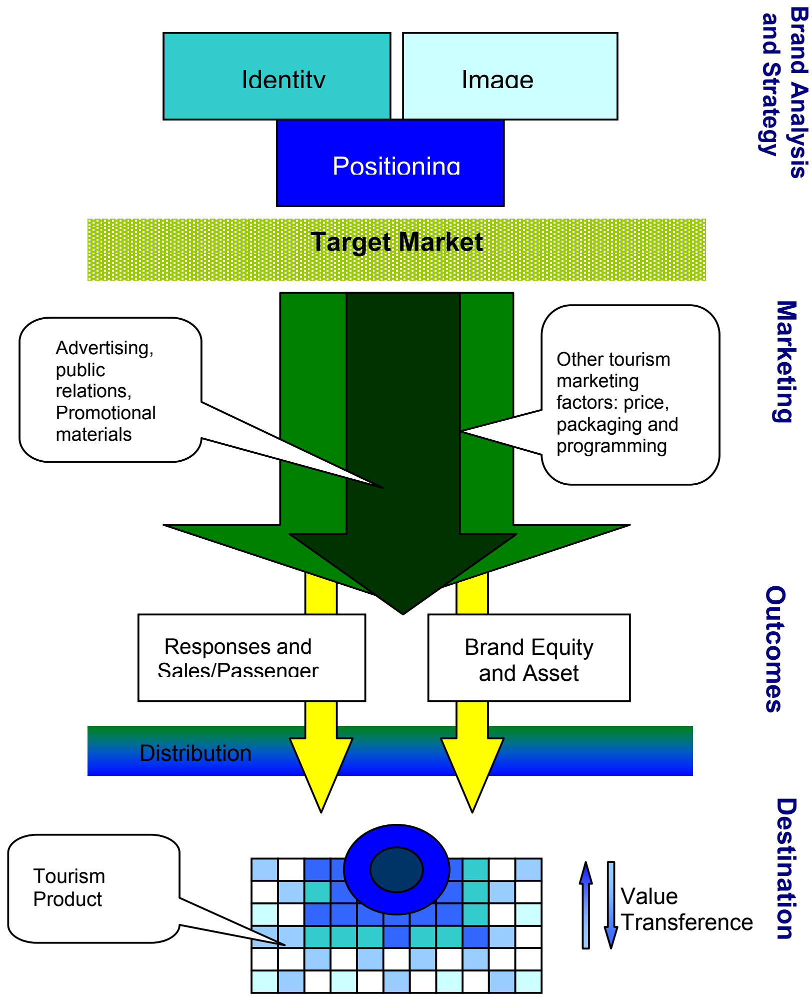


Figure 5.6 Brand Impact on Destination Development and Marketing Communications

- The destination process model provides a framework for analyzing the destination branding process.



5.7 Destination Brand Development Process

5.5. Limitations of the Study

While providing insight into National Tourism Branding there are limitations to the study which can be identified. This study is an exploratory analysis of a field in which there is growing interest in tourism research. As such the studies rely heavily of descriptive analysis in order to provide a clear overview of the practices undertaken by these organizations.

It is noted that the methodology used for these studies involved some inherent limitations. The sample groups while reflective of the industry groups were relatively small. This is in part due to the relatively small number of practitioners in the field and in part due to the focus on the single destination market. One other methodological issue is worth noting. The first NTO study, undertaken through a mail in survey, took place post-911 with the first letter being mailed during the anthrax mail threat in the United States. This was clearly not the best time to do a mail survey.

This exploratory analysis of the NTOs operating in the United States and the marketing activities of Australian intermediaries was, like all studies, limited by its defined scope. The following section outlines suggestions for future study that will continue the development of this important field of study.

5.6 Future Study

The studies undertaken in this thesis have yielded greater insight into the destination branding process and the roles of NTOs and commercial stakeholders in the branding process. Despite the new understanding these studies reveal many areas ripe for further investigation. These potential areas of study reside in a variety of disciplines, including public policy, marketing, management/organizational behavior as well as tourism, and it will take a multi-disciplinary approach to reveal the complete picture of destination brands.

In the public policy arena research should be undertaken into the value of nation branding, and national tourism branding. Questions to be addressed may include - Is it good public policy given the priorities of government? What are the social benefits? What are the economic benefits of these activities?

From an organizational/management perspective the question should be raised as to the challenges associated with managing the international marketing/branding organization such as a NTO. What are best practices of national tourist organizations and what activity adds greatest value to stakeholders and the nations they represent?

From the marketing/branding perspective there is a need for greater understanding of the process of brand development and implementation within national tourist organization. There is also a clear need for greater understanding of the value transference between brands in a composite brand like a national tourism destination. Finally there is need for greater understanding of the importance of branding to the consumer purchase process. In particular, further research into the creation and nature of conative images, which images that stimulate action, is an important issue for the field to address. Moving the image development research from the abstract of image development to the specific examination of which images stimulate travelers to visit a destination will have applications for many DMOs.

Destination branding is a rich area of future study for tourism researchers and there is much information required to fully understand this topic. Destination branding is a topic that impacts on a wide number of destination marketing organizations, from local and regional tourism organizations, visitor and convention bureaus, through State Tourism Organizations to National Tourism Organizations. Although many of the findings of this study are applicable to each of these circumstances the study does not address the needs and issues of these other levels of DMO. Future study addressing the interaction of brand stakeholders and the value generated by destination brands should be undertaken at each level of the destination hierarchy.

Destination marketing is a global enterprise but these studies have been designed to focus on the US market, and although the US market represents an important source market for many destinations and their products, it is by no means the only market in which national tourism branding occurs. Future studies should address destination branding from the perspective of the NTO as a global enterprise. These studies should examine the global operations of the NTOs; the brand development process from a central organizational perspective; the organizational management issues of managing the international offices and tensions that arise in brand development and execution. In addition to examining the global destination process future studies should also look at the issues addressed in this study for source markets other than the United States.

The assessment of brand examines the perspective of two commercial stakeholders in the brand. Although these partners represent important players in the business they are by no means the only stakeholders that accrue value from the National Branding process. Future studies should ensure that a broader range of stakeholders as included in the study to give a more complete view of the roles of stakeholders in the destination branding process and the value created by the branding process.

In addition to further studies into the National Tourism Branding it is important that greater research is undertaken into the following areas:

- National Tourist Offices’ efficiency, effectiveness, global operations. Decision making etc,
- International marketing activities of tourism product.; and
- The operations and marketing activities of Tourism wholesalers and their role in international tourism marketing.

5.7 Final Comments

Destination Branding has become an important activity for destination marketing organizations and an important support mechanism for the small to medium size enterprises that market their products internationally. Destination marketers have adopted and adapted these marketing techniques to meet their specific needs of the tourism industry and the destinations themselves.

As marketing and branding techniques become more sophisticated and consumers become savvier to the techniques employed by marketers, destination marketers are challenged to stay on the cutting edge of these techniques in order to be relevant in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

Tourism researchers must also meet the challenge. There remain many areas of the branding process that require initial research, and still more areas that have been identified in the context of consumer marketing that need testing in the tourism marketing field. Not the least of these topics is an exploration of the development of “conative” images in the mind of the consumer. From an applied research perspective there are many aspects of destination branding that require further examination to ensure that individual organizations accrue the greatest benefits of the branding process and that ultimately our communities benefit from the promise of increased tourism.

Jonathon Day
2005