

A Strategic Media Selection Framework for Destination Marketers within the Digital Landscape

by

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Student Declaration

I declare that while registered as a candidate for the research degree, I have not been a registered candidate or enrolled student for another award of the University or other academic or professional institution.

I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award and is solely my own work.

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MA (By Research)

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Abstract

This masters aims to combine three strands of research, namely destination marketing, digital marketing and media selection. Making it highly context specific, the purpose of the research is to give further insight into destination marketing media selection and provide practitioners with a potential blueprint on making these media selection decisions. This includes traditional as well as digital media, particularly since digital media have gained an important role due to the web becoming the dominant medium for tourism marketing (Miller and Henthorne, 2006 p.54).

In all three strands of research, in fact in general marketing literature – the idea of hierarchical and rational planning, decision making and taking of action is strongly supported by academics (Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.24; Hanlan et al., 2006 p.21). However, this is widely ignored by practitioners, despite the urge that it will increase efficiency and prevent strategic drift (Bagaric, 2010, p.237). This seems to be true for various areas of the destination marketing field, however, due to research limitations the focus of this masters has been narrowed to media selection, which in the destination marketing context is yet widely unexplored. It is therefore the declared aim of this research, to give further insight into destination marketing and in particular media selection and propose a conceptual framework on how these media selection decisions could be made.

Providing a hierarchical and rational approach, the conceptual framework presented in this thesis proposes to act as a hands-on step-by-step guide to lead practitioners through the media selection process in an appropriate manner. It is classified as a 'reflective tool', which in this study refers to its ability to stimulate reflection by providing important aspects of consideration, rather than offering a number of pro-forma solutions. This way, the tool enables practitioners to find their own customized solutions, whilst maintaining a general applicability.

Adopting a case study approach, this study further utilizes Delphi technique elements, which have proven in the past to be suitable for the context of tourism and particularly destination marketing. This way, feedback from experts of the industry is directly used for the construction of the proposed media selection tool.

It is the author's firm belief that problem solving theory is the answer to the practical complexity of destination marketing. As a result, this thesis is presented as a first step to close the gap between destination marketing theorists and practitioners and an appeal to all destination marketers to continue to this path through increased dialogue for the future success of this discipline.

The study is divided into the following sections:

CHAPTER ONE – Introduction

Chapter one provides the reader with a short introductory note by the author, drawing out some key research issues and challenges. Furthermore, it presents the research aims and objectives, which acted as key drivers within the study.

CHAPTER TWO: Destination Marketing -Themes, issues and consequences

Chapter two aims to introduce the reader to the discipline of destination marketing and give a comprehensive overview of its main theory and developments. This includes the emerge of the business discipline, its history and development, definitions of key terms and theory as well as contemporary issues. Main themes are the definition of destination marketing in the destination collective context and the role of destination marketing organisations (DMOs).

CHAPTER THREE: Digital Marketing - Themes, issues and consequences

Chapter three gives the reader an overview of digital marketing theory and development. This includes main definitions and strategic planning theory, the development of the digital landscape within destination marketing as well as contemporary issues. The state of digital efforts and destination websites is reviewed; strategy presented which is suited to digital marketing planning, and a discussion given on key implications of the digital age.

CHAPTER FOUR: Media Selection

Chapter four presents currently available theory for media selection and media planning, of which a selection contributed directly to the construction of the latter reflective tool. Since no specific theory could be found on media selection in a destination context, this overview is limited on theory and frameworks from the general media selection field.

CHAPTER FIVE: Towards a conceptual framework

Chapter five presents the development process of the so-called 'reflective tool', as well as the first draft of the tool itself. Please note, that at this state the tool is not yet reviewed by field research input and will undergo major alterations until it reaches its final form.

CHAPTER SIX – Context of this research

This chapter provides some background information towards the context of the research setting, which will contribute to the reader's understanding of the study and its results.

CHAPTER SEVEN – Methodology

Chapter seven provides a comprehensive overview of the used methodology. This includes research philosophy and strategy, research methods, data analysis and conduct considerations. The chosen research methods - semi-structured interviews, document analysis and focus groups - are explained and a rationale given for the use of each of them.

CHAPTER EIGHT – Analysis of Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents an overview of the findings from the field research, and discusses their impact on the modification of the framework. Since the study consisted of two rounds of field research, two modified versions of the framework are represented, of which the second is the final reflective tool.

CHAPTER NINE – Conclusions

Chapter nine summarizes the outcomes of the field research and draws conclusions from findings. These conclusions concern the reflective tool itself, general destination marketing theory, as well as implications for practitioners and academics of the discipline. It further points out implications for future research.

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And thanks to HIM, through whom all things are possible, and who works all things to the good of those who love Him.

CHAPTER ONE - Introduction

1.1. Introduction and research rationale

This master aims to combine three strands of research, namely destination marketing, digital marketing and media selection. Making it highly context specific, the purpose of the research is to give further insight into destination marketing media selection and provide practitioners with a hypothetical model on making these media selection decisions. This includes traditional as well as digital media, particularly since digital media have gained an important role due to the web becoming the dominant medium for tourism marketing (Bonn, Furr and Susskind, 1999; Jang, 2004; Morrison et al., 2001, in Miller and Henthorne, 2006 p.54). The model itself encourages marketers to reflect on their planning and decision making within media selection, which will then hopefully aid them to more strategically make use of their available resources. Since the model in the course of this master will not yet have the opportunity to be tested through use in the industry, future research will be required to reveal its full applicability. It can then serve as a potential blueprint for practitioner media selection decisions.

In all three strands of research, in fact in general marketing literature – the idea of hierarchical and rational planning, decision making and taking of action is strongly supported by academics (Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.24; Hanlan et al, 2006 p.21; Kotler et al, 2001 cited in Hanlan et al, 2006 p.21). Unfortunately, this is widely ignored by practitioners despite the urge that it will increase efficiency and prevent strategic drift (Bagaric, 2010 p.237). This seems to be true for various areas of the destination marketing field. However, due to research limitations the focus of this master has been narrowed to media selection, which in the destination marketing context is yet widely unexplored. Providing a hierarchical and rational approach, the conceptual framework presented in this thesis proposes to act as a hands-on step-by-step guide to lead practitioners through the media selection process in an appropriate manner. Based on a thorough literature review, the framework was initially constructed as a synthesis of a number of applicable theories in destination marketing, digital marketing and media selection. As a second stage, field research in form of a case study was conducted with a local destination marketing organisation to explore the applicability of the framework and make any necessary modifications.

The reader might be surprised at the level of importance given to the input from practitioners in this research and the inclusion of Delphi technique elements. This, however, was a deliberate act based on the firm belief that only the combined efforts of

theoretical knowledge and practical experience can together create the most effective frameworks. The 'reflective tool' presented in this thesis therefore specifically aims to simplify the complexity of the subject of destination marketing and make it accessible to its practitioners. The reader is encouraged to keep this in mind throughout the presentation of this research project. Research has, through the use of language more often than necessary made findings obscure to its own respondents and affected groups/individuals. This weakness is specifically to be avoided within this work, as the beneficiaries of this research project are not only the academically but practically active in this field.

1.2. Aim and objectives

Research Aim	To give further insight into destination marketing media selection and propose a conceptual framework on how these media selection decisions could be made.
Research Question	<p>General: Which planning elements and considerations are relevant for destination marketers when establishing their media strategy / making media selection decisions?</p> <p>Specific:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Is there a hierarchical planning sequence, which destination marketers could adapt when establishing their media strategy? b. Which criteria do/could destination marketers consider, when making a media selection decision? c. Are there any destination marketing specific aspects, which are relevant in this context?
Research Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To critically evaluate the existing theory and research on destination marketing, digital marketing and media selection. 2. To discuss, evaluate and assemble all the applicable concepts and criteria and synthesise them into a conceptual framework which proposes a step-by-step guide to media selection within destination marketing. 3. Provide practical tips for implementation of media selection in a destination context. 4. Recommend future areas of research.

CHAPTER TWO: Destination Marketing - Themes, issues and consequences

2.1. Introduction

2.1.1. Introductory note from the author

Before examining and discussing the literature, the author would like to point out that destination marketing in itself is a manifold and highly complex discipline. This is due to two main reasons which challenge both academic experts and practitioners on a daily basis and are painfully evident to both. First of all, destination marketing represents a research field of interdisciplinary nature, due to its evolution out of several strands of different fields of disciplines into a distinct subject area of its own within marketing (Skinner, 2008 pp.915 - p.917). As a consequence, the extant theory remains fragmented due to the lack of established terminology to describe its various associated phenomena, which puzzles academics and practitioners alike (Skinner, 2008 p.45). Secondly, the destination as an entity remains one of the most difficult to manage and market (Fyall and Leask, 2006 p.51) 'due to the numerous products, stakeholders and organisational bodies and individuals that combine to deliver the destination 'product' (Fyall and Leask, 2006 p.51). Both these aspects will be elaborated on later in this literature review. However, it might prove helpful for the reader to keep these key issues in mind whenever dealing with the subject of destination marketing.

2.1.2. The emerge of destination marketing

Although academic interest and research into the subject are quite recent, destination marketing is, in fact, widespread practice (Hankinson, 2004 cited in Skinner, 2008 p.915) and 'as old as commodification itself' (Brown, 2006 p.12 cited in Skinner, 2008 p.915). Destination marketing has been recognised as an indispensable topic for the tourism industry both in theory and practice; although unfortunately it has not been accompanied by much empirical work illustrating the actual implementation (Blumberg, 2005 p.45). The development of destination marketing has largely occurred within the last forty years (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002 cited in Skinner, 2008 p.917). Due to increasing interest in the subject, a clear sophistication of the marketing of places has been evident within the last three decades (Deffner and Metaxas, 2005 cited in Cameron and Baker, 2008 p.79). This resulted in a more focused, integrated and strategic orientation compared to the early piecemeal attempts of place promotion (Kavaratzis, 2005 p.330).

Academics believe that the initial reason for the growing interest in the marketing of places was the global increase of competition for resources, which includes visitors, business investments and even local residents (Kotler et al, 1999 cited in Kavaratzis, 2005, p.329; Blumberg, 2005 p.45; Baker and Cameron, 2008 p.79). Consequently, also the application of marketing techniques to places increased (Baker and Cameron, 2008 p.79) in an attempt to secure these resources. Simultaneously it was recognised, that it is not only crucial for destinations to attract new place-users and activity, but to ensure that the existing ones remain satisfied (Kavaratzis, 2005 p.329). It was around the 1990's, however, that not only the competition for resources but as a result the competitiveness between the destinations themselves was increasing (Codato and Franco, 2006; Go and Govers, 2000; all cited in Skinner, 2008 p.917).

Despite the general acknowledgement that marketing greatly benefits destination development (Cooper et al, 1998; Howie, 2003; Prideaux and Cooper, 2002; all cited in Baker and Cameron, 2008 p.81) the process often remains complex and confused as it is challenging (Bennett, 1999; cited in Baker and Cameron, 2008, p.81). In an attempt to tackle the complexity, academics such as Kotler (1999 cited in Kavaratzis, 2005) and Hankinson (2009) have utilized a number of general business and marketing concepts for destination marketing purposes; with most of them being transferred from the initial field of industrial products and services (Ashworth and Voogd, 1994 cited in Kavaratzis, 2005 p.330). However, before further examining these concepts, it is important to define destination marketing and its role, as well as the function of the so-called 'Destination Marketing Organisation' (From here on referred to as 'DMO').

2.2. Definitions

2.2.1. Defining destination marketing

There is still little consensus on general practices of destination marketing (Skinner, 2008 p.916). Academics seem to be divided into two main parties – those that limit destination marketing to its function of targeted promotion (e.g. Collier, 1999 p.419 cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.46) and those that consider it a strategic tool in coordination with planning and management to provide suitable gains to all stakeholders (Buhalis, 2000 cited in Baker and Cameron, 2008 p.82; Hankinson 2001, cited in Hanlan et al., 2006 p.23; Ashworth and Voogd, 1994 cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.47). In an attempt to solve the issue, some academics have decided to distinguish between destination marketing and destination management; destination marketing being limited to the role of persuasive communications in order to attract visitors whereas destination management specifically includes the building and managing of stakeholder relationships (Gretzel et al., 2006, cited in Elbe et al., 2008 p.286). A third group of academics seem to combine both management and marketing under the term of destination marketing, such as Kotler et al. (1999 cited in Baker and Cameron, 2008 p.79): Destination marketing is:

‘a place planning procedure concerning the needs of target markets. It could be successful when it fulfils two main parameters:

- a. The enterprises’ and residents’ satisfaction that the place provides
- b. The satisfaction of expectations of potential target markets (enterprises and visitors) as long as the goods and services the place provides are those that they wish to get’

Following Blumberg’s approach in her paper on ‘Destination Marketing – A tool for Destination Management: A Case Study from Nelson/Tasman, New Zealand.’ (2005), it is necessary to go back to the definition of marketing itself to determine what destination marketing really means. Blumberg rightly relates the shift in the definition of marketing to the shift of the understanding of destination marketing: ‘In harmony with the general marketing literature, which understands marketing as a management tool, some researchers understand destination marketing as a form of ‘market orientated strategic planning’ and hence as a strategic approach to place development rather than a promotional tool.’ (2005, p.45).The author supports the majority of academics, who agree that destination marketing involves much more than just targeted promotion (Hankinson, 2001 cited in Hanlan et al., 2006, p.23; Buhalis, 2000; Ashworth and Voogd, 1994; Ritichie and Crouch, 2000 p.2; all cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.47).

The following illustration may help to distinguish between promotion, marketing and management – all terms often confused or used interchangeably within the destination literature (Skinner, 2008):

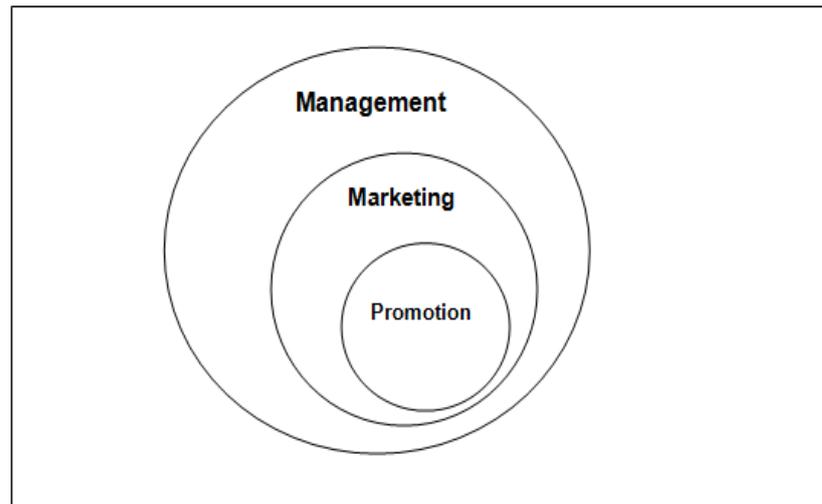


Figure 1.: The Interrelationship of Management, Marketing and Promotion

Here, promotion is understood as an element of marketing, whilst marketing is form of management (Brassington and Pettitt, 2006 p.10). As a management philosophy, marketing involves three main propositions (Stokes and Lomax, 2006 p.30):

- Customer orientation (primary focus of company are customer needs)
- Organisational integration (everyone in company accepts and implements customer orientation, not just marketing department)
- Mutually beneficial exchange (there has to be a balance between the needs of the customer and the strengths of an organisation so that it too can have its needs met)

Marketing has been defined in many different ways, the most common and generally acknowledged definition can be found with the UK Chartered Institute of Marketing: Marketing is ‘the management process responsible for identifying anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably.’ (Stokes and Lomax, 2006 p.6).

Unfortunately, this definition has limited suitability for the subject of destination marketing, as the destination product involves an exchange process more complex than just between DMO and customer due to its ‘fragmentation of ownership’ (World Travel Organisation, 2004 p.10 cited in Baker and Cameron, 2008, p.81). The destination product requires a marketing definition suited to its special requirements, one of them being the multitude of buyers and sellers involved in the destination product (Baker and Cameron, 2008, p.82).

A more suitable approach can be found in the idea of marketing as an exchange process, as first proposed by Alderson (1957, cited in Brassington and Pettitt, 2006 p.8), which, for the purposes of this work, defines marketing as follows:

‘Any measures which support the exchange of desired values. Values include money, desired outcomes, anything that satisfies the purpose of the exchange process. Process participants can be organisations and its customers, as well as individuals etc.’ (Griffiths, 2012).

Hereby it is recognised that parties involved in the exchange process act as elements of the destination product i.e. planners and suppliers. As a result, and for the purpose of this research, destination marketing is defined by the author as:

‘A management process that includes any measures which support the exchange of desired values between the parties involved in the destination network. This network consists of a range of parties including external and internal visitors, local businesses, local authorities, and most importantly, the destination marketer or DMO, which acts as an interface between all of them.’

The mentioned destination product network may vary from destination to destination. However, it is fair to assume that most networks in the UK will at least consist of external visitors, the DMO or destination marketer, stakeholders - including suppliers - as well as some form of local administration or governmental representation. Although local authorities classify as stakeholders, they are considered separately, as they possess special responsibility and power over regional development planning and political decision making.

2.2.2. Defining the destination

Once spatially confined as the ‘end of the journey’ (Vukovic, 1997 p.98 cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.46) the destination is now defined as ‘an amalgam of individual products and experience opportunities that combine to form a total experience of the are visited’ (Murphy et al., 2000 p.44 cited in Blumberg 2005 p.46). This view of a destination as a tourism product and integrated marketing unit has a strong impact on determining the role of destination marketing organisations, which will be explored later.

2.2.3. Defining the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) and its role

Generally, a destination marketing organisation can loosely be defined as ‘any organisation that at any level is responsible for the marketing of an identifiable destination’ (Pike, 2004 cited in Elbe et al., 2009 p.286) or ‘a publicly funded body, normally given the responsibility for coordinating the marketing activities within the

boundaries of the destination (Pearce, 1992; Pike, 2004; cited in Elbe et al, 2009 p.284).

However, just as there is a multitude of different types of destinations, there is an equal variety of so-called 'Destination Marketing Organisations' and although marketing is commonly their dominant function, most DMOs are 'generally multifunctional' (Pearce, 1992 cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.48). 'DMO' hence acts as a collective term for institutions which can be in the public sector, a cooperation of public and private, or even totally privately held institutions (Cooper et al., 1998 p.107 cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.48). These can range from membership based organisations, local or national government funded promotional organisations, to bodies formed through a mix of private and public sector funding. Some destinations occasionally even show and represent a mix of competing organisations, each attempting to represent either the whole place or areas within it (Prideaux and Cooper, 2002 cited in Baker and Cameron, 2008 p.83).

Pearce relates the general establishment of DMOs to the nature of the tourism and destination market, which is dominated by SMEs (Cooper et al., 1998; Buhalis, 2000; all cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.48) and often interdependent, highly fragmented and spatially separated. This creates the desire for combined action and a willingness to achieve common goals - and hence leads to the foundation of tourist organisations (Pearce, 1992 p.5, cited in Elbe et al, 2008 p.286). On the other hand DMOs are often linked to tourist boards acting as a foundation for the tourism to operate at destination level (Cooper et al., 1998 p.107 cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.48).

Nonetheless, the views on the role and responsibility of the DMO differ significantly amongst academics, due to the great variety of organisations. The definition of the role of DMOs finds a division into camps of those who limit their role to the targeted destination promotion (e.g. Collier, 1999 cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.46), and those that see the responsibilities of the DMO in a much wider context, including acting as a leadership provider, stakeholder manager and marketing strategist (e.g. Gretzel et al, 2006; Ritchie and Sheehan, 2005; cited in Elbe et al, 2009 p.286; Ashworth, 1991 p.139 cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.48).

According to Ashworth (1991 p.139 cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.48) the DMO's role is to 'pursue strategic goals and devise and implement an overall destination marketing strategy'. Furthermore, Pearce et al. point out that DMOs often 'provide leadership in policy and planning, marketing, product development, industry advocacy and coordination, and increased professionalism in tourism through education and training' (1998, p. 221 cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.47), making them infinitely influential.

However, DMOs also face a constant tension between service, representation and leadership in order to fulfil their role (Peace, 1998 p. 221 cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.47). Pühringer and Taylor list the following aspects as part of the role of DMOs: Destination promotion, the coordination of operator activities, visitor information services, advocating tourism, leadership provision and increasing the standards of professionalism through education (2008, p.177). Furthermore, DMOs can also act as 'information wholesaler' on behalf of their members, including market knowledge, industry trends, and touristic developments impacting the region. Often they even provide a specific service which gathers and analyses market data to then transfer this knowledge to the industry (Pühringer and Taylor, 2008 p.177).

Amongst practitioners it seems that the variety of roles amongst destination marketing organisations does not only stem from the variety of institutions, but often seems to be dictated by the conditions of the destination itself – the extent of support from local authorities and stakeholders, types of stakeholders present, demands of external visitors, funding, resources, level of expertise, institutional foundation history etc. The role of a DMO hence grows organically. Consequently, the level of professionalism amongst DMOs can also greatly vary – from 'relatively highly formalized, forward looking and well-funded programs of intelligence gathering and analysis to relatively piecemeal and reactive approaches' (Pühringer and Taylor, 2008 p.177). Hence it seems that given the context and circumstances in its destination network, every DMO defines for themselves what role they want to play, can play and should play. Furthermore, the geographic scope classes DMOs into Local (LTO), Regional (RTO) and National (NTO) Tourism Organizations (Pearce, 1992 cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.48).

Sheehan et al. (2007, cited in Elbe et al, 2009 p.285) conclude from field research that DMOs should coordinate amongst stakeholders and act as an interface between buyers and sellers of the destination. Since this view is very much in agreement with the upper constructed definition of destination marketing, the author supports this definition. The question of how much responsibility for leadership DMO's should provide has been debated amongst academics – especially since there seems to be a significant difference in how much leadership should ideally be claimed and in reality can be claimed by DMOs.

This issue is explored in more detail by the case study conducted by Blumberg (2005) concluding that 'DMOs are unlikely to be able to claim too much responsibility for destination management and development, but can play an important part in the management of the destination product' (Blumberg, 2005 p.46). As Wang and Xiang

note 'the DMO can play an influential role, but this requires that it be accepted by the other actors as legitimate in that role (2007 cited in Elbe et al, 2009, p.286). This links into the emphasis that has more recently been placed on the importance of the DMO's responsibility to build and manage of stakeholder relationships – bringing about the renaming of the 'Destination Marketing Organisation' to 'Destination (Marketing and) Management Organisation' (Gretzel et al., 2006; Ritchie and Sheenhan, 2005; cited in Elbe et al., 2009 p.286). Concepts following this idea are generally named as collaboration strategies, facilitation strategies and PPP strategies (Public-Private-Partnership) (Elbe et al., 2009 p.285), and will be explored in more detail in a later chapter.

2.3. Developments and impact

To tackle the complexity of the destination product, academics have proposed various concepts, including destination branding, collaboration strategies and stakeholder management, as well as strategic planning processes. These will now be presented and discussed.

2.3.1. Early classical destination concepts

According to Kotler et al., destination marketing is understood as 'market orientated strategic planning' (1993, in Blumberg, 2005 p.46) and hence as a strategic approach to place development rather than a sales and image making tool (Buhalis, 2000 cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.46.). However, this view only represents the modern understanding of marketing. In the early days of destination marketing, the first attempts of incorporating marketing theory into the destination context were rather intuitive and randomly undertaken, focussing mainly on the aspect of place promotion (Kavaratzis, 2005 p.330). Most of these early attempts were classical marketing frameworks transferred from the initial field of industrial products and services (Ashworth and Voogd, 1999 in Kavaratzis, 2005 p.330). This includes the concept of 'place marketing mixes', segmentation and destination branding. All three theories, however, will not be further reviewed due to the following reasons: The 'place marketing mix, not being discussed any further in later publications, was dismissed as outdated. Segmentation was taken as a given by the author, whereas branding represents a major field of its own within destination marketing which, however, lies not within the focus of this research. The curious reader will find a summarized review of all three topics in the appendix.

2.3.2. Marketing as a strategic planning process

The strategic plan

Kotler et al. (2001) support the idea of marketing as a planning process, believing that an effective marketing strategy needs to derive as part of an overall strategic plan for the destination. They define the strategic plan as the process of developing and maintaining a strategic match between the destinations aims, capabilities and changing market opportunities (Kotler et al., 2001 cited in Hanlan et al, 2006 p.21). It furthermore has to rely on a clear strategic mission which supports objectives and coordinates functional strategies, enabling the destination to take advantage of emerging opportunities in a dynamic environment (Hanlan, 2006 p.21).

Also, mutual objectives and cooperation with stakeholders seem imperative within the destination context. Unfortunately though, practitioners often lack a clear plan and objectives or general strategic orientation, addressed by Bagaric as so-called 'strategic drift' (2010, p.237). Hence, academics support the idea of the DMO as a strategic leadership provider amongst a bundle of disorientated stakeholders, rather than just functioning within a limited promotional role (Gretzel et al., 2006; Ritchie and Sheehan, 2005; Sheehan et al, 2007; all cited in Elbe et al, 2009 pp.285-286). However, this is challenging and due to limited control over the destination, DMOs often simply accept the product as it is (Ashworth and Voogd 1990 p.12 in Blumberg, 2005, p.47). The lack of control hereby does not only stem from the number and variety of stakeholders, but also the support and acceptance of local authorities (Gretzel et al., 2006 p.120). Partnerships with local authorities are therefore essential to allow DMOs to take part in the development of regional marketing concepts (Gretzel et al, 2006 pp.121-123).

Generic strategies

Kotler et al (1993, p.18 cited in Baker and Cameron, 2008 p.79) suggest four primary activities in order to satisfy the needs of internal and external stakeholders in the destination marketing process:

1. The design of a suitable mix of community features and services;
2. Setting attractive incentives for the current and potential buyers and users of its goods and services;
3. Efficiently and accessibly delivering a place's products and services;
4. Promoting place values and image to create awareness amongst potential users of the place's distinctive advantages

Firstly, the design of a suitable mix of community features and services is desirable, yet it remains questionable to what extent this can be executed. As Collier notes, the extent to which a destination can be modified is limited: 'The core product is the destination and cannot to any great extent be modified' (1999, p.419 cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.46).

Secondly, incentive setting offers an interesting approach to destination customer relationship management – a responsibility that lies both with the marketer and the stakeholders. In cooperation, suitable offers and deals may be generated and then communicated to the wider audience via the DMO as an umbrella interface, rather than the individual stakeholder. However, the success would depend on the willingness to cooperate.

Thirdly, as much as we would wish for a smooth delivery and outstanding experience of the destination product, aspect number three is very much out of the control of the destination marketer and mainly lies within the hands of the stakeholders. As Bieger points out, the influence of DMOs on the elements of the marketing mix are limited as those responsible for the marketing of a destination are not typically those concerned with the production, operation and pricing of its components (1999, p.182, cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.18). Even if the DMO works in close cooperation with the stakeholders, they would not be able to fully control the destination experience for every visitor every time.

Finally, promotion is implemented the easiest out of all the destination marketing elements so that some academics and practitioners have limited themselves to this role. However, if any greater impact and success is to be achieved with any destination, the greater picture has to be considered, which includes destination management aspects such as regional development and stakeholder management. In fact, many destinations spend a majority of their budget solely on attracting external visitors rather than promoting within the community. In return, the establishment of the DMO's role in the community and the need to build consensus for future development projects is often neglected (Gretzel, et al, 2006 p.120). Fortunately, DMOs are increasingly shifting towards more a management focussed practice by participating in the local community rather than just engaging in external marketing activities (Gretzel et al, 2006 p.120). This more management focussed and collaborative practice will be discussed within the next section in more detail.

2.3.3. Collaborative approaches

A more recent solution to tackle the intangibility of the destination product has been the so-called 'collaboration strategy'. Also known as 'public private partnerships', it usually involves joint activities between destination players from the public and private sector (Bagaric, 2010 p.237). This approach aims to not only increase the influence of the DMO over the destination product, but to obtain financial resources in order to supplement the often limited DMO budget (Horner and Swarbrooke, 1996 cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.48). Several academics see a more collaborative means of pooling resources and developing more integrated management and delivery systems as the best way to manage the destination (Buhalis and Cooper, 1998; Telfer, 2001; Prideaux and Cooper, 2002; Fyall and Garrod, 2005; Blumberg, 2005; all cited in Fyall and Leask, 2006 p.51). Bennett further claims that the division between the public and private domain has held destination marketing back for years and concludes that the removal of this line is the key to success in the future of the industry (Bennett, 1999, p.49). Accordingly, many DMOs measure their effectiveness by the degree of

involvement and support they receive from their stakeholders (Batchelor, 1999 p. 187 cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.48).

However, tourist boards have to first earn the respect of the industry and be able to clearly demonstrate the benefits of engaging into partnerships (Bennett, 1999 p.50). Hereby, understanding is the key – tourist staff has to appreciate what drives the private sector and the stakeholders, in return, have to take a wider view than their individual properties (Bennett, 1999 p.50). Nevertheless, the constantly shifting mosaic of stakeholders is a source of continued difficulties (Blumberg, 2005 p.48). The fragmentation of the tourism industry, the dominance of SMEs (Small/ Medium Enterprises), the perceived loss of autonomy in cooperative structures, rivalry, competition, adversary and most importantly – the seeming divergence in interests and benefits sought by various stakeholders all add to the intangibility of the destination product (Cooper et al., 1998; Buhalis, 2000; Shields and Schibik, 1995; Palmer and Bejou, 1995; Buhalis and Cooper, 1998; cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.48). Consequently, a critical role of the DMO is to form and organise destination governance (Beritelli, 2007 cited in Elbe et al, 2009 p.285).

A key to the cooperation strategy was found in the establishment of shared objectives, as confirmed in a destination case study by Graengsjoe and Gummesson (2006, cited in Elbe et al, 2008 p.285). Furthermore, the inclusion of all partners - public and private sector, associations and residents - is necessary for creating clear direction and avoiding 'strategic drift' (Bagaric, 2010 p.237). Despite the obstacles that come with it, the concept of PPP presents a promising approach to tackling the complexity of the destination product. It would be desirable to see theory refined and more empirical evidence provided on this in the near future.

2.4. Contemporary issues – the future of destination marketing

A number of issues are likely to impact on the future of destination marketing, and have been identified in studies such as King (2002) and Bennett (1999). These include: channels of distribution, channel power, changing of market conditions, patterns of booking, the tendency of many DMOs to rely on 'what the destination has to offer' and the continued use of 'mass marketing techniques more suited to the passive customer' (King, 2002; Bennett, 1999 cited in Fyall and Leask, 2008 p.51). Furthermore, an appeal for more effective branding supports the increased linkage of key brand values and assets with the holiday aspirations and needs of key customers (Fyall and Leask, 2008 p.51). As a conclusion, Bennett summarizes the following tools as important for the future of destination marketers: PPP, the removal of any bureaucratic ethos, the incorporation of environmental and social corporate responsibility and more effective branding via the increased linkage of key brand values and assets with the holiday aspirations and needs of key customers (1999, p.54; Fyall and Leask, 2008 p.51). As a conclusion, these tools offer great potential for those who use them wisely, while those failing to will inevitably be left behind (Bennett, 1999 p.54).

CHAPTER THREE: Digital Marketing - Themes, issues and consequences

3.1. Introduction

The arrival of the digital age has tremendously impacted not only general business, but marketing itself: 'the internet [...] heralds the single most disruptive development in the history of marketing' and whether this presents an opportunity or a threat largely depends on one's perspective as a marketer (Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.6). The challenges and opportunities introduced by the digital age have triggered academic discussion and resulted in a number of suggestions of how to act (e.g. O'Connor and Galvin, 2000 p.14; Bennett, 1999 p.49; Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.6). Since the market penetration of digital channels is growing rapidly, so does the potential audience and hence the allure of digital marketing (Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.13). Hence, marketing managers need to understand how the digital age has changed the ways in which marketing activities must be conducted (O'Connor and Galvin, 2000 p.11).

Furthermore, the need for more strategic planning within digital marketing is stressed in order to realize its full potential (Chaffey, 2006 p.18).

Meanwhile, the digital age has similarly impacted destination marketing: the internet has firmly established itself as a crucial market communication channel for DMOs and transformed the tourism industry into a digital economy (Buhalis and Spada, 2000, in Choi et al, 2006, p.59). In fact, it has rapidly taken over personal recommendation as the number one source for travel and tourism information (Gertner et al, 2006, p.105). Given the highly competitive nature of destinations McCartney et al. suggest that locations striving to enhance, rebrand or reposition their destination image should invest in more creative and innovative uses of current marketing and promotional practices as well as in burgeoning media channels such as the internet (2008, p.194). However, to give a comprehensive overview, a clear definition of current terms will be presented first.

3.2. Definitions

Similarly to destination literature, academics and professionals have been granting the use of the internet and digital media a bewildering range of labels (Chaffey, 2006 p.8). The terms 'internet marketing', 'e-marketing' and 'digital marketing' are often used interchangeably; however, there are differences in definition. Firstly, 'internet marketing' is the achievement of marketing objectives through applying digital technologies (Chaffey, 2006 p.8). 'E-marketing', on the other hand, achieves marketing objectives through the application of electronic communications technology (Chaffey, 2006 p.9). It has a broader scope than 'internet marketing' as it refers to digital media such as web, email, and wireless media, but also includes management of digital

customer data and electronic customer relationship management systems (e-CRM Systems) (Chaffey, 2006 p.9). Based on the definition of marketing by the CIM (Chartered Institute of Marketing), 'e-marketing' is also seen as a means to support actual marketing (Chaffey, 2006 p.9) Finally, 'digital marketing' has a similar meaning to 'electronic marketing' – both describe the management and execution of marketing using electronic media in conjunction with digital data about customer's characteristics and behaviour (Chaffey, 2006 p.10). 'Digital marketing', however, is increasingly used by specialist e-marketing agencies and the new media trade publications including the Institute of Direct Marketing (Chaffey, 2006 p.10). The meaning of the term has therefore been influenced by the specific working environment associated with it and further suggests a strong linkage with direct marketing.

3.3. Strategic planning within the digital landscape

The use of the internet and digital media has had a number of implications for marketing and in particular destination marketing practice. It remains questionable whether many marketers – and destination marketers - are yet familiar enough with the implementation of digital tools to use them to their full potential (O'Connor and Galvin, 2000 p.194). Marketing applications of the internet include (Chaffey, 2006 p.4):

- An advertising medium: To create awareness etc.
- A direct response medium: Email campaign, click through banners etc.
- A platform for sales transactions: Online marketplace / online shop
- A lead-generation method
- A customer service mechanism
- A relationship building medium

Also, the function of websites can be divided into different types (Chaffey, 2006 p.14):

- Transactional e-commerce website (e.g. Amazon)
- Service –orientated relationship-building website (e.g. pureglobal.com)
- Brand building website (e.g. Guinness)
- Portal or media website (e.g. Yahoo)

The question remains as to which particular use a website should have for destination marketing. Although this is highly context specific it is still important for destination marketers to clarify this aspect. However, this will be discussed later in this chapter.

Academics repeatedly emphasize the need for strategic planning within digital marketing (Hudson and Lang, 2002 p.164; Ryan and Jones, 2009 pp.19-20), as it will help to:

- Target the right people
- Make informed decisions about the company's foray into the digital marketing arena
- Efforts are focussed on the digital marketing elements most relevant to the business
- Marketing activities are always aligned with the business goals

The last aspect is particularly important as it confirms that successful strategic planning involves a set hierarchy going from general to specific. Hence, the business objectives or company mission and marketing objectives should always serve as a foundation for any other strategic decisions. Chaffey, meanwhile, points out the risks of a non-strategic approach in digital marketing (2006, p.18):

- Unclear responsibilities
- No specific objectives
- Insufficient / wasted budget
- No review of opportunities
- No measure or review of results
- Poor integration of offline & online activities

The digital strategy should explicitly define the business goals that are to be achieved via digital marketing efforts. An effective route can only be planned if the end goal is clear and unambiguous from the start. Objectives for one's digital marketing strategy have to be realistic (Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.33). However, when setting the strategy, there is not a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Every business needs to construct its unique [digital marketing] strategy based on its own particular set of circumstances (Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.22). As Ryan and Jones note, 'effective digital marketing is about boxing clever. You pick and choose the elements that are specifically relevant to your business' (2009, p.36).

Ryan and Jones suggest the following foundations for any digital marketing strategy:

- Know your business
- Know your competition
- Know your customers

- Know what you want to achieve – setting clear and measurable objectives. What does the marketer want to get out of digital marketing?
- Know how you are doing – the beauty of digital results is that they are so much more measurable.

(Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.24)

Finally, the website as a main platform is the most important element within the whole digital marketing strategy. It acts as a 'vital piece of online real estate' to which all other online activity can direct any prospects (Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.32). However, website traffic in itself will remain worthless, unless it is converted (Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.32). Online Promotion elements include (Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.33):

- Website
- SEO (Search Engine Optimisation)
- PPC (Pay per click advertising)
- Affiliate marketing and strategic partnerships
- Online PR
- Social Networking
- Email Marketing
- CRM (Customer Relationship Management)

Again, which factors to include and outcomes to measure depends on the marketing goals a DMO establishes for its website (Park and Gretzel, 2007 p.51). Furthermore, website evaluation has to be interpreted in the context of specific goals as otherwise it is of little use (Park and Gretzel, 2007 p.51). Therefore, to meet objectives DMO websites need to clearly define their identities and roles (Choi et al., 2006 p.60).

Academics seem quite divided when determining a more detailed role of the destination website. The question as to whether it should be more content driven or process driven, and whether it should be the final point of contact between the destination and the prospective tourist or the first opportunity to develop an on-going communication seem yet unresolved (Buhalis, 2000; Gretzel et al., 2000; Scott et al., 2000; Ritchie and Crouch, 2003; Wober, 2003; Sheehan and Ritchie, 2005; all cited in Choi et al., 2006 p.60).

Whether a website should be driven by content or process seems to depend on the context of every DMO's operations. This means that the role of the DMO and hence its website will determine whether the focus will be on process or content. As to the debate over the website's position within the customer journey, it seems unreasonable

to limit it to either function if it can do both. The destination website should in any case be the first opportunity to build an on-going communication and relationship with the prospect. Consequently, it should not only serve as the final point of contact with the tourist but research has shown that tourists happily interact with the website pre, during and post-visit (Choi et al., 2006 p.70).

3.4. Developments and impact

3.4.1. Implications of the digital age

The arrival of the digital age affects marketing in several ways (O'Connor and Galvin, 2000 p.3):

- Consumers are becoming more sophisticated and demanding
- Product development and brand management have changed:
 - a. Differentiation online is less easy due to commoditisation (Chaffey, 2006 p.47)
 - b. Shorter product lifecycles and lead times increase competition (Chaffey, 2006 p.47)
- Distribution channels become virtualized:
 - a. Location no longer becomes a barrier to entry (O'Connor and Galvin, 2000 p.137)
 - b. The internet reduces costs through reducing intermediaries (Chaffey, 2006 p.49)
- Payment systems become virtualized
- Globalization of markets

To be able to respond adequately, marketing managers will need to understand how these challenges and the arrival of the digital age have changed the ways in which marketing activities have to be conducted (2000, p.11). One of the aspects hindering marketers to do so seems to be the lack of IT knowledge. In fact, 'few marketing professionals can claim to be IT literate or state that they can fully appreciate the potential of the internet for marketing, can discuss pros and cons for data warehousing, or have strong views on enterprise resource planning.' (O'Connor and Galvin, 2000 p.194). Fortunately, marketing managers are increasingly exposed to online services for research and are getting more familiar with the capabilities of the internet (O'Connor and Galvin, 2000 p.194). However, economic value has to remain imperative; and clear goal setting instead of unplanned experimentation is required to guarantee long-term success (Chaffey, 2006 pp.152-161).

3.4.2. The digital age and common misconceptions

The arrival of the digital age has further brought with it a number of expectations which have turned into common misconceptions about what the internet and its related tools can offer.

One of the most common misconceptions is that the internet is some sort of magical tool which will solve all the problems marketers are facing. Marketers, however, should not forget the basics of marketing: 'The internet is not magic. It is another distribution tool.' (Bennett, 1999 p.49) or 'just another channel to market' (Chaffey, 2006 p.155). Hence, if internet marketing is channel marketing, it requires channel specific objectives, propositions and communications (Chaffey, 2006, p.152). Particularly in the western business world, managers generally seem to assume that technology always offers the smartest means of improving performance (O'Connor and Galvin, 2000 p.191). This, however, is not always the case. In fact, IT in and of itself cannot provide solutions to a company's marketing needs (O'Connor and Galvin, 2000 p.190). Technology merely affords the marketer new and exciting platforms that allow him to connect with people in increasingly diverse and relevant ways (Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.14).

Another common misconception is that online consumers are a mysterious and new species labelled the 'digital consumer'. However, the first thing to realize about digital consumers is that there is basically no such thing. The customers and prospects online are the very same people who the marketer interacts with on a daily basis in the store, on the phone or via mail. There is nothing mysterious about them, they are still human beings like everyone else (Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.25). Consequently, digital marketing is not about understanding the underlying technology but rather about understanding people, how they are using that technology, and how you can leverage that to engage with them more effectively (Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.13). This may indeed require gaining the knowledge of how to use the tools of the trade, however, understanding people is the real key to unlocking the potential of digital marketing (Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.13).

3.4.3. History and development

For DMOs the adoption of online techniques has dramatically changed marketing over the last five years (Rudic and Bilos, 2010 p.178). However, compared to the commercial sector, DMOs have been slow to adopt IT in their operations; which in most cases did not start until the increasing public awareness of the internet in the mid-1990s (Hudson and Lang, 2002 p.156). The first generation of tourist websites was of rather passive nature – essentially they were brochures transferred to the web -

functioning as a supplement to the traditional communication activities, however, with no possibility for interaction (Rudic and Bilos, 2010 p.180). This way most DMOs assumed a follower rather than leader approach to website development (Dooling et al., 2002; Dyle, 2005; Feng et al., 2004; all cited in Han and Mills, 2006 p.94).

Nowadays tourist websites usually offer the possibility of conducting business activities: Making reservations, extending, cancelling and confirming them. Furthermore, a new generation of websites have appeared in the last few years which act as interactive virtual spaces to customers: Visitors are allowed to edit the website to some extent. Travellers can express their opinion about their stay at a hotel or a whole destination on pages such as www.tripadvisor.com (Rudic and Bilos, 2010 p.180).

A survey conducted by the World Tourism Organisation (2004 cited in Han and Mills, 2006 p.94) gives a comprehensive overview of the development of websites amongst DMOs:

- 95% of DMOs operate a website
- However, only 20% have online-based reservation services
- Only 5% have completed implementing e-business strategies in 2004

DMOs continue to function in the online world mainly as a bridge between stakeholders and consumers, primarily helping online consumers to reduce the search time for information gathering and decision making (Bender, 1997 in Han and Mills, 2006, p.94). Due to its role of information provision, unprecedented level of connectivity, effective communication channels and low costs (Maswera, Dawson and Edwards, 2008 p.187 cited in Yayli and Bayram, 2010 p.51) the internet is becoming increasingly important as a direct marketing tool for tourist organisations (Lee, Cai and O'Leary, 2006, p.815, in Yayli and Bayram, 2010 p.51). The role of destination websites is increasingly extended as the destination bears increasing responsibility for successful stay of tourists. This relates to the fact that the destination experience is not created by one or two single stakeholders but the entire destination (Rudic and Bilos, 2010 p.184). Hence, in today's competitive market place and technology driven society, merely having a web presence is no longer enough to bring visibility and accessibility to the destination (Wang, 2008 p.55 cited in Yayli and Bayram, 2010 p.52).

However, DMOs still struggle to assume a leadership role in the online market, whilst consumers on the other hand are taking to the web and other online travel markets (Han and Mills, 2006 p.95). Information search plays a crucial role in the online world of travel and tourism, as travel information is among the most popular and frequently visited information on the Internet (Zhou and DeSantis, 2005 p.89 in Yayli and Bayram, 2010 p.52). Also, destination related online planning is steadily becoming more popular

each year (Lee, Cai, O'Leary, 2006, p.16, in Yayli and Bayram, 2010, p.52). Consequently, tourism websites play an indispensable role in people's travel decision making before their departure (Zhou and DeSantis, 2005, p.789 in Yayli and Bayram, 2010, p.52).

Interactivity is also of importance (Rudic and Bilos, 2010 p.178; Han and Mills, 2006 p.103) as it allows a two-way communication at the DMO website which can reduce underlying uncertainty and encourage visitors to book a trip (Han and Mills, 2006 p.103). Furthermore, it stresses the destination website's effectiveness in engaging the user with web site content. This can be done through interactive features, social involvement emphasises the sharing and peer communication dimension of website interactions (Park and Gretzel, 2007 p.51). However, ideally such websites should not only engage with visitors, but also serve the stakeholders in promotion and distribution (Yayli and Bayram, 2010, p.58).

Finally, destination websites are increasingly growing into so-called destination management systems (DMS). This is achieved by destination management systems combining the radically advanced technology with new or better communications with the aim of satisfying the need of the growing tourism market (Buhalis, 1995 p.176 cited in Rudic and Bilos, 2010 p.184). Bennett strongly supports the use of DMS, in particular as a tool for direct marketing purposes: 'Any tourist destination which is not working on some form of destination management system is losing the plot.' (Bennett, 1999 p.53). He stresses that this does not have to be a highly complex system, but something relatively simple yet effective (Bennett, 1999 p.53).

3.5. Contemporary issues

There are a number of topics which due to their impact on marketing in the digital landscape require more detailed examination and will be discussed now.

3.5.1. Issue 1 – Database and direct marketing

The importance of direct marketing and its strong linkage to digital marketing has already become apparent in the definitions section. Within this, O'Connor and Galvin also emphasize the role of the customer database, which 'is probably the greatest application of information technology in marketing today' (2000, p.87). Database marketing can be defined as interactive approach to marketing which uses individually addressable marketing media channels to (O'Connor and Galvin, 2000 p.92):

- Help extend a company's target audience
- Stimulate their demand
- Stay close to customers by keeping customer data of all transactions and contact

The advantage of direct marketing lies in its approach of customization instead of mass marketing: messages are sent on an individual direct basis to a much smaller number of people who are more pre-disposed to the message and buying the product or service (O'Connor and Galvin, 2000 p.92).

Forces behind the resurgence of direct marketing include (O'Connor and Galvin, 2000 p.93):

- Fragmentation of advertising media
- Increasing retail power
- Declining brand loyalty
- Search for long term customer relationships

Overall, it seems that direct marketing as a tool within the digital landscape should be utilized more, particularly by destination marketers. Bennett (1999, p.53) links the usage of direct marketing to the increasing popularity of destination management systems, whilst criticizing the failure of many destination marketers to fully utilize the available customer data: 'Consider what treasure trove destinations have. Arrival and departure cards give names, addresses, socio-economic status, birthday and other info which some direct marketers might die for. And what do many destinations see it as? A source of statistics! It is much more rarely seen as an opportunity for direct marketing.' (Bennett, 1999 p.53)

3.5.2. Issue 2 – Stakeholder management

The use of the internet has also been explored as a tool to harness the 'destination marketing network' – or 'constantly shifting mosaic of stakeholders' (Blumberg, 2005 p.48). Academics have been vigorously disputing the role of the destination website and the DMO's evolving role in customer service and contact through closer partnerships with private sectors and integrated information systems (Buhalis, 2000; Gretzel et al., 2000; Scott et al., 2000, Ritchie and Crouch, 2003; Wober, 2003; Sheehan and Ritchie, 2005; all cited in Choi et al, 2006 p.60). As a destination networking support tool the internet has several advantages; including its cost effectiveness especially within partnerships (Hudson and Lang, 2002 p.164) and the increasing shift of digital enterprise towards networking as part of the 'extended enterprise concept'. The 'extended enterprise' - a common business principle amongst internet companies - opens itself up to its suppliers and customers, forming networks and sharing information (O'Connor and Galvin, 2000 p.196). Furthermore, online technologies are increasingly used within tourism for commerce purposes and continue to build the relationship between operators, intermediaries and consumers (Nysveen and Lexhagen, 2001 cited in Morrison and King, 2002 p.104).

On the other hand, several aspects stand in the way of online destination networking. Since the internet encourages direct and immediate contact between suppliers and customers, together with a decrease in transaction and commission costs, intermediaries are being more and more eliminated (Hudson and Lang, 2002 p.156). Consequently, some stakeholders might prefer to act on an individual basis rather than in partnership with the DMO since the internet allows them direct access to their consumers. Another obstacle is the fragmentation of the tourism industry, which is dominated by small businesses. Also, several studies (Pühringer and Taylor, 2010 p.181; Morrison and King, 2002 p.106) confirm stakeholders' lacking ability to keep up with technology trends, low levels of awareness and knowledge on e-marketing through a prevalence of retiree-owners in family run businesses (Pühringer and Taylor, 2010 p.181). Although the significance and pervasiveness of e-commerce has become almost universally accepted by academics, tourism consumers, suppliers and intermediaries directly involved in Internet trading, there is an apparent lack of understanding by small business owner-operators, reducing the prospects for implementation in the tourism sector (Buhalis, 1996; Buhalis and Main, 1998; Main, 2002; all cited in Morrison and King, 2002 p.106).

Overall, the success of network-driven approaches mainly depends on the stakeholders' willingness to cooperate. Unfortunately, many small business owner-

operator perceptions have often been shaped by with over-optimistic first generation online experiences which produced dubious outcomes such as negative interactions with technology suppliers and intermediaries (Evans, Bohrer and Richards, 2000 cited in Morrison and King, 2002 p.106). The extent to which these concepts can successfully be implemented, therefore, remain questionable and highly dependent on the stakeholder constitution and attitudes of each individual destination.

3.5.3. Issue 3 – Web 2.0 and the Social Media

Finally, it is inevitable to mention the role of web 2.0 applications and social media. As they are of major importance within today's digital landscape, a review can be found within the appendix. However, it was felt that they were not part of overall focus of the research and hence were dismissed from the main thesis body for the more relevant matters.

3.6. Summary and conclusion

This chapter has shown the extent to which the digital age has impacted and transformed destination marketing. It has further shown how some of its tools can help to harness the challenges of the discipline. Destination marketing, even within the digital landscape is not about technology, but remains a people business – and technology only becomes interesting when it connects people with other people more effectively (Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.5). The most important thing to remember is that to achieve success ‘we need to think about the context in which destination marketing will take place!’ (Bennett, 1999 p.48). Hence, every DMO has to pick and choose from the digital tools what works best for them and create their own digital marketing strategy (Park and Gretzel, 2007 p.51; Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.22).

Overall, there are very few businesses today that could not benefit from at least some degree of digital marketing (Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.22) but eventually, it all just comes down to a few basics:

‘Do not get lost in the tools of the trade. The essence for success will be the same as it always was. Be clear about what you are selling. Achieve clarity in who you are trying to sell it to. And despite or because of all the technology, remember travel is a people business. Yes use technology as an aid, but always remember that whatever the destination, if the visitor has a friendly welcome, is safe and secure, has a good time, they will tell their friends and they will come back for more themselves.’ (Bennett, 1999 p.54).

CHAPTER FOUR: Media Selection

4.1. Introduction

Media selection has recently been paid increasing attention to, as due to the economic climate, the need for accountability within media facilitation is greater than ever (Smith and Taylor, 2002 p.168). Media selection is of major importance for marketers as it represents one of the biggest resource allocation decisions within business, and hence should be given adequate attention (Smith and Taylor, 2002 p.168; Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.6; Tapp, 2005 p.134). Consequently, media selection decisions should be based on a thorough understanding of the various media (Smith and Taylor, 2002 p.168; Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.6; McCartney et al., 2008 p.186). However, this is rarely the case as too often clients and advertisers pay attention to messages promotions or research, however seldom to the media plan (Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.6) Also, any discussion of media has become increasingly complex due to the rising number and scope of available media outlets (Smith and Taylor, 2002 p.168) The responsibility for media selection and planning is hence increasingly shifting from traditional agencies into the hands of media specialists (Smith and Taylor, 2002 p.168).

Despite media's strong link to resources, it is ultimately not the size of the budget that will determine successful marketing, but the effectiveness and relevance of marketing and promotional activities. These will outsmart rather than out-buy the competition (Hsu, Wolfe and Kang, 2004 p.141 cited in McCartney et al., 2008 p.183). The creative and innovative use of burgeoning media is seen as a key solution to increased competitiveness particularly for destinations (McCartney et al., 2008 p.194). In the following sections some of the current concepts in media selection will be introduced and key developments and impacts covered.

4.2. Current state of research

The accelerating pace at which information and communication technology develop in today's society has complicated media selection (Rui et al., 2011 p.292). On the other hand, computer-mediated communication and similar technologies have also brought about new media which are now at the marketers' disposal (Rui et al., 2011 p.292). There is, however, a limited amount of quantified work in this field, and research on media selection is lagging behind its practical implementation (Rui et al., 2011 p.292). There are a number of theoretical media selection frameworks, yet none of them can even present basic explanations to questions such as 'Which medium is better?' or 'Should I change my communication media?' (Rui et al., 2011 p.292). Amongst academics, there is a division into two camps, namely the rational and the socially orientated. The first compare media by their inner attributes whilst the second group focuses on social influences within media selection (Rui et al., 2011 p.292). Researchers have done empirical studies which support or deny the theories of both camps (Rui et al., 2011 p.292). The following frameworks represent the main tools currently available in media selection (Rui et al., 2011 p.292): The Media Richness Theory (MRT), Social Influence Perspectives (SIP), and the Media Fitness Framework (MFF).

4.3. Definitions, developments and impact

4.3.1. Main media selection theories

a. Media Richness Theory (MRT)

The media richness theory represents the main theory within the rational camp of media selection and suggests that a good match between media and the level of ambiguity of a message result in effective communication by reducing uncertainty. The 'richness' of a medium determines its suitability for various communication tasks. The richer a medium the more it is suited for tasks high in ambiguity, as they handle 'rich information'. The simpler the task, the more they are suited for lean media. Richness can be evaluated through four factors: the medium's capacity for immediate feedback, the number of channels used, the number of cues used, and the variety in personalisation and language. Media are ranked accordingly from rich to lean: FTF (face to-face), telephone, written and personal (letters or memos), written and formal (bulletins, documents), and numeric and formal (output). Numerous studies have supported as well as questioned its applicability (e.g. pro: Fulk and Collins-Jarvis, 2000; Kahai and Cooper, 2003. Con: Dennis and Kinney, 1998; Dennis et al. 1999; Mennecke et al., 2000; all cited in Rui et al., 2011 p.292).

b. Social Influence Perspective (SIP)

Fulk et al. (2001, in Rui et al., 2011 p.292) proposed a social influence model that rejects the idea of communication richness being a constant and objective property of the communication medium. Instead, SIP sees the choice of media as a result of a manager's superiors and co-workers influence on him. Since people's views on media richness vary, the decision-making process is subjective and influenced by information provided by others (Rui et al, 2011 p.292).

c. Media Fitness Theory (MFT)

Striving for a theory which considers both camps as well as some new notions, Rui et al. (2011, p.292) constructed the Media Fitness Framework (MFF). Three groups of factors are considered within MFT: Group 1 considers mainly ideas from MRT, group 2 from SIP, group 3 contains ideas representing real limitations of resources available to enable communication. Furthermore, a number of physical attributes pre-select the candidate media (Rui et al, 2011 p.292).

d. Media Neutral Planning

Media Neutral Planning has emerged as the 'hottest new thing' within media selection in the last year or two (Tapp, 2005 p.133). The main idea is that all media might achieve any objective, subject to customer preferences, creativity, business objectives and market context. However, a creative mix based on media characteristics, the customer's preferences and brand touch points is best to achieve success (Jenkinson, 2002 p.2). In short, all media are considered and given an equal consideration during media selection. Furthermore, MNP favours multiple mix media to single media approaches (Jenkinson, 2002 p.2). Tapp points out that MNP de-silos the communications-process – taking away rivalry between departments and working together for the overall objectives of a company and its particular campaign (2005, p.133). This way, marketers are forced to consider the full spectrum of media available.

4.3.2. Strategic Media Planning

Just as in destination marketing and digital marketing, there is an increased need for strategic planning within media selection (Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.10; Sissors and Baron, 2010 p.17; Pickton and Broderick cited in Chaffey, 2006 pp.357-358). Solid media planning can help to avoid overlap, frequency and waste and hence increase efficiency (Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.10). A common misconception by marketers is the view that media in itself are goals. However, they are primarily a tool for implementing a marketing strategy (Sissors and Baron, 2010 p.15). Generally, marketers should aim to plan their media selection in a logical manner going from

general to specific: Under no circumstances should a media plan be established without the general objectives as a base (Sissors and Baron, 2010 p.17; Pickton and Broderick, 2005 cited in Chaffey, 2006 pp.357-358; Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.51). Deriving from the marketing objectives, separate advertising objectives can be formulated. Finally, media objectives can be set, which again should be based on the advertising objectives (Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.51) Marketers are reminded that media never operate in a vacuum, but must be part of overall marketing objectives and plans (Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.51).

Hereby, objectives are what the marketer wants to achieve long-term, whereas goals refer to short term achievements. Strategies, again, can be defined as plans to achieve these objectives and goals (Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.52). Marketers should not establish goals to use certain media, instead goals should be established expressing what the marketer hopes to achieve with the media, and the actual media selection should be left until the strategy stage. This is important, as predetermining the selected media will lead to overlooked opportunities (Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.54). A good way for marketers to check that they are not confusing media choice with objectives is to check whether the objective uses the infinite form of a verb – ‘to do’ something. A medium itself cannot be an objective as it is not a verb or action. You cannot have ‘to newspaper’ or to ‘outdoor print’ as a media objective (Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.55). Furthermore, good objectives will be quantifiable, enabling the marketer to know whether they have met their goal later (Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.55). Ideally, the marketer should base his objectives on research, however, many practitioners work intuitively based on their own experience and expertise, which is also a type of research (Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.51).

Finally, Tapp (2005, p.134) addresses the issue of planning sequence confusion amongst marketers. He assumes that much of this confusion stems from a lack of appreciation of where the media sit within the strategic planning process (2005, p.134). He criticises the fact that media decisions are often made alongside segmentation or positioning decisions, although this clearly makes no sense from a planning point of view. Logically seen, media decisions can only be made once a company knows its strengths, the customer’s proposition, the demands of the market, segmentation and positioning strategy, and its position against competitors (Tapp, 2005 p.134) Hence, they should be one of the very last steps within planning (Tapp, 2005 p.134, supported by Sissors and Baron, 2010, p.17; Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.51).

To aid marketers, Tapp therefore suggests the following planning sequence for media selection:

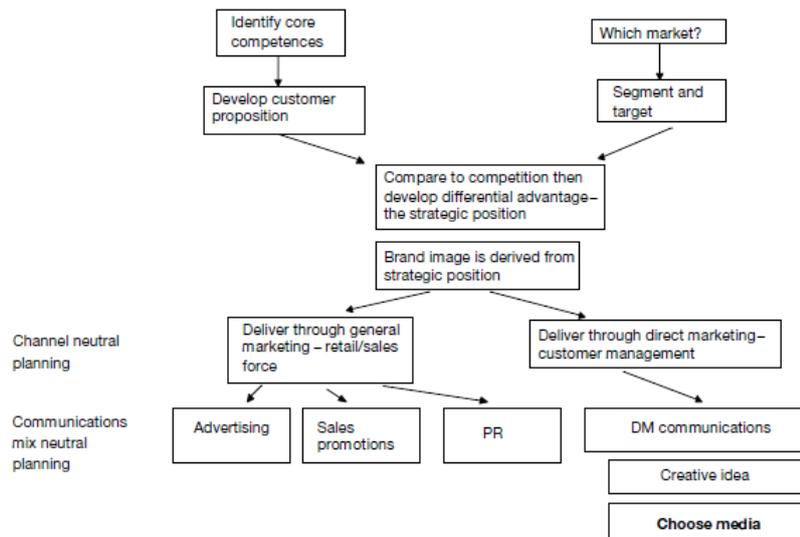


Figure 1: Media neutral planning

Figure 2.: Media Neutral Planning (Tapp, 2005 p.134)

A company identifies its competitive position, creates or enhances its brand and then decides the best route to market – general or direct marketing. Next, the communication mix has to be established: Advertising, PR, sales promotions or direct marketing. Unfortunately, these are often labelled as ‘media’ – when in fact they are communications techniques. Only once the communications techniques have been decided, the marketer can then move on to media selection (Tapp, 2005, p.135).

Marketers are cautioned to not copy last year’s plan with new costs or use a template form that only needs blanks to be filled in. Since every campaign has its specific marketing purposes at a specific time, the media plan should always be custom tailored (Sissors and Baron, 2010 p.17). This is particularly important as the market place is constantly changing, and with it its competitors, customers problems and opportunities. Hence media planning demands great sensitivity to change so that at times even direct competitors can decide on very different media strategies (Sissors and Baron, 2010, p.17). This is one of the assets of Media Neutral Planning – the principle of equally considering each medium as a potential player to avoid a shift towards ‘media conventions’ which unfortunately are often found within certain sectors of the industry (2005, p.134). The Media Neutral Planning approach can hence be used as a wake-up call for marketers who have become lazy or creatures of habit within media selection. Finally, a certain flexibility needs to be maintained as unexpected opportunities might arise, which can only be taken advantage of if part of the budget is set aside for this in advance (Smith and Taylor, 2002 p.189).

4.3.3. The Media Decision Flow Chart

Another framework for media selection proposed by Barnes et al. (See Figure 3a - 1982, p.68) originally aimed to aid marketers to estimate the cost of advertising in international markets. Based on the 'objective and task' method, it is set out as a decision making flowchart, guiding the marketer through every step of planning in a logical and hierarchical order.

Split into two parts, figure 3a focuses on the actual media selection process, whereas Figure 3b shows a build-up of general to specific strategy planning elements which need to be established before the actual media selection.

FIGURE 3a.

Media Selection Decision Objective and Task Flow Model

(Barnes et al., p.71, 1982)

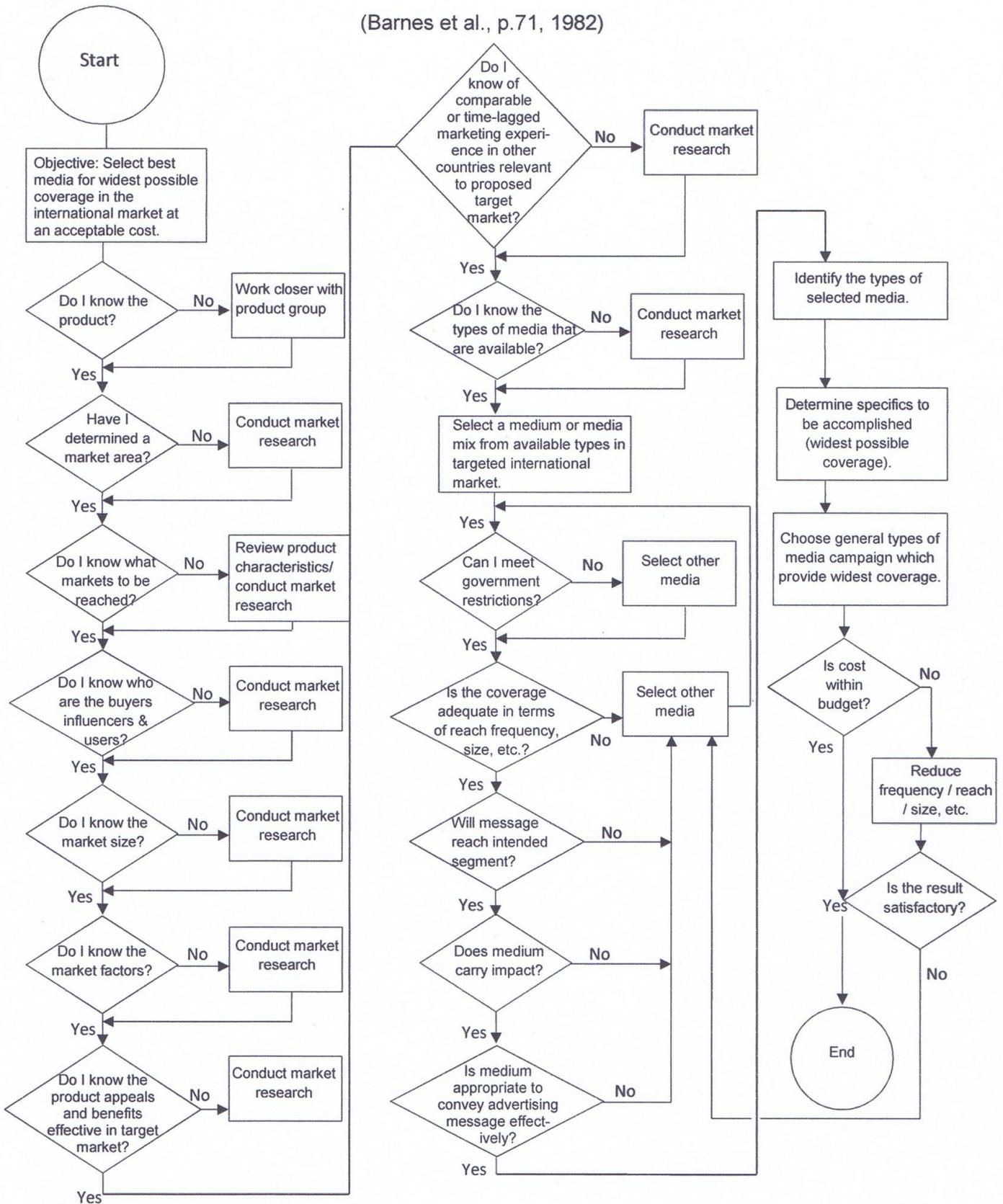


Figure 3a: Media Selection Decision Objective and Task Flow Model
by Barnes et al. (1982, p.71)

Figure 3a contributed individual considerations to the latter constructed reflected tool, including 'Do I know the product?', 'Have I determined a market area?', 'Do I know who are the buyers, influencers and users?' and 'Is cost within budget?'. Furthermore, the general principle of the iterative planning process with built-in review mechanisms was taken from this model and integrated into the reflective tool structure. Interestingly though, although figure 3a. was specifically designed for Media Selection, figure 3b. was found a more suitable inspiration for the frame of the reflective tool.

FIGURE 3b.

Integration of the Objective and Task Media Selection Decision Flow Model and Advertising Cost Formula to Determine Advertising Strategy and Budgets
(Barnes et al., p.74, 1982)

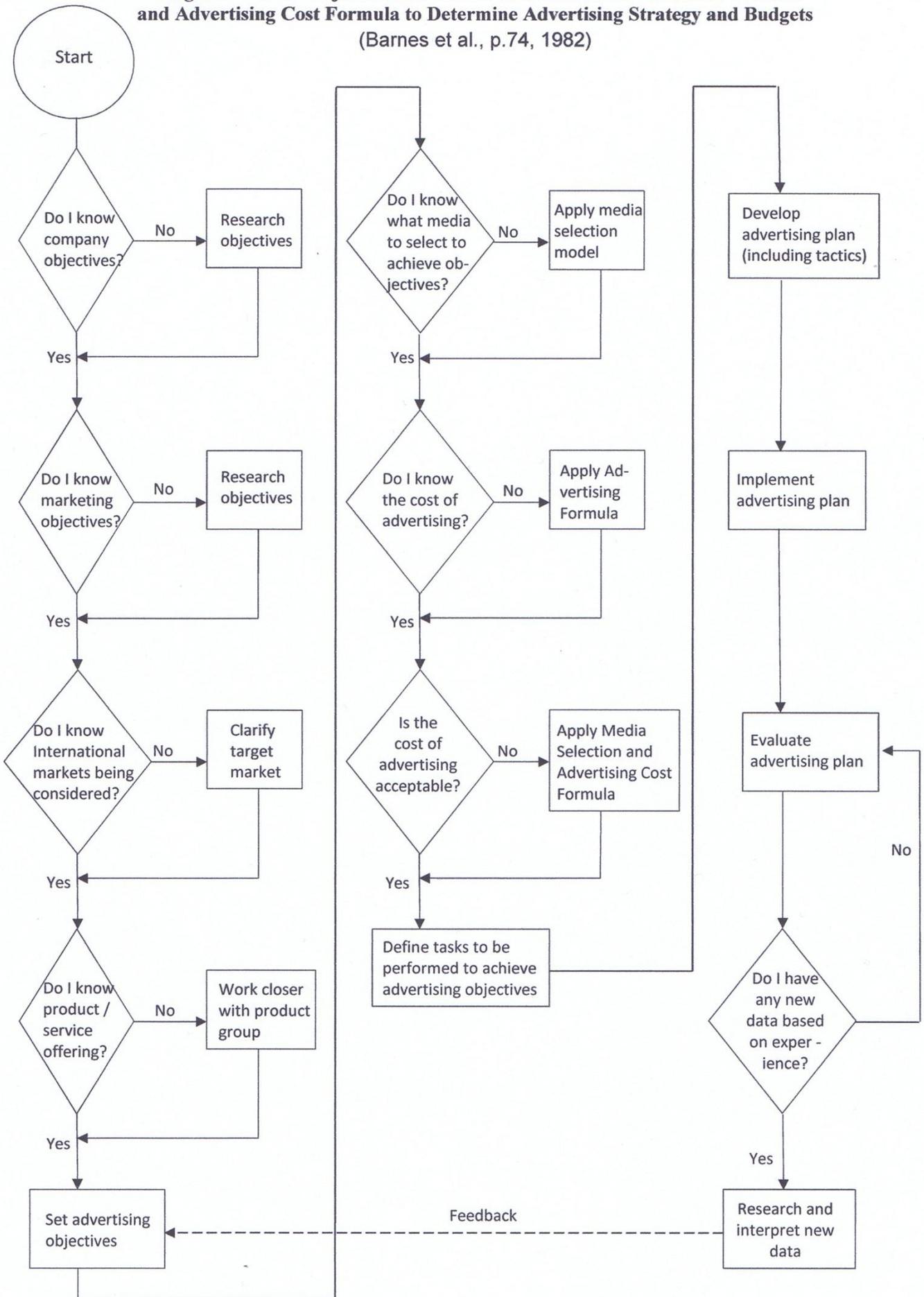


Figure 3b: Integration of the Media Selection Decision Objective and Task Flow Model and Advertising Cost Formula to determine Advertising Strategy and Budgets by Barnes et al. (1982, p.71)

Figure 3b. had a major influence on the layout and build-up structure of the latter constructed reflective tool. First drafts of the reflective tool completely adapted the flow chart style of this model and its approach to objective hierarchy setting. Considerations that were included in the reflective tool included 'Do I know company objectives?', 'Do I know marketing objectives', and 'Do I know product and service offering?'. However, during the construction process, it became evident that the flow chart style would not be able to handle the iterative complexity of the reflective tool's content, whilst displaying it in a simplified and comprehensive way. In other words, too many review loops would have been required to display all options of reflection – which would have turned the tool into a chaotic and confusing web of boxes and arrows. Hence the latter reflection box layout was chosen as a more appropriate frame for the final reflective tool.

However, further detail as to the construction of the reflective tool will be given in the following chapter.

4.3.4. Media Selection Criteria and AIMRITE

The media selection literature shows an abundance of opinions and lists of various criteria suggested by a number of academics (Yeshin, 1998 pp.171-180; Smith and Taylor, 2008 p.186; Chaffey, 2006 p.356; Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.12; Sissors and Baron, 2010 p.19). However, after a thorough examination of all lists and suggestions, it was found that all aspects are incorporated and most comprehensively presented in the framework of AIMRITE by Tapp (2005, p.358). It is built on the principle of Media Neutral Planning which aims to objectively and consistently judge each medium and based on media choice considerations:

Audience: Does the medium reach the desired target audience?

Impact: Does the medium have impact; does it ensure the message has a chance of getting through the clutter?

Message: Does it help to ensure the message is clearly communicated? Does it add to the message?

Response: This does not refer to the percentage response, but rather, do the media make responding easy?

Internal Management: Does it enhance the efficient management of the campaign?

The end result: What are the costs and projected likely revenues? Taking all the above into account and looking at typical response rates for your medium, how likely are you to hit target for the campaign? (Tapp, 2008 p.358).

4.5. Context: Destination marketing and media selection

A thorough review of the literature has shown that media selection in the destination context is still a vastly under-researched area. Only a limited number of publications could be found, including the 'Strategic Use of the Communication Mix in the Destination Image-Formation Process' by McCartney et al. (2008), their construction of a Communication Effectiveness Grid for tourist offices in Macao, as well as a research project examining the Information needs of tourist players by Franch et al. (2001). However, there currently seems to be no media selection framework which guides destination marketers through their decision making process. It was therefore decided that the focus of this thesis would be to construct such a model. An explanation of the construction and synthesis of various marketing theory from all three strands of research – namely destination marketing, digital marketing and media selection theory – will be presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: Towards a conceptual framework

5.1. Introduction

The continued outcry of academics for more hierarchical and rational planning, decision making and taking of action amongst practitioners (Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.24; Hanlan et al., 2006 p.21; Kotler et al., 2001 cited in Hanlan et al., 2006 p.21) and the lack of a framework for media selection in the destination context presented a clear gap within research which was to be addressed within this thesis. As a result, a conceptual framework is offered, which is a synthesis of applicable theories in destination marketing, digital marketing and media selection.

Three important aspects which were considered within the process of construction:

- a. The idea of a hierarchical and rational planning sequence
- b. The principle of Media Neutral Planning (MNP)
- c. Maintaining flexibility in the destination context

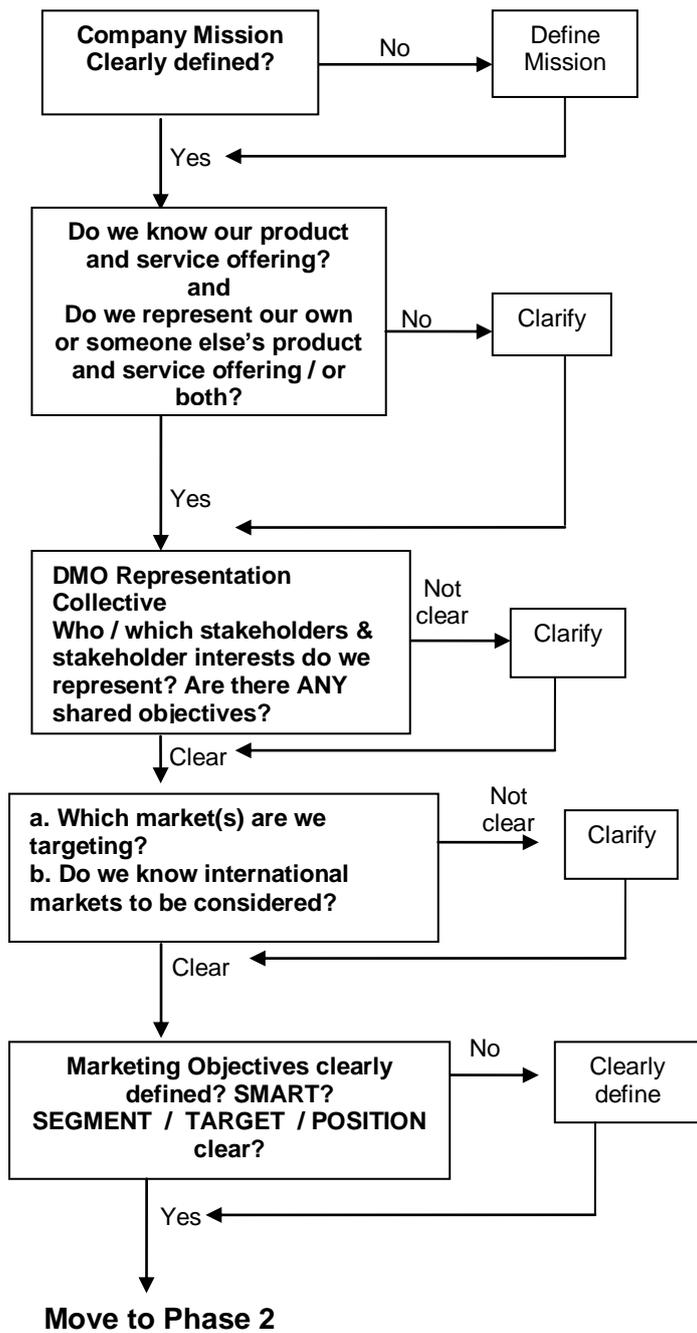
The first aspect ensures that the framework will offer marketers a clear planning sequence in to guide their media selection. Secondly, the principle of MNP will consider all media equally and favour multi-mix approaches. And finally, the aim is to construct a model which will remain generally applicable in principle whilst allowing the user to custom tailor the plan according to their circumstances. Further explanations can be found in the appendix.

5.2. Construction of the model

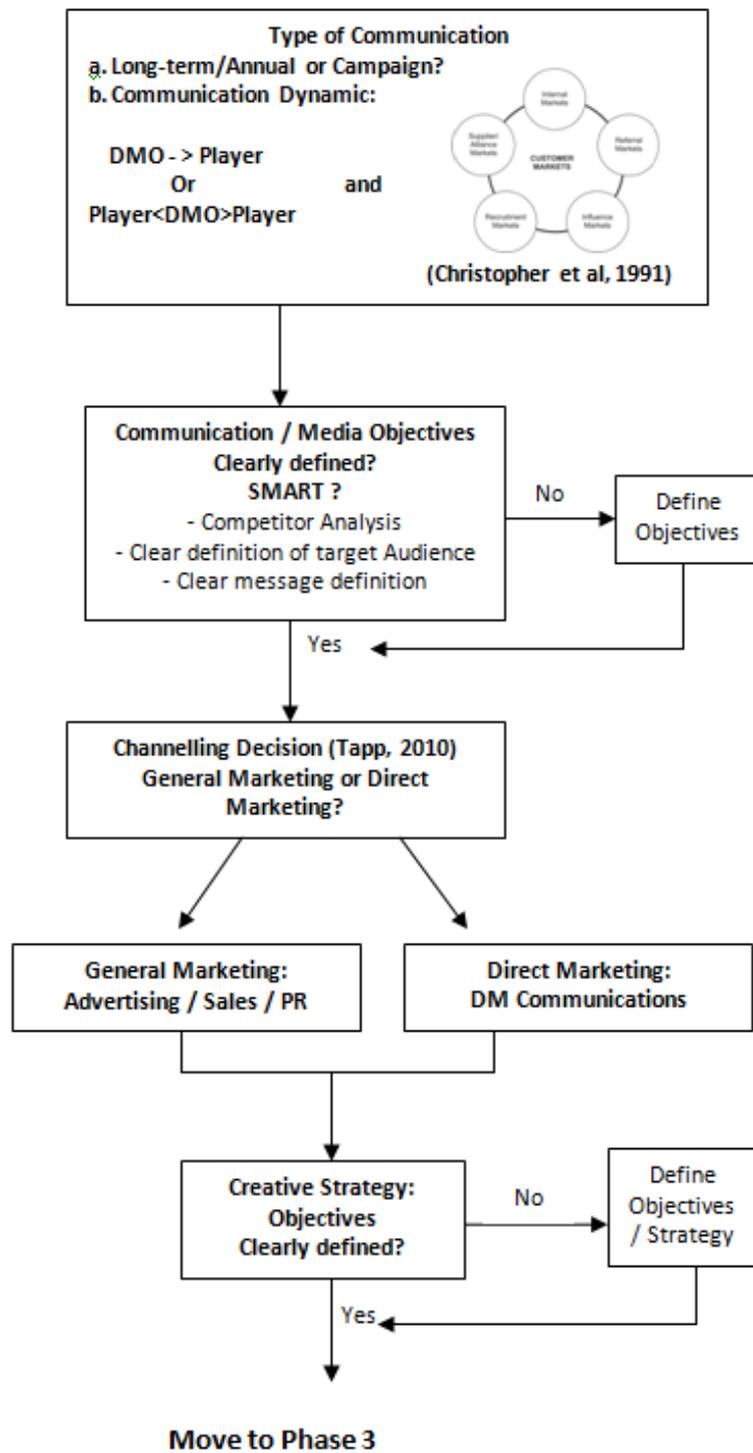
As a basis for the initial model, the 'objectives and task' flowchart style from a model by Barnes et al (1982, p.74) was adopted, including some of its main strategy elements. Interestingly, the part of the model focussing on the strategic planning sequence and hierarchy was found more suitable as a basis for the initial destination media selection model, rather than the first part which was originally designed for media selection. For the actual media selection stage, AIMRITE was found a more suitable approach. Based on Tapp's recommendation of structuring the planning sequence into marketing, communications and media planning phases (2005, in Chaffey, 2006 p.358) the flowchart was divided into these three phases of decision-making, which will be presented in the following section.

Detailed explanations as to the construction of individual elements of this first version of the framework can be found in the appendix; however, they were not included in the main body of the thesis as they would take the focus from the final framework presented in findings and discussion.

5.3. Figure 4a: Media Selection Flowchart: Phase 1 - Marketing Considerations



5.4. Figure 4b: Media Selection Flowchart: Phase 2 – Communication Considerations



5.5. Figure 4c: Media Selection Flowchart: Phase 3 – Media Mix and Selection

Media Mix
a. Assorted or Concentrated
b. Digital vs. Traditional



Media selection criteria checklist AIMRITE (Tapp, 2010) ²

Audience

- Reach or Coverage/targeting precision
- Amount of Consumer Control over Contact/Consumption (Initiation: Push or Pull?)
- Suitability for type: Enquirer, Prospect, Suspect, Customer, Advocate, Cold contact etc.
- Coherence of medium with self-image

Impact

- Ability to cut through clutter
- Competitor activity
- Targeting Precision/Wastage
- Attention keeping / Interest – where is audience? AIDA
- Active Processing – lean forward or backward medium?
- Intrusive nature
- Seasonality factor & Scheduling
- Frequency / needed number of exposures
- Restrictions?

Message

- Does medium effectively communicate the message?
- Type and volume of information (Complexity, Rich or Lean?)
- Message urgency
- Message Life span
- Degree of Formality
- Creative requirements (Colour, sound, motion, demonstration)
- Compatibility of message/company image/brand with medium

Response

- Response required?
- Response mechanism? Interactivity?
- Public or private response / dialogue?
- > if public: need for monitoring?
- > Extent of control over feedback?
- Time lag?
- Ease for Consumer to respond
- Social presence or anonymity (Richness?)
- Inbuilt media responsiveness of target group

Internal Management

- Does the medium enhance or complicate the internal management of the campaign?
- Planning requirements
- Flexibility (Lead times for space/production/placing/cancellation)
- Operation cost / effort / expertise
- Maintenance cost / effort / expertise
- Location specific / geographic availability?

The End Result

- a. Delivery of objectives: Tasks fulfilled efficiently?

Efficiency Check:

- Too much overlap?
- Too much frequency?
- Too much waste?

b. Cost:

- Within specified budget?
- Cost vs. Likely revenues / ROI?
- Cost Breakdown: CPM, CP Acquisition/Conversion, CP Click/response/action
- Best results at reasonable cost?

² Bullet Points sorted under AIMRITE headings taken from Fill, 2009, p.235-237; Yeshin, 1998, p.48; Smith and Taylor, 2002, p.168-189; Chaffey, 2005, p.186-405; Strauss et al, 2003, p.395; Tapp, 2008, p.358-429; Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008, p.4-77; Sissors and Baron, 2010, p. Xxi (foreword)-20).

CHAPTER SIX – Context of this research

To fully understand the setting of this research, an explanation as to the context must be given, as it is quite a specific one.

The participating respondent organisation, a privately established tourist board is classified as a 'Destination Network Collective Representative'. This type of DMO acts as an interface between the external and internal players of the destination network and represents its stakeholders to the external visitors. Furthermore, the respondent organisation was – at the time of the research project – undergoing major restructuring of their business approach. Major funding cuts made it necessary for the board to commercialize themselves in order to ensure financial independence in the future.

This leads on to the second focus of the research, namely the emphasis on low budget and budget restrained organisations and their struggle within the present economic climate. When first commencing the research journey, the objective was to find low cost digital solutions for budget restrained destination marketers. However, this field proved to be much wider than first anticipated and certainly too broad to manage within the restrictions of a 12 month masters. Several options of niche topics resulted from the undergone literature review and since media selection represents one of the biggest resource allocation decisions within the business (Smith and Taylor, 2002 p.168; Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.6; Tapp, 2005 p.134), it was chosen as a suitable research focus.

The main objective in choosing media selection was to enable practitioners to make the most of their available resources within the limitations of restrained financial resources. Due to the current economic climate, it is most likely that there will be numerous other DMOs of the same type that will suffer from similar budget restraining circumstances. It has to be pointed out, that on this level – namely the local or regional marketing of destinations – it is unlikely that responsible organisations will ever have sufficient budget. In fact, many destinations are facing increasing pressure on their finances (Park and Gretzel, 2007) and plenty of smaller destinations already work within the restrictions of a limited budget on a regular basis (Clark et al., 2010). Hence, even in a better economic climate the pressure to perform and accountability towards numerous stakeholders would remain. Since there is an ongoing tension between budget allocation and the various expectations from destination network players, this focus of research will always be of interest to destination marketers on the regional and local level.

Finally, the digital era of marketing has similarly taken over within the tourism industry as it has in any other areas of business. Affecting both the general work practice in terms of database and direct marketing as well as the field of media and communications through new platforms such as social media and website driven campaigns, this shift has had a heavy impact on the way destination marketing and media selection are conducted. It not only raised the question of where digital fits within general marketing planning, but also how it should be integrated in media selection itself. However, it is important to remember that the technological advances of the digital age simply are new platforms – the principles of marketing remain very much the same. This proposition has been maintained throughout the course of this research and is reflected in the construction of the presented framework.

CHAPTER SEVEN – Methodology

7.1. Introduction

An aim of this research project is to bridge the gap between theory and practice by simplifying the complexities of the subject. This way, theory is made accessible and more implementable for practitioners. Consequently, the field research undertaken and construction of theories are to take place in tight co-operation and with considerable input from practitioners. Fellow researchers might criticise the chosen methods as being too practitioner-sided or un-academic and unconventional, as input from respondents was directly used to feed into the framework of this thesis. However, the purpose of this research is to provide marketers in the industry with knowledge which they can directly apply to their working practice. All frameworks within this thesis have been based on the synthesis of available literature and clear reasoning – marrying both practice and theory together in an adequate yet accessible balance. The author would like to encourage readers to view the method justification in the light of this aim and keep in mind that theory and clear reasoning for the choice of methods was never neglected for the purpose of practice.

7.2. Research philosophy- ontological and epistemological considerations

One has to keep in mind that social research never operates within a vacuum and is always closely connected to ‘social sciences and the various intellectual allegiances that their practitioners hold’ (Bryman, 2008 p.161). Hence, a clear ontological and epistemological position as a base for gathering new levels of knowledge is essential for any kind of social research. As the research is approached from a realists’ point of view, the overall process of gathering knowledge within the identified subject will be predominantly retroductive: testing an explanatory model as a hypothetical description of existing social phenomena and their relations (Blaikie, 2010 p.89). The explanatory model in this case will be the revised framework resulting from the research, and hence falsification will be part of the revision process. Since the research questions focus both on the ‘how’ as well as the ‘what’ there might also be elements of inductive approaches involved, to correctly address the requirements of the questions asked.

7.3. Research Strategy

7.3.1. An integrated qualitative research strategy

Destination marketing in itself is driven by context and the network setting it functions in. It was therefore clear that this particular project would be mainly of a qualitative nature, since ‘qualitative research methodologies celebrate richness, depth, nuance, context, multi-dimensionality and complexity rather than being embarrassed or

inconvenienced by them' (Mason, 2002 p.1). Furthermore, it inputs these factors directly into analysis and explanations of the studied phenomena; it has a unique capacity to produce powerful arguments of how things work within a certain context (Mason, 2002 p.1). At the beginning of the research, quantitative data collection and analysis were considered as part of the overall strategy, namely cost analysis and budget evaluation through of the respondent organisation. However, since only of secondary importance for the research aim and due to time limitation, this element was dropped in favour for more relevant qualitative investigation methods.

7.3.2. Not the ordinary case study: The Delphi Technique

In a context driven discipline such as destination marketing it is important to consider the holistic picture even when focusing on smaller details within (Bennett 1999 p.48). As Denscombe notes 'Relationships and processes within social settings tend to be interconnected and interrelated. To understand one thing it is necessary to understand many others, and crucially, how the various parts are linked. The case study approach works well here because it offers more chance than the survey approach of going into sufficient detail to unravel the complexities of a given situation.' (2010, p.53). Case studies within a single organisation have not only been an established method amongst some of the best known studies in sociology (Burawoy,1979; Pollert,1981; Pettigrews,1985; all cited in Bryman, 2008 p.53) but have also proven to be a suitable method for the investigation of destination marketing related issues (Blumberg, 2005).

Due to time and resource limitations, it was also clear that the research scope would have to be within a single organization. The decision on using a case study was therefore also pragmatic; a simply strategic decision towards the scope and scale of the investigation (Denscombe, 2010 p.54). Furthermore, case studies are not necessarily associated with inductive approaches, but are known for both theory generation and testing (Bryman, 2008 p.57). The researcher will hereby take the critical case approach: a case is chosen that will allow a better understanding of the circumstances in which a well-developed theory or hypothesis will be assessed on its validity (Bryman, 2008, p.53). Finally, the flexibility of method was seen as a strategic advantage, as it is indeed 'a strength of the case study approach that it allows the use of a variety of methods depending on the circumstances and the specific needs of the situation.' (Denscombe, 2010 p.54). As a result, the case study approach was chosen as a suitable research strategy for this master.

Although the overall research strategy was a case study, it was necessary to utilise a number of elements from the so-called Delphi technique to achieve the identified research objectives. The Delphi technique is one of the most well established means of

collecting expert opinion and gaining consensus among experts on various factors under consideration (Green et al., 1990 p.271). It is usually used to deal with uncertainty in an area of imperfect knowledge and to generate rather than test hypotheses - to map out a field rather than to test relationships within it (Green et al., 1990 p.271). The method is iterative and involves several rounds: First, an exploratory round to identify the breadth of perspectives and approaches to the area of study, and then one or more convergence rounds to identify and integrate the most important perspectives and issues (Kaynak and Macaulay, 1984 p.90). However, this research project utilised only elements of this method, as a true Delphi technique would typically conduct its research rounds via questionnaires to preserve anonymity amongst its respondents (Green et al., 1990 p.271; Kaynak and Macaulay, 1984 p.90). These aspects, however, were dismissed as unsuitable or unnecessary as all respondents were working in cooperation and within the same organisation. Firstly, interviews and focus groups were found to be a more suitable approach to gather insight compared to the restricting format of a questionnaire. Secondly, feedback from the interviews was agreed to be kept anonymous throughout the project, whilst the second round, a focus group, was aiming to utilise group dynamics and face to face discussion for creative stimuli. Consequently, the overall research strategy can be qualified as a rather unusual type of case study, which utilises elements from the Delphi technique for its own purposes.

7.4. Research Methods

7.4.1. Semi-structured Interviews

Within the field research it became clear that an exploratory stage would be required to understand the context of the respondent organisation's media selection and planning. This would not only include understanding the planning processes and procedures, but also their division of responsibilities within destination marketing. The semi-structured interviews were proposed as a first stage of a multi-level iterative research process to gain a general understanding of the respondents working procedures, attitudes towards strategic planning and understanding of destination marketing and their role within it. Inspired by the Blumberg case (2005, p.49) semi-structured interviews were considered as an appropriate method to gain the desired insight. To thoroughly understand the division of roles and responsibilities of the respondent organisation the interviews will be held individually.

By definition, interviews are deliberately created opportunities to talk about something that the interviewer is interested in (Miller and Dingwall, 1997 p.59). Since these qualitative interviews usually involve a relatively informal style they often have the

appearance of a conversation rather than a formal question answer format (Mason, 2002 p.62) This does not only allow more flexibility in the respondents answers enabling him or her to introduce aspects they consider important, but furthermore puts them at ease and hence increases the potential for more honest accounts. Also, questions may stray from the outline on the schedules and questions that are not included in the guide may be asked as the interview picks up on what is being said by interviewees (Bryman, 2008 p.438). This way, the researcher can follow up specific responses along lines which are particularly relevant to their research context, and which they could not have 'anticipated in advance, in a highly organic way.'(Mason, 2002 p.64).

Within semi-structured interviews the researcher is able to cover a list of questions and themes; however, these might vary from interview to interview. This will allow adapting to the specific organisational context encountered in relation to the research topic (Saunders et al., p.312 2007). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews are useful for exploratory and explanatory purposes, particularly if questions are complex and open-ended or when the order and logic of them might vary (Saunders et al, 2007 pp.314-316). Since this flexibility was needed within the exploratory context and also the fact that several different manager types were interviewed within the organisation, it seemed a suitable data collection method. As social context plays such a vital role within destination marketing, the interview cannot be separated from its social context for fear of introducing bias. Indeed, it should not even be attempted (Mason, p.65 2002). Rather, the researcher should try to comprehend the complexities of the action and the way in which context and situation work in interview actions (Mason, 2002 p.65). In fact, it is the interaction between the researcher and the respondent, and its epistemological importance which makes semi-structured interviewing appropriate (Mason, 2002 p.65).

A general guide was constructed for the interviews, allowing the necessary flexibility to include questions or skip them when needed. Furthermore, individual interviews would allow for the respondents to express their attitudes and views unafraid of their colleagues' opinions and hence would allow the researcher to gain a better insight into the examined matters. Finally, the reason for choosing semi-structured interviews was also a pragmatic one: The desired data was simply not feasibly available in any other form (Mason, 2002 p.66).

7.4.2. Document Analysis

Although the interviews served well as exploratory stage, some detail concerning strategic planning elements still remained partially unclear. It became clear that to gain

a full understanding of the boards planning, further evidence would be required in form of a campaign report or marketing plan.

From an ontological point of view, written words, texts, document records and other visual phenomena or aspects of a social organisation are meaningful constituents of the social world in themselves and hence they act as a form of representation of relevant elements of the social world (Mason, 2002 p.106). Using visual or documentary methods therefore suggests that texts documents, written records, visual documents, records objects or phenomena can provide or count as evidence of these ontological properties (Mason, p.108 2002). This way, documents can help to verify, contextualise or clarify personal recollections and other forms of data derived from interviews or observation (Mason, 2002 p.108).

Upon request, the board provided the researcher with a campaign based marketing action plan as well as a campaign report. Data triangulation was used to check the validity of the interview statements. Document analysis as another format of data was compared (Denscombe, 2010 p.347) to the findings from the interviews to provide more clarity on any questionable areas.

7.4.3. Focus Group

After reworking the framework, a second stage of expert input was required to assess the quality of the new reflective tool. Several reasons suggested that a focus group would be the most appropriate method as this stage. By definition, a focus group typically consists of a small group of people who under the guidance of a 'moderator' explore attitudes and perceptions, feelings and ideas about a specific topic. Lasting between 1.5 hours to 2 hours, they are useful for gauging the extent to which there are shared views among the respondents in relation to the discussed topic (Denscombe, 2010 p.177).

Since the aim was to get a practitioner's opinion on the reflective tool, a data-rich and interactive feedback session was required rather than a strictly formatted type of data gathering. The advantage of the 'group interview' is that the 'group' characteristics of the interaction are stressed; participants distinctively respond as part of a group rather than individuals. The incentive for the researcher in this case, is not a quantitative one concerned with the improved representativeness but a qualitative one concerned with the way that group discussions can be more illuminating (Denscombe, 2010 p.177). Group members will often argue with each other and challenge each other's views. This way the researcher may stand a chance of ending up with a more realistic account

of what people think as they will be forced to consider different viewpoints and possibly revise their own opinions (Bryman, 2008 p.475).

Furthermore, participants are able to bring to the fore issues in relation to a topic that they deem to be important (Bryman, 2008 p.475). Hence, respondents do not only provide data but also reasoning for their expressed opinions and attitudes (Denscombe, 2010 p.353). Often, the discussion is triggered by a stimulus, introduced by the moderator at the beginning of the session. This is a vital element of the method as it focuses the discussion by providing a topic which all respondents are familiar with, and it channels the discussion onto something specific and concrete (Denscombe, 2010 p.352).

7.5. Data Analysis

Semi-structured interviews

All interviews will be conducted according to the guidelines of the MRS Code of Conduct insuring that all respondents will be questioned in a neutral, non-judgemental manner and avoiding any possible bias that could be introduced through relations with any of them. The interviews will be recorded on an audio device so that they can be listened to and transcribed into word-processed documents for further analysis. As recommended by Saunders et al. (2007, p.476) the transcription process will be done as soon as possible after conducting the interviews to avoid a build-up of audio material and ease the transcription process. For the analysis the data will be classified into meaningful categories which derive from the data or theoretical framework. Then, relevant units of data will be attached to the appropriate categories devised (Saunders et al., 2007 p.480).

Document Analysis

The campaign plans and marketing action plan provided by the respondent organisation will be analysed via textual analysis; a data-gathering process in which an educated guess is made at some of the most likely interpretations of a text (McKee, 2003 p.1). Hereby, the following aspects have to be taken into account: Cultural background, what questions the analysis is trying to answer and most importantly the context of the research (McKee, 2003 p.92). A quantitative way of textual analysis is the breaking down of texts into components which can be counted; once a number of categories have been selected they can be assigned and keywords can also be used as an indicator (McKee, 2003 p.127). This way, relevant goals and themes can be identified throughout the documents and compared to the results of the interviews.

Focus groups

Similarly to the interviews, the focus group will firstly be audio recorded and then transcribed according to Saunders et al.'s recommendations (2007, p.476). Analysing feedback from the focus group will be slightly more straight-forward as it directly relates to the different elements of the reflective tool. The researcher will consider the thoughts, criticism and recommendations made by the respondents, and then compare and linking those back to the available literature. Finally, based on their own intelligence and experience they will then decide whether and how this feedback can be integrated into the revision of the reflective tool. The outcome will then be presented within the analysis and discussion chapter so that the reader will be able to follow the researcher's revision of the reflective tool.

7.6. Research determinants, conduct and ethical considerations

The following ethical concerns, as identified by Punch (2005, p.277) were considered relevant within the proposed research:

- Informed consent
- Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity
- Ownership of data
- Benefits, costs reciprocity

Before the first stage of field research, a written agreement of consent covering all the relevant aspects mentioned above was constructed by the researcher in cooperation with the respondent organisation and was signed by both parties. Furthermore, forms of consent were signed by all respondents prior to the interviews and focus group to ensure their voluntary and informed part-taking in the research. Finally, a thorough ethical check was undergone via the University of Central Lancashire and ethical clearance given by the appropriate research committee. The signed agreement can be found in the appendices.

7.7. Contextual Information

Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Semi-structured Interviews An interview guide with questions put together by the researcher was used for all three respondents. The basic order of questions was kept, however, adapted according to each respondent's answers and flow of topic. Furthermore, questions were adapted or added by the researcher according to each respondent's position in the organisation. - Document Analysis A campaign plan and a marketing action plan were provided by the respondent organisation, both from past activities within the last two years. The first included aims, target groups, planned activities as well as respondent figures. The latter included a Gant-chart. - Focus Group All three respondents from the interviews were invited back to the focus group, with the researcher acting as the moderator. A detailed plan of the questions to be discussed and brainstorming activities to be conducted were planned by the researcher in advance. This will mainly consist of a discussion of the revised reflective tool and a test on the comprehensiveness in regards to its content and layout. More detail can be found in the appendix.
Sample	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Semi-structured Interviews Three staff members of the respondent organisation, chosen by their director, based on the connection of their position to the research topic. - Document Analysis One campaign plan and one marketing plan requested by the researcher. Request for documents from past activities within the last two years. - Focus Group The same three staff members as in the interviews, encouraging an iterative research process.
Analysis Technique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Semi-structured Interviews Answers in interview transcripts were sorted according to (research) question, topic and planning stage (Marketing Foundation, Campaign stage, Media Selection stage). Key statements were picked out and marked into different categories by colour. Answers were compared, consensus and differences evaluated and put into context by researcher. - Document Analysis Document content and quality of statements was compared to elements suggested in academic planning theory by researcher. Key strengths and weaknesses of planning were listed by researcher. Key statements and elements were marked in colours. - Focus Group Answers in transcript were sorted according to (research) question, topic and reflective tool element. Key improvement suggestions for tool were picked out and evaluated as to their merit. Answers were compared, consensus and differences evaluated and put into context by researcher.

7.8. Summary

Overall, the research strategy used for this project does not only utilise a multi-methodology but furthermore a multi-stage approach. The framework, which has been constructed prior to primary research, undergoes a revision through the input of field research feedback at every stage, refining and improving its relevance for practitioners and academics alike. Since the findings from the field research will be used in the revision of the framework in conjunction with a thorough assessment of the theoretical reasoning behind it, it will be based on a solid practical as well as theoretical standard. Working with an exploratory, triangulatory and final evaluative stage, the research has a clear direction and purpose for each stage of conducted field research.

CHAPTER EIGHT – Analysis of Findings and Discussion

8.1. Introduction

The following chapter will present, analyse and discuss the findings which resulted from the conducted field research. This master's research journey presents a dominantly iterative process, an approach that may seem a little unconventional. However, it is based on the firm belief that input from respondents and their experience in the industry can be successfully used to inform, modify and enhance theory to make it more implementable in practice. The findings will be presented in two categories: The first category focuses on general findings within destination marketing and media selection; the second summarizes all findings that directly informed modifications on the earlier presented conceptual framework. All in all, the conceptual framework, from the point of its construction, underwent two revisions – one major revision after the conduction of interviews and document analysis, and another smaller revision after the conduction of the focus group.

8.2. Interview and document analysis of findings and discussion

8.2.1. General Findings

The understanding and scope of destination marketing in practice

One of the first questions on the interview guideline inquired after the respondents understanding of destination marketing and the role of the respondent organisation within it. This presents a vital question in the context of media selection. It will not only drive the entire company mission, but also determine the scope of destination marketing and hence the measures of communications and media within their everyday practice. Interestingly, the board's understanding of destination marketing – represented by respondent A and B – initially seemed quite dominated by the idea of branding and promotion towards external visitors rather than network management: '[Destination Marketing] I would have said it's promoting the place... the destination as a place to visit, but I think it is actually more than that, that's the overall starting point shall we say. Yes it's a lot more than that, because it's about developing an image for X that even people who live here can buy into and believe, people who work in the industry as well, it's also about developing an image for X for the businesses to believe in and to follow and embrace as well as encouraging visitors.' (Respondent A, 2012).

Stakeholder management seemed to be taken for granted, an inevitable 'maintenance task' but not considered part of the actual marketing. Here, the question remains to what extent the respondent organisation sees itself as a network-driven destination

marketing organisation and at what point destination marketing turns into destination management.

When asked about their product and service offering, the list of responsibilities and tasks of the DMO seemed quite randomly bundled. This became evident through the fact that all respondents seemed to have a slightly different idea of the company's mission and listed its responsibilities rather loosely. Again, branding seemed to be a dominant theme (mentioned by A and C), as well as information provision and supporting visitors in planning their short breaks. Stakeholders were mentioned too, however, although often only after specific inquiries of the interview conductor. Here, the offering of marketing services was mentioned alongside 'broadening their horizon of where they reach' (Respondent C, 2012). Numerous other activities also became apparent later in the interviews that were not specifically mentioned at this point. This includes respondent C's mention of offering marketing and PR consultation services to stakeholders and the on-going cooperation with district council partners (Respondent B, 2012).

When returning to the literature, the reader might remember that academic opinions on the role of DMOs still present a source of on-going debate. The feedback from the respondent organisation seemed to confirm the notion that every DMO has to decide for itself what level of destination marketing they can, should and want to engage in. From this point of view even limited network driven destination marketing approaches can be justified through a lack of status, network development and resources – given that they are strategically thought through. Hence, the author does not criticise a limited level of engagement in destination marketing measures, but rather the lack of professionalism with which these are often carried out: 'the level of professionalism amongst DMO's [...] can greatly vary – from 'relatively highly formalised, forward looking and well-funded programs of intelligence gathering and analysis, to relatively piecemeal and reactive approaches' (Pühringer and Taylor, 2008 p.177).

It is indeed the dominance of 'relatively piecemeal and reactive approaches' amongst practitioners which the reflective framework presented in this thesis tries to help overcome.

Strategic planning within destination marketing practice –

Bridging the gap between theory and practice

Taking Pühringer and Taylor's statement into account, two major issues addressed within the framework were the emphasis on a logical and hierarchical planning approach and the clear formulation of SMART objectives. When questioned about

these aspects, it became apparent that the respondent organisation operated on an experience based-approach of task fulfilment rather than a set planning sequence within campaigns and media selection. The general planning was split into an annual marketing plan – including branding and market research - and monthly campaign project meetings, the latter of which had only recently been established at the respondent organisation. The only distinct planning phases that could be identified from the interviews were a general campaign planning stage and a stakeholder-sponsor-acquisition stage, a topic that will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters. An examination of the provided campaign reports and marketing plans did not reveal any further evidence on a set structure within the actual campaign planning and media selection stage.

Interestingly, respondent C pointed out that timing and seasonality were an important factor for the planning of the organisations activities:

'I think we are driven by a timetable in the first instance rather than a plan, because these things happen at certain times in the year. So we have a timetable of when we know we can meet people and opportunities we take that would otherwise seize because once they are gone they are gone.' (Respondent C, 2012).

When questioned about objective setting, it became apparent that specifically formulated objectives had not been utilized to a large extent within planning:

Respondent A: 'Our objectives are quite loose, not too restricting, so our objectives for a campaign were [...] .. to increase the overnight visits to X, or to increase traffic onto our website.. so those are the objectives that we work to..'

Interviewer: 'So do you have specific numbers or just rough estimates that you want to achieve? Do you ever say "this is the set number we want to achieve" or "this is the increase"..?'

Respondent A: 'No..that is perhaps something I would like to do.. but that's never been done..'

Interviewer: Do you have any other objectives that you set? [Other than the annual 20% website traffic increase?]

Respondent B: 'Not me personally. Yeah, I mean, there are a few, but they are based around generating campaigns.. but the main objective that we have – and I know this sounds quite simple – is to increase traffic to the website..' (Respondent A and B, 2012).

Since the interviews only provided an abstract picture of the DMO's objective setting practice, it was decided that campaign plans were necessary to triangulate and clarify this aspect. An examination of sample campaign and marketing action plans confirmed the findings from the interviews: The only element close to objectives was a listing of loose campaign aims, but they did not state any measurable or specific outcomes (SMART) to be achieved:

'Campaign Aims:

To promote day visits and short breaks in X to families within an Y-hour drive time

To reinforce the X- Brand Values and position through campaign activity

To increase email opt-in data through campaign activity' (Campaign plans, 2012)

Interestingly, despite the lack of detailed objectives, the respondent organisation kept a rigorous account of results and closely monitored the outcome of past campaigns:

'So generally the decision [on media selection] comes from previous campaigns and previous experiences. So we know that certain things worked and certain things didn't work. Certain things that are really expensive did not give us a really high return so we sort of adapt that.. [...] So it's trial and error... we do measure response on direct mail, so if we post something out, we always have a competition going on there, whether that is to return something or whether it's to enter online, so we always measure that to see what has worked and what hasn't.' (Respondent A, 2012).

From this statement it can be seen that the data gathered by previous work informed media selection and future campaign planning. However, it did not seem to be used to measure achievements in regards to objectives – since this is their major function: Good objectives will be quantifiable and enable the marketer to know whether they have met their goal later (Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.55). In other words, it informed the 'what has worked and what has not worked'. However, the respondent organisation did not take it a step further to ask 'how well does tool or measure x work/ how much can we achieve with this?'

Overall, this seems to confirm Bagaric's concept of the 'Strategic Drift' in which she criticizes the fact that practitioners often lack a clear plan and objectives (2010, p.237). However, the importance of clearly formulated objectives cannot be overemphasized, as they do not only prevent strategic drift, but act as key elements for network building activities such as the cooperation strategy addressed by Grangsjoe and Gummesson (2006, cited in Elbe et al., 2008 p.285).

Data gathering, direct marketing and target market considerations

Overall, it seems a common phenomenon amongst practitioners to gather data and not realize its potential for direct marketing purposes:

'Consider what treasure trove destinations have. Arrival and departure cards give names, addresses, socio-economic status, birthday and other info which some direct marketers might die for. And what do many destinations see it as? A source of statistics! It is much more rarely seen as an opportunity for direct marketing.' (Bennett, 1999 p.53)

Also, the importance of direct marketing should be emphasized due to its strong link to the usage of digital measures as discussed earlier in the literature review (Chaffey, 2006 p.10). Considering the amount of data the respondent organisation gathers, it would be highly advisable to increase its use of for direct marketing. Further, it can help to enhance their general targeting and inform not just their media choice but media strategy more thoroughly.

The document analysis revealed a very thorough segmentation and profiling of the target market, however, no evidence of engaging into more elaborate target market considerations such as customer journey, number of ideal touch points or hierarchy of effects. The gathered data from previous campaigns could be of considerable value to inform these more elaborate 'target market considerations'. The aspect of 'target market considerations' represents an important element of communications and media selection planning. Its incorporation into the model will be presented in the following chapter.

Generally, practitioners seem to stick to established marketing basics due to their hasty and time pressured working environment. In the case of the respondent organisation, examples include marketing research before planning, the concept of promotion and branding, segmentation and customer profiling. More elaborate and destination specific concepts such as a detailed direct marketing strategy in cooperation with the database, customer journey and touch points or network dynamic considerations were not found within their planning and practice routine.

Finally, all respondents emphasized the importance of keeping up with the market goings-on and the development of marketing concepts, and listed regular measures to do so. The deliberate acquisition of destination specific marketing theory was not yet considered. However, it has to be noted that the fragmentation of this theory still presents a major barrier to its utilization. After conducting the interviews the impression remained that there still seems to be a considerable gap between theoretical suggestions of what and how destination marketing should be done and the reality of everyday industrial practice execution. This aspect will also be discussed in more detail later.

The Destination Bowtie

a. Commercialisation of the business

Within the interview stage, it became clear that the commercialisation of the company is of significant importance. It can be assumed that due to the economic climate

numerous other DMOs will be in the same position, striving to make their business more sustainable and rely less on external funding. The interview with respondent B in particular showed that the DMO's work can be divided into a two-fold loop of financial input and output, which it runs between the stakeholders and external visitors:

Respondent B: 'The purpose has changed over the last couple of years really. It always used to be about inspiring visitors to the area and getting them to come and stay for a short break, getting them to spend money in the area. But obviously with the demise of the regional development agency and the loss of funding, we have had to become more commercial. Hence we started charging our members for campaigns etc. [...] So yeah it obviously has shifted... obviously we still want people to come to the area, and that has not changed, but we have also had to start thinking how we can make money from the website.'

Interviewer: 'So what about the supply side? You said you worked with members and membership?'

Respondent B: 'Our commercial team basically look after all the commercial members, and their targets are obviously to bring more members in..'

Interviewer: 'So you are representing these members to the target market then? Or how would you describe your role?'

Respondent B: 'Yes definitely. The membership team also make sure they sell the right membership to the right person. So it is making sure to nurture our members, ensuring they get value for their money etc. So it is kind of evolving in a cycle – and we have around 300 members and quite a small team..' (Respondent B, 2012)

The principle is as follows: The DMO charges membership from the stakeholders – this money is then used to engage in marketing activities to attract external visitors. As a result, external visitors engage with the DMO and come to the destination and spend their money. By spending their money on the destination, the stakeholders financially benefit from the visitors. Here the DMO therefore acts as a channel and catalyst for financial exchange between the players of the destination network (See Destination Bowtie Number 3).

Overall, this seems an efficient CRM (Customer Relationship Management) scheme for destination marketers, especially since many DMOs measure their effectiveness by assessing the degree of involvement and support they achieve from their stakeholders (Batchelor, 1999 p. 187; cited in Blumberg, 2005, p.48). By strengthening relationships with stakeholders, the DMO will be able to gain the respect of the industry and demonstrate the benefits of engaging into partnerships (Bennett, 1999 p.50). This again will enable the DMO to then engage in destination governance (Beritelli, 2007 cited in Elbe et al, 2009, p.285).

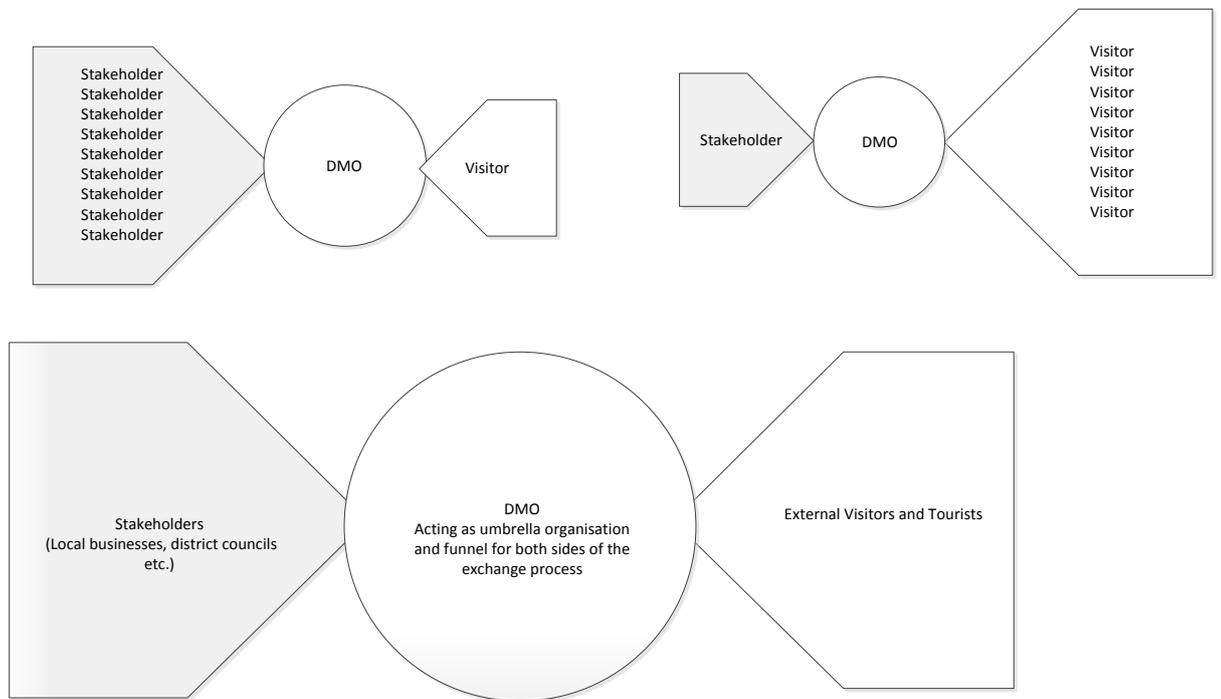


Figure 5: The Destination Bowtie (constructed by the author for illustration purposes)

b. The DMO acting as an ‘info-wholeseller’ – or Contactual Efficiency

A second characteristic of destination marketing illustrated within the ‘Destination Bowtie’ is the function of information wholesaling – otherwise known as ‘Contactual efficiency’. Being an established concept within distribution theory, this principle of increasing channelling efficiency through the introduction of intermediaries has already been addressed within the context of marketing channelling by Rosenbloom (1995, p.21). (See Figure 6 below)

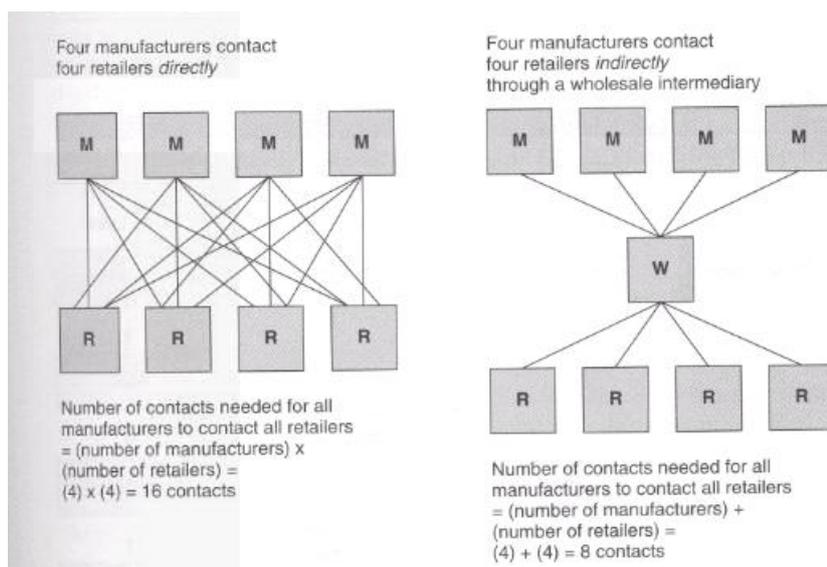


Figure 6: Contactual Efficiency through the use of intermediaries (Rosenbloom, 1995 p.21).

In the context of destination marketing, the DMO acts as an intermediary for information gathering and exchange: On the visitor side, the respondent organisation offers support in planning trips and 'a good source of information what there is to do in [our area]' (Respondent B, 2012). On the business side, the DMO offers information on a broader reach of accessible target markets to the stakeholders. According to respondent C, the DMO's expertise and access to market intelligence enables them to point stakeholders to suitable target markets which they themselves might not have considered. This way, the DMO acts as information channel and source that links together visitors and stakeholders and supports the exchange of values within this network:

'I think what we actually do for them is we broaden their horizon of where they reach or where they think they can reach. Because we have links into VisitEngland, VisitBritain, it's a much bigger picture for them.' (Respondent C, 2012).

8.2.2. Findings impacting on framework

Short introduction

The interviews and document analysis led to a number of findings which demanded modification of the conceptual framework. These will now be presented and their importance for the framework explained. This will include a rationale for the changes made in its content as well as the revision of its general layout. Finally, the modified framework will be presented.

Phase 1 – Marketing considerations

From the interviews conducted, it seemed that the company's mission and product service offering were so interrelated that it remained questionable which of the two should be established first. It seemed that in addition to a planning sequence and hierarchical structure, there was a need within certain 'blocks' of strategic decisions to maintain flexibility and allow an iterative strategy development take place. However, at this point it seemed that the model was potentially too theoretical and multi-faceted to make it accessible for practitioners. Hence, there was a further need to simplify the complexity captured within the framework.

Early attempts to overcome this difficulty were to include additional arrows and loops into the flowchart to show that certain elements of strategy could be revised later in the planning process. However, it soon became evident that a flowchart structure was no longer appropriate or sufficient to tackle the complexity of the content whilst presenting it in a comprehensive way. Eventually, this was overcome by an approach which maintained both the hierarchy of planning, whilst also allowing for a certain amount of flexibility within certain planning stages. Instead of a flowchart, strategic considerations

were listed as bullet points and grouped into boxes of planning phases. This would allow the marketer to iteratively plan within one stage of planning whilst keeping the overall hierarchical planning structure.

Phase 2 – Campaign considerations

Target market considerations (TMCs)

One of the main issues within the campaign planning phase was the fact that some important aspects had remained a challenge to be successfully integrated. This included the measurement of media suitability against hierarchy of effects, customer journey and touch points. Overall, all communications elements seemed to repeatedly lead back to the simple 'who, what and how'-principle: 'Who are we targeting, what do we want to achieve, and how are we going to achieve this?'. With the now simplified outline of the model, these were aspects incorporated under the heading of 'Target Market Considerations'. Also, it was concluded that the consideration of these TMCs served as a solid foundation for the later to be determined integration and media mix strategy. Hence, a note was included at the bottom instructing users to utilize the TMC input for the integration and media mix strategy later.

Parallel to this, it was felt that the 'Type of Communications'-considerations had to be thought through alongside the TMCs, as only together could they act as a foundation for the campaign strategy formulation. Most input from the old model were kept; however, it was decided to present the six markets model as a checklist, making it more comprehensive to the user.

Channel strategy:

According to Tapp, media selection in the context of direct marketing requires a clear decision on the channel strategy before moving on to the selection of media vehicles (2005, p.134). Since direct marketing is very result driven in its nature, a lot of its theory can serve as a very useful input for other areas of marketing. It was therefore decided to incorporate the channel strategy stage into the model. The conducted interviews seemed to confirm the division of channelling within marketing practice: PR, marketing and digital were held as separate departments, which resembled Tapp's categorization of general versus direct marketing channelling. It has to be noted, however, that even at this stage the usefulness of the channel strategy approach remained questionable to the researcher.

Phase 3 – Media Selection considerations

Media Mix and Integration:

The integration and mix of media were thoroughly discussed within the interviews. It became apparent that practitioners not only reinforce messages through multiple touch points but they also tend to use multiple media to increase the coverage of the target audience. Whilst the mix aspect had already been covered in the old framework, more emphasis on integration was felt necessary – especially after the integration of target market considerations. Hence, an additional point on integration was included into the new model to make practitioners reflect on their integration strategy.

In-house versus external resources:

One aspect which very clearly stood out in the interviews was the respondent organisation's distinct separation of in-house resources and external media. The literature had never expressively emphasized its importance, except for pointing out that media selection, as one of the biggest resource allocation decisions within business, should be given adequate attention (Smith and Taylor, 2002 p.168; Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.6; Tapp, 2005 p.134). The in-house outsource discussion had therefore not been integrated into the framework so far. To practitioners, however, it seemed of major importance since the acquisition of additional external media would severely affect the available budget. Practitioners would hence utilize all available in-house options before considering the acquisition of any external media space. This behaviour seems to confirm Bennett's notions on advertising in destination marketing that 'Advertising tends to be a blunderbuss for almost any destination – something which is nice if you can afford it' (p.52, 1999). It was therefore decided to be included into the framework as a final check for the media selection process. Since practitioners would try to, or even have to, work with internal resources first, they should - at the very end of the selection process - question whether in-house media would be sufficient to solve the proposed communication task. If not, external media could be acquired in order to fully meet the task requirements.

'Beware of' factors:

Throughout the construction and remodelling of the framework, there were a number of factors that were considered important for media selection, however, could not be assigned any specific place within the planning process. This included the influence of the social environment on decision making, the reaction of DMOs to competitor activities as well as the influence of stakeholders on the media selection process. It

was decided that all these factors could be summarized into internal and external decision influence factors which the destination marketer should 'beware of' when planning. The question of a suitable reaction to competitor activities had previously been discussed and resulted into a list of reaction options, as pointed out by Sissors and Baron (2012). Similarly, a list of reaction options were found for the other aspects and included in the framework. Since these factors mainly influenced the media selection stage, yet arguably sat somewhat separate from the planning process they were positioned in a separate 'Beware of' – warning box alongside the media selection stage.

8.2.3. General overall changes

- A reoccurring theme: From decision making flowchart to reflective tool

Although the decision making flowchart structure was dismissed for a more suitable bullet-points in boxes approach, the division of the planning process into marketing planning stage, campaign stage and media selection stage was kept. Within these stages there are reoccurring elements which reinforce the reflection on strategy: Reflection on the achievement of its objectives, the characteristics of its target market, and the message to be communicated. The more flexible outline of 'consideration boxes' transformed the framework into a 'reflective tool': It does not provide the marketer with fool proof answer for every question, but rather guides him through the planning process by pointing out what to consider and in which order.

- The house metaphor

Once all the major modifications had been made, the researcher aimed to further emphasize the hierarchical and logical planning approach within this tool. To signal its importance and principle to the practitioner, the metaphor of house-building was utilized as an overall format. The shape of a house is there to remind the user that in order to successfully plan your media selection, the strategic base has to be established first and only then the campaign and media specifics can be built on top. The 'Beware-of' factors are set on a separate flag as they have to be kept in mind throughout the entire planning process.

- The exploded model approach:

Sissors and Baron (2010, p.17) emphasize the need to break habitual planning and custom tailor campaign plans according to each market situation. However, during the interviews with the respondent organisation it became apparent that there was also an urgent need to minimize planning efforts due to their pressurized working schedule. To meet both criteria, the 'reflective tool' is suggested to be used in different stages and

according to the DMO's needs: Stage 1, the marketing basis, is suggested for annual planning. However, if this strategic base has not been established, practitioners are strongly advised to go through this first in order to move on to the other stages. Stage 2, the campaign stage, can be used for every bigger campaign, according to the DMO's needs. Stage 3, the media selection stage, can be used for media selection within a campaign. This way, marketers do not have to establish the basics for every campaign but can build on what they have already worked on. At the same time it allows for every campaign plan to be custom tailored and appropriate for its market conditions. The question remains whether a media plan has to be done from scratch every time, if the market is the same and the aim is the same.

Points that remained debatable

Despite numerous successful changes, a few aspects remained questionable in their appropriateness for the 'reflective tool':

- Digital versus traditional

This aspect was included in the integration and media mix considerations, since the literature encouraged the differentiation of digital and traditional media (e.g. Chaffey, 2006; Brassington and Pettitt, 2006). However, arguably all media – whether digital or traditional – remain media, and if the NMP principle is applied, this division is simply unnecessary as each media vehicle will be assessed on an individual basis (Jenkinson, 2002 p.2).

- Channel strategy

The channel strategy (Tapp, 2005 p.134) up to date remains a debatable element in the 'reflective tool' as its specific function is yet to be fully understood by the researcher. It is helpful to consider the different channel options as well as to specifically plan a direct marketing strategy aside the general marketing. However, since it is likely that all these options are going to be used, it remains questionable whether it is necessary to differentiate between these options.

- Dynamic in destination network

This element intended to encourage marketers to reflect on their function within the destination network, which is linked to their understanding of destination marketing and the DMO's purpose. Although this element in itself is important, it remains questionable whether the way it is presented will enable the user to understand it.

8.3. Figure 7: Revised Framework 1 - Overview

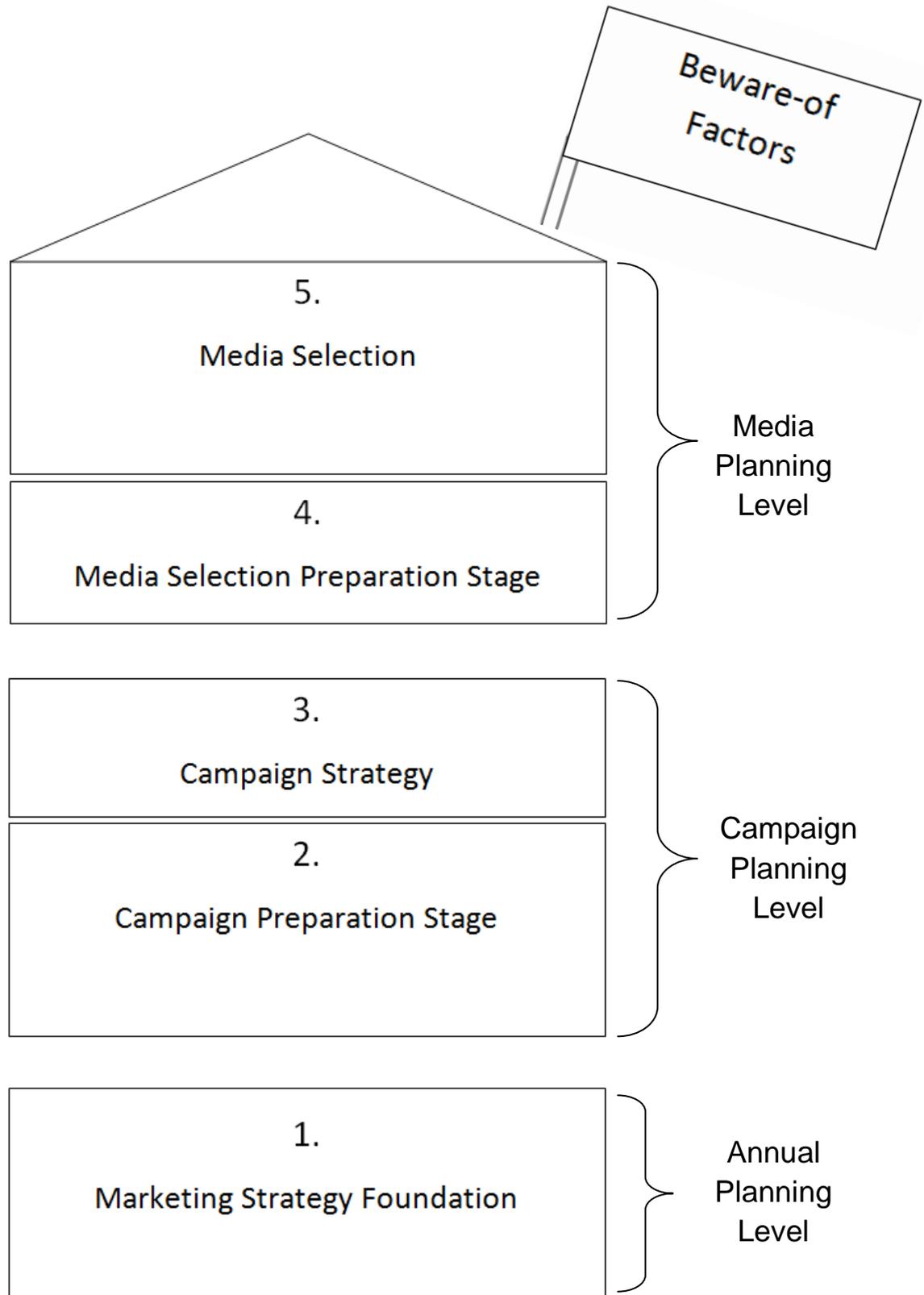
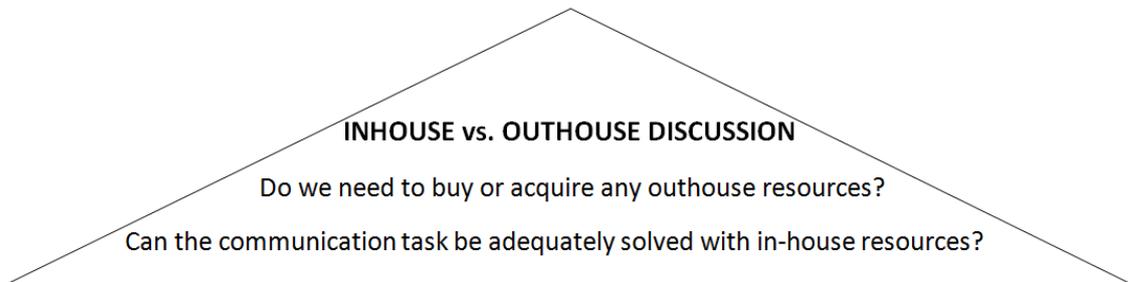
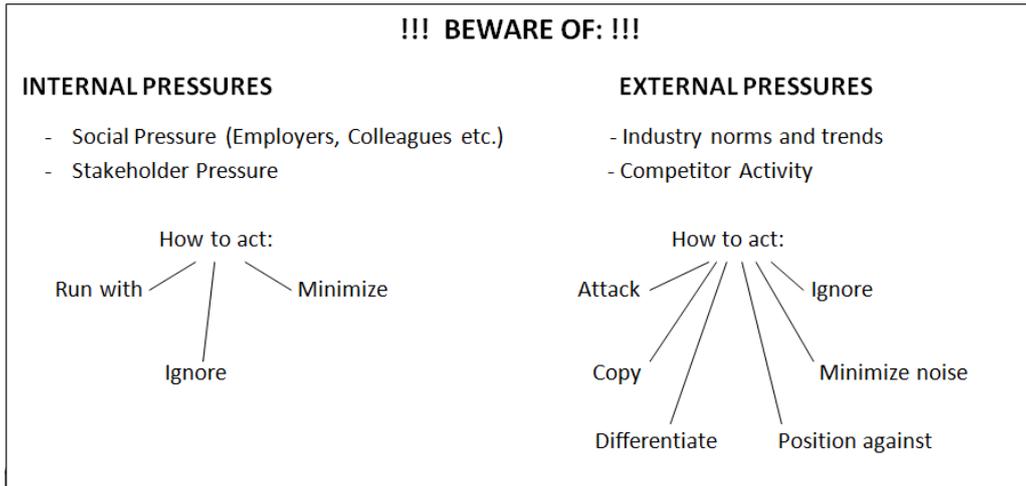


Figure 7b: Revised Framework 1 - Detailed Presentation



<p>INDIVIDUAL MEDIA TOOL CHECK - AIMRITE (Tapp, 2010)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Audience ➤ Impact ➤ Message ➤ Response ➤ Internal Management ➤ The End Result 	<p>MIX AND INTEGRATION STRATEGY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Assorted vs. Concentrated Mix ➤ Digital vs. Analogue Platforms <p>Integration Strategy Formulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use input from 'Target Market Considerations' ○ If possible / appropriate, run tests on how media work together
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<p style="text-align: center;">Channel Strategy</p> <p>General Marketing or Direct Marketing (Advertising /PR/ Sales) Or both?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Creative Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Objectives ➤ Brief for Creative Team
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Communication / Campaign / Media Objectives

- Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-Constrained
- Clear Definition of MESSAGE

Target Market Considerations	Type of Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clear Target Market Definition: Segmentation, Profile, Response to media etc. ➤ Customer Journey / Point in Customer Journey against Hierarchy of Effects: Where are our targets at? Attention – Interest – Desire – Action (Strong, 1925) ➤ Desired effects of media tools / Business targets to be achieved with media: Strategic advantages of tools ➤ Number of ideal touch points and nature of platform <p style="text-align: center;"><i>NOTE: Use as input for integration strategy and media selection later</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Dynamic in destination network: <div style="text-align: center; margin: 5px 0;"> <p style="margin: 0;">DMO ←————→ Stakeholder</p> <p style="margin: 0;">or</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Stakeholder ←— DMO —→ Stakeholder</p> </div> ➤ Long-term or short term Communication? Implications? ➤ Who are we talking to? <p>Six markets model (Christopher et al., 1999)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Customer Market ○ Supplier / Alliance market ○ Influence Market ○ Referral Market ○ Recruitment Market

Marketing Strategy Foundation

- Company Mission
- Product and Service offering / whose product and service offering do we represent?
- Stakeholder range / which stakeholders do we represent? / Are there any shared objectives?
- General Target Market (Geographic scope)
- Marketing Objectives (Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Time-Constrained)
- Segmentation / Targeting / Positioning (includes Branding) Strategy

Figure 7c: Revised Framework 1 – Detailed Presentation of Individual Media Tool
AIMRITE Check List with (Tapp, 2010)³

<p>Audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reach or Coverage/targeting precision -Amount of Consumer Control over Contact / Consumption (Initiation: Push or Pull?) - Suitability for type: Enquirer, Prospect, Suspect, Customer, Advocate, Cold contact etc. - Coherence of medium with self-image <p>Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ability to cut through clutter - Competitor activity -Targeting Precision/Wastage -Attention keeping / Interest – where is audience? AIDA (Strong, 1925 in Fill, 2005, p.235) - Active Processing – lean forward or backward medium? -Intrusive nature -Seasonality factor & Scheduling - Frequency / needed number of exposures -Restrictions? <p>Message</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does medium effectively communicate the message? -Type and volume of information (Complexity, Rich or Lean?) - Message urgency - Message Life span - Degree of Formality - Creative requirements (Colour, sound, motion, demonstration) - Compatibility of message/company image/brand with medium <p>Response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Response required? - Response mechanism? Interactivity? - Public or private response / dialogue? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ If public: need for monitoring? ➢ Extent of control over feedback? - Time lag? - Easiness for Consumer to respond - Social presence or anonymity (Richness?) - Inbuilt media responsiveness of target group <p>Internal Mgmt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the medium enhance or complicate the internal management of the campaign? - Planning requirements - Flexibility (Lead times for space/production/placing/cancellation) - Operation cost / effort / expertise - Maintenance cost / effort / expertise - Location specific / geographic availability? <p>The End Result</p> <p>a. Delivery of objectives: Tasks fulfilled efficiently? Efficiency Check: Too much overlap, frequency, waste?</p> <p>b. Cost:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Within specified budget? ➢ Cost vs. Likely revenues / ROI ➢ Cost Breakdown: Cost per thousand, Cost per Acquisition/Conversion, Cost per Click/response/action ➢ Best results at reasonable cost?
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³ Bullet points under AIMRITE headings from: Fill, 2009, p.235-237; Yeshin, 1998, p.48; Smith and Taylor, 2002, p.168-189; Chaffey, 2005, p.186-405; Strauss et al, 2003, p.395; Tapp, 2008, p.358-429; Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008, p.4-77; Sissors and Baron, 2010, p. Xxi (foreword)-20). Finding that Alan Tapp's framework AIMRITE (2005, p.134

8.4. Focus Group analysis of findings and discussion

8.4.1. General Findings

One aspect already which became apparent in the focus group was a certain hesitance in the practitioner mindset to use theory. A main criticism of the researcher during the review of literature was the naivety of academics towards offering implementable concepts. Often, their suggestions would be unrealistic or made in a fashion which suggested that the authors had clearly never worked in the industry. In the focus group, however, the 'practitioner equivalent' became obvious: A tendency to dismiss theory in favour of industry experience. This aspect became more prominent in the focus group as the implementation of theory was more at the centre of discussion compared to the interviews. Often, when inquiring after the use of theoretical elements the respondents would acknowledge their validity but express their hesitance to implement them in everyday practice:

M: 'So where do you know it from or what does it relate to? [SMART Acronym].'

Respondent A: 'Objectives. Good Objectives.'

M: Makes sense, don't make sense..?

Respondent B: 'Makes sense, but I have not used it..'

Respondent A: 'Yeah I was going to say – it is not like we use it all the time.. so.. well a lot of the time one is aware of it in a theoretical sense rather than a practical one..'

M: 'So do they [TMC considerations] say anything to you?'

Respondent C: 'Yeah they do. They do go into detail...but you are probably talking to three people who know what that means and we have kind of ...it's engrained in what we do so we don't articulate it as such...it's something that we do, if we think that's the best way of doing it.. So for somebody who is coming completely new to that it is probably a useful pointer towards... working that out, but you have three people who intuitively do that... Because in the real world again you don't sit down and source out every single option...'

M: [Shows six markets model]

Respondent A: 'I am aware of that, I have come across it... I don't necessarily use it like that, I think it is just a knowledge and a.. I think you do it automatically, don't you? But actually thinking about it, we don't do all of those, thinking about it.. [...]' (Respondent A, 2012).

These examples show that often the implementation of recommended theory was assumed to be done 'automatically' within the respondents work routine. The researcher agrees that this might be true to some extent, yet there is a danger that some elements are left out, not considered in enough detail or in the right order. All three respondents were confident in their practitioner experience and expressed that theory might be more useful to someone new in the industry – as can be seen in statement 2 below. It seems that the value of theory for everyday practice has to yet be fully communicated to practitioners. Interestingly, towards the end of the discussion a slight turn in mind became noticeable, in which the respondents seemed to start

realizing that even for experienced practitioners as themselves, theory could still be a very useful reminder and guide towards their work:

Respondent B: I think this [reflective tool] would be helpful if you simplified it in the way we suggested... but it does need to be simplified... and it does become natural to the way you work... so I am not quite sure we would sit here and go 'right we need to go through all of that'...

Respondent A: It is useful to have it as a template though... and it is good to have somewhere to start sometimes I think...

Moderator: So would you say someone experienced would not really need this then?

Respondent C: You know I think any new model is good because it refocuses your mind on... giving you a sense of order... because if you do start to do it intuitively you get all of these things mixed... you know you don't do them in an order, but I think even someone who is experienced can benefit from seeing a new route to what you want to achieve. And even someone experienced has probably got a team member who needs something to help them formulate this kind of focus... [...] (Respondent A, B and C, 2012).

8.4.2. Findings impacting on the framework

Generally, the feedback towards the 'reflective tool' was very positive, except for a few requested changes in terminology – mainly within the target market considerations. The established business models incorporated into the 'reflective tool' were found very helpful – this included the six markets model and AIDA (Christopher et al., 1999 cited in Fill, 2009 p.235). This reinforces the argument that theory can be helpful and implementable for practitioners, however, this will be discussed in more detail later. All in all, three major aspects remained which the respondents struggled with and hence requested to be changed:

- Dynamic within Destination Network

As predicted, all three respondents struggled to understand what exactly the reflection on 'dynamic within destination network' was aiming at. It took a certain amount of explanatory support from the researcher until it was fully understood. Yet, the respondents acknowledged the importance of this element and suggested change in its presentation for clarification.

- Channel Strategy

Similarly to the researcher the respondents questioned the use of the channelling strategy. In fact, they confused it with various other elements of the media selection process including the actual media vehicles:

Respondent A: 'I am presuming channel is the .. whether it is direct mail or e-newsletter or how you are getting to your target audience..'

Respondent B: 'Or is it offline, online, PR..that type of channel? It is not quite clear..'

This seems to confirm Tapp's complaints that practitioners often confuse communication technique or channel strategy (as used in the tool) for media vehicle and vice versa. However, Tapp's theory has to be equally criticized as the exact purpose of differentiating between the various communication techniques remains questionable, even after numerous months of research (Tapp, 2005 p.135).

- Digital vs. Traditional

This aspect not only confused the respondents but was thoroughly discussed within the focus group. With the 'digital versus traditional' consideration, the researcher had merely intended to stimulate a reflection on the use of digital media and traditional media within the media mix. Literature had encouraged the differentiation of digital and traditional media due to their specific characteristics, so that this consideration had been incorporated into the 'reflective tool'. Respondent C's comment, however,

perfectly captures the reason why the differentiation between digital and traditional is unnecessary and outdated:

'To me this looks like we have a choice between digital and analogue and not a balanced... I think the fact that it is pulled out as a specific makes me think well where is this going? Is it somehow going to rule out other areas of activity? Because to us this [digital media] is the baby of the moment and yet again in a few years time there is going to be the next big thing, so if you are trying to create a model about general media, why pull out something specifically here? I think it might throw people off... the usefulness of this because you are immediately automatically estranging some people who might deal with one specific thing rather than another [...] so if you are talking about true integration I would not mention specifics, you know – focus of activity is enough really... it just seems to be weird that online and offline seem to be our only options..' (Respondent C, 2012).

As a result, the digital and traditional consideration was taken out of the framework.

8.5. Figure 8a: Revised Framework 2 – Overview

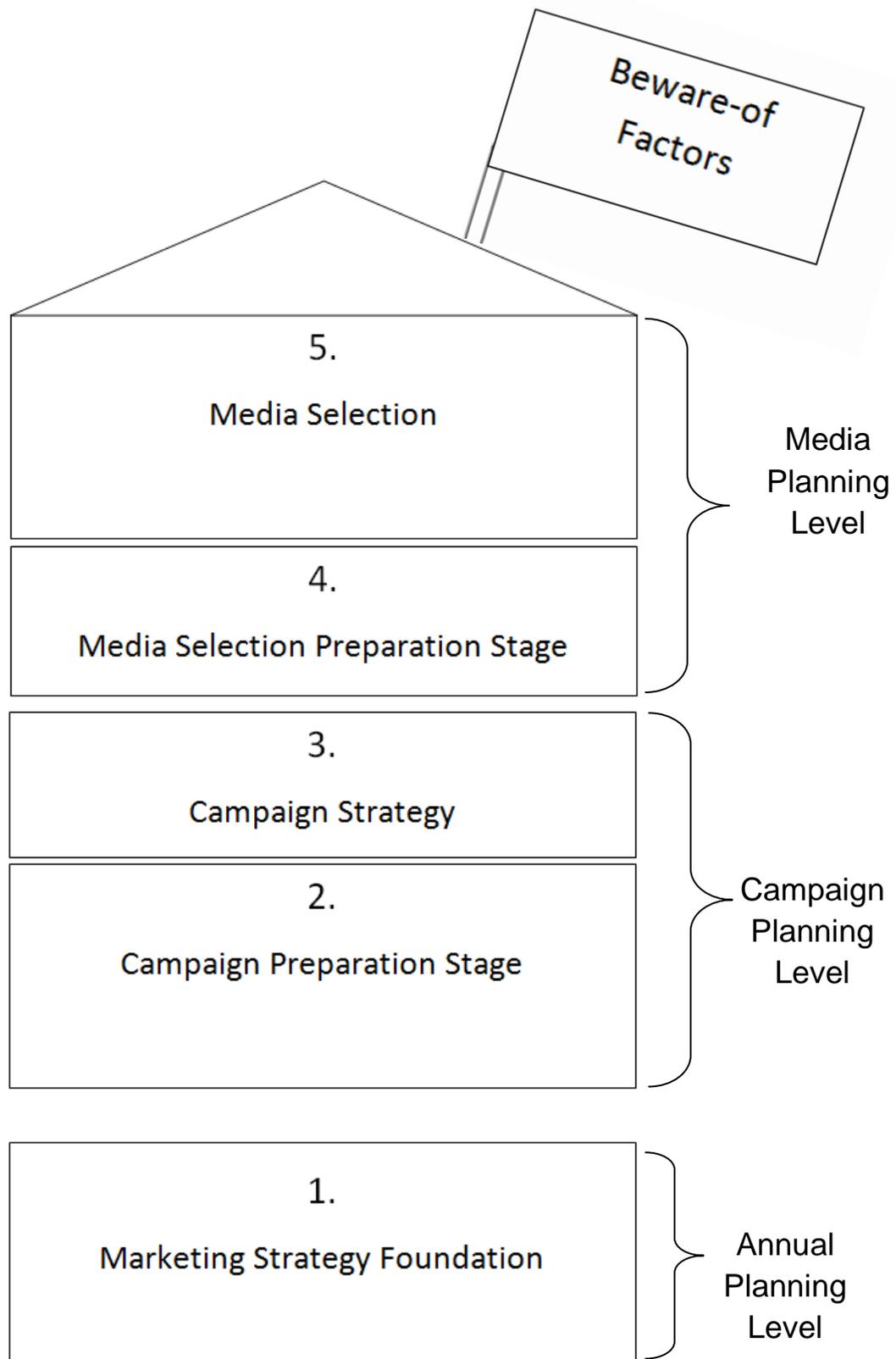
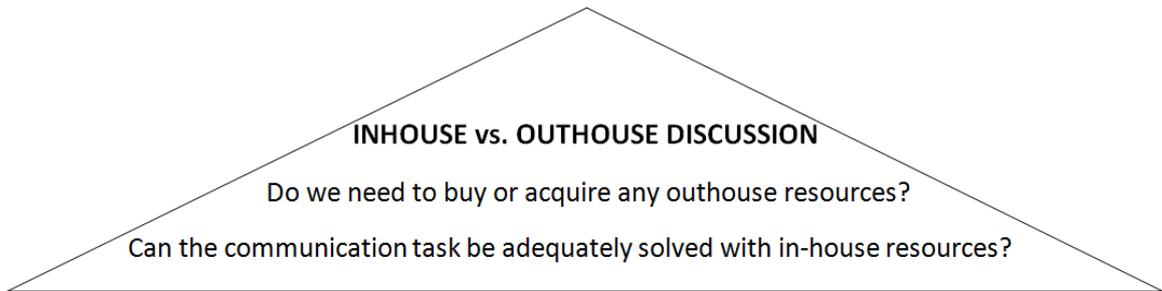
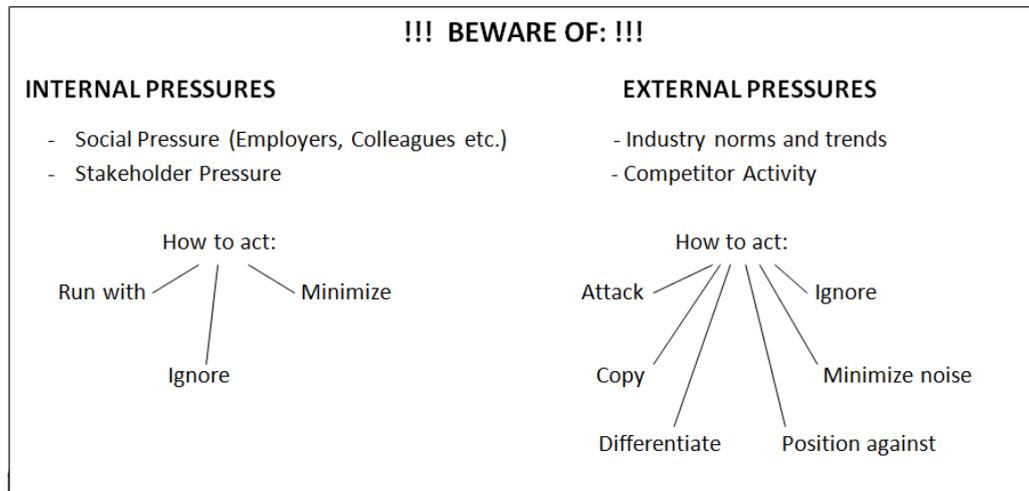


Figure 8b: Revised Framework 2 - Detailed Presentation



<p>INDIVIDUAL MEDIA TOOL CHECK AIMRITE (Tapp, 2010)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Audience ➤ Impact ➤ Message ➤ Response ➤ Internal Management ➤ The End Result 	<p>Mix and Integration Strategy Consider your Focus of Activity</p> <p>Is the media mix choice appropriate for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The business targets to be achieved? ➤ The customer journey stage your audience is at? ➤ The nature and ideal number of customer touch points? (Coverage and frequency) ➤ Do all media work together to maximize their effect? (Integration) <p><i>If possible / appropriate, run tests to see how media work together</i></p>
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<p>Consider your Focus of activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sales Promotions ➤ PR ➤ Advertising ➤ Direct and Database Marketing 	<p>Creative Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Objectives ➤ Brief for Creative Team
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Communication / Campaign / Media Objectives

- Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-Constrained
- Clear Definition of MESSAGE

Target Market Considerations	Type of Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clear Target Market Definition: Segmentation, Profile, Response to media etc. ➤ Customer Journey / Point in Customer Journey against Hierarchy of Effects: Where are our targets at? Attention – Interest – Desire – Action (Strong, 1925) ➤ Desired effects of media tools / Business targets to be achieved with media: strategic advantages of tools ➤ Number of ideal touch points and nature of platform <p style="text-align: center;"><i>NOTE: Use as input for integration strategy and media selection later</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consider the function of the communication within the destination network, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are you negotiating between parties? ○ Are you communicating a one way message? ○ Are you building up relationships? ○ Are you selling the destination? ➤ Long-term or short term Communication? Implications? ➤ Six markets model (Christopher et al, 1999) Who are we talking to? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Customer Market ○ Supplier / Alliance market ○ Influence Market ○ Referral Market ○ Recruitment Market

Marketing Strategy Foundation

- Company Mission
- Product and Service offering / whose product and service offering do we represent?
- Stakeholder range / which stakeholders do we represent? / Are there any shared objectives?
- General Target Market (Geographic scope)
- Marketing Objectives (Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Time-Constrained)
- Segmentation / Targeting / Positioning Strategy

And: Consider your Budget and Resources!!!

Figure 8c: Revised Framework 1 – Detailed Presentation of Individual Media Tool
AIMRITE Check List with (Tapp, 2010)⁴

<p>Audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reach or Coverage/targeting precision -Amount of Consumer Control over Contact / Consumption (Initiation: Push or Pull?) - Suitability for type: Enquirer, Prospect, Suspect, Customer, Advocate, Cold contact etc. - Coherence of medium with self-image <p>Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ability to cut through clutter - Competitor activity -Targeting Precision/Wastage -Attention keeping / Interest – where is audience? AIDA (Strong, 1925 in Fill, 2005, p.235) - Active Processing – lean forward or backward medium? -Intrusive nature -Seasonality factor & Scheduling - Frequency / needed number of exposures -Restrictions? <p>Message</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does medium effectively communicate the message? -Type and volume of information (Complexity, Rich or Lean?) - Message urgency - Message Life span - Degree of Formality - Creative requirements (Colour, sound, motion, demonstration) - Compatibility of message/company image/brand with medium <p>Response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Response required? - Response mechanism? Interactivity? - Public or private response / dialogue? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ If public: need for monitoring? ➢ Extent of control over feedback? - Time lag? - Easiness for Consumer to respond - Social presence or anonymity (Richness?) - Inbuilt media responsiveness of target group <p>Internal Mgmt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the medium enhance or complicate the internal management of the campaign? - Planning requirements - Flexibility (Lead times for space/production/placing/cancellation) - Operation cost / effort / expertise - Maintenance cost / effort / expertise - Location specific / geographic availability? <p>The End Result</p> <p>a. Delivery of objectives: Tasks fulfilled efficiently? Efficiency Check: Too much overlap, frequency, waste?</p> <p>b. Cost:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Within specified budget? ➢ Cost vs. Likely revenues / ROI ➢ Cost Breakdown: Cost per thousand, Cost per Acquisition/Conversion, Cost per Click/response/action ➢ Best results at reasonable cost?
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⁴ Bullet points under AIMRITE headings from: Fill, 2009, p.235-237; Yeshin, 1998, p.48; Smith and Taylor, 2002, p.168-189; Chaffey, 2005, p.186-405; Strauss et al, 2003, p.395; Tapp, 2008, p.358-429; Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008, p.4-77; Sissors and Baron, 2010, p. Xxi (foreword)-20). Finding that Alan Tapp's framework AIMRITE (2005, p.134

CHAPTER NINE – Conclusions

9.1. Conclusions

9.1.1. The role of destination marketing – promotion versus network building

The role of destination marketing remains a source of dispute amongst academics. Whilst some limit it to targeted promotion (e.g. Collier, 1999 p.419 cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.46) a majority now considers it a strategic tool in coordination with planning and management to provide suitable gains to all stakeholders (Buhalis, 2000 cited in Baker and Cameron, 2008 p.82, supported by Hankinson, 2001 cited in Hanlan et al., 2006 p.23; Ashworth and Voogd, 1994; cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.47). Past theory has emphasized the promotional side by focussing on the branding and image creation of destinations (e.g. Hankinson, 2009, Gretzel et al, 2006), whilst more recent publications have turned their focus onto network driven solutions (Bagaric, 2010; Horner and Swarbrooke, 1996 cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.48, Prideaux and Cooper, 2002 cited in Fyall and Leask, 2006 p.51).

This past development has a simple explanation. Out of all the elements within destination marketing, promotion is the one the destination marketer has most control over. Network related elements such as destination governance; product development and delivery are considerably more challenging as they depend on the cooperation of various network players (Cooper et al., 1998; Buhalis, 2000; Shields and Schibik, 1995; Palmer and Bejou, 1995; cited in Blumberg, 2005, p.48). Initially, branding and image creation presented an easier and in the short term, a more implementable option to the frustrated destination marketer. However, as the destination marketing grows more sophisticated (Deffner and Metaxas, 2005 cited in Cameron and Baker, 2008 p.79), practitioners and academics increasingly realize that the long-term success lies within the network driven solutions (Gretzel et al, 2006, p.120).

Although destinations tend to grow organically, the destination network unfortunately requires hard work and constant maintenance. As respondent C remarked in the interviews, theory often presupposes a destination network, however, in reality the network is often the result of years of hard work and some places might not even have a network to start with. Relationship and network building schemes are therefore inevitable. Stakeholders ultimately provide and deliver the destination experience. Consequently, the higher the cooperation level, the more control the marketer will have over the destination product. It is therefore the author's firm belief that network driven approaches are the future to successful destination marketing.

In the past, some academics have distinguished between destination marketing as limited to persuasive communications in order to attract visitors or destination management as the building and managing of stakeholder relationships (Gretzel et al., 2006 cited in Elbe et al., 2008 p.286). Others have combined both management and marketing under the term of destination marketing, such as Kotler et al. (1999, cited in Baker and Cameron, 2008 p.79). Since destination marketing within this research was defined as 'A management process that includes any measures which support the exchange of desired values between the parties involved in the destination network', the author supports the second approach. Destinations may have different departments for promotion and network management, however, the interrelation of both will always require tight cooperation. Destination marketers should therefore see network building as a compulsory element of their work, not an option.

Also, promotion and communications within destinations should not only be seen as a means to attract external visitors, but as a tool for network building and internal marketing. In order to sell the destination to externals, internals have to be convinced of its value in the first place to guarantee a genuine delivery. Campaigns and communications should therefore not just focus on visitors, but stakeholders alike. The respondent organisation already shows a good implementation of this principle in their commercial version of the earlier discussed 'Destination Bowtie'-process. This notion of multi-functional communications is also incorporated in the reflective tool within 'Network Considerations'. It helps marketers to reflect on the role of their communications task within the destination network. And finally, it reminds marketers that media selection in a destination context is highly linked to both promotion and network building, and therefore all three should always be considered in relation to each other.

9.1.2. Branding versus lead generation

Overall, there is a shift of emphasis from branding to lead generation within marketing (See Figure 9a and b below), a topic which was hotly debated at the recent annual conference held by the Institute of Direct Marketing (IDM). Branding and lead generation both drive modern marketing, however, in the past the emphasis has often been put on branding as a key to success. Its merit undoubtedly lies in its ability to provide consistency and build consumer trust; however, it remains highly immeasurable. Plenty of smaller destinations already work within the restrictions of a limited budget on a regular basis (Clark et al., 2010) and the economic downturn has resulted in further budget cuts and marketers are increasingly held accountable for their spending (Park and Gretzel, 2007). In this position, destination marketers are driven to lead generation and direct marketing measures, as these are measurable and

allow practitioners to justify their expenses and prove the ROI to their sponsors and stakeholders. The overall emphasis is and should therefore be on lead generation rather than branding.

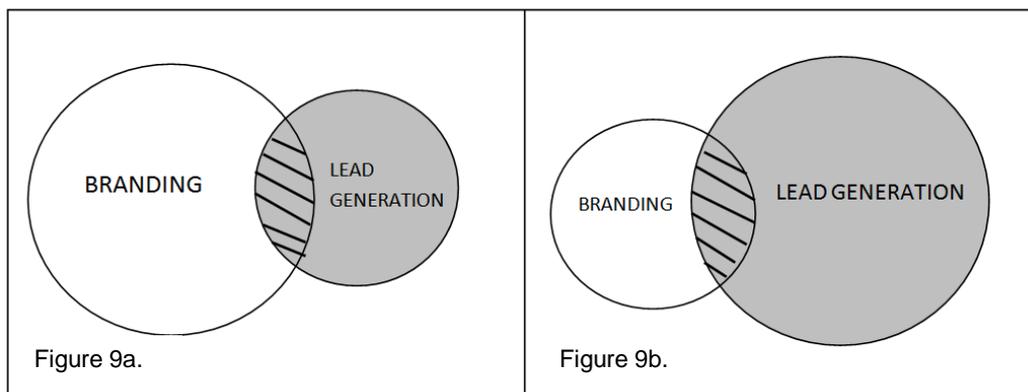


Figure 9a: The past role of Branding and Lead Generation in Destination Marketing
 Figure 9b: The current role of Branding and Lead Generation in Destination Marketing
 (Constructed by the author for illustration purposes)

Hence, the role of the destination data base and data gathering for direct marketing purposes cannot be underestimated. As pointed out by Bennett (1999, p.45) and confirmed by the case study, destinations often already gather data as part of their daily operations. However, this is seldom seen as an opportunity for direct marketing. In order to overcome the restraints of the current market conditions, practitioners are strongly advised to sufficiently incorporate direct marketing into the overall marketing strategy. This should include a clear data base acquisition and retention strategy, ideally segmenting customers according to their journey points and action required by the media (Tapp, 2008). These measures may take some effort in planning and implementation, however, the author believes that they will be highly rewarding. Direct measures will help destination marketers to track the effect of their marketing more successfully, an issue which was addressed within the interviews. On several occasions respondents remarked the difficulty of assessing their efforts as the DMO functions as an umbrella organisation for the stakeholders who ultimately deliver the product and ‘harvest’ the return on investment. Furthermore, direct measures will provide practitioners with the proof of return on investment or ‘figures and facts’ which they can then present to their sponsors and stakeholders.

It is generally acknowledged that successful marketing requires both branding and lead generation, and that both have to be done well. Consequently, destination marketers should not dismiss branding completely; however, they should be aware of the shift in emphasis towards lead generation. Once this is understood, it will allow them to drive

their marketing efforts more successfully and according to the demands of today's market and economic climate.

This shift of paradigm is also reflected in the conceptual framework, in which the role of branding was included yet intentionally under-emphasized in favour of more relevant elements. Fellow destination marketers might be surprised at the lack of importance given to branding, as in the past it has often been celebrated as the key to destination marketing success. However, considering the developments of the discipline towards more network driven and lead generation solutions, this change of focus only seems appropriate. Interestingly, the impact of direct marketing is also reflected within the general strategic structure of the reflective tool. A framework on strategic planning within direct marketing was found by the author after the completion of this research project, and its general structure uncannily resembles that of the reflective tool (See Figure 10 below). Both follow the principle of hierarchy in planning and include similar stages of decision making considerations. This seems to confirm the relevance of both aspects within strategic planning. As a final conclusion, media choice should always be dependent on the outcomes that are to be achieved with them. Branding and lead generation present two major functions within destination marketing communications and this knowledge will ultimately help marketers to choose their media more appropriately.



Figure 10: The Strategic Pyramid by Meisner (2006, p.5)

9.1.3. Practitioners, academics and the ROI of theory

When first examining the literature, it seemed that the academic mindset was often detached from the reality of practice and rather naive about some of the outcomes that could be achieved with suggested theory. However, during the field research, practitioners displayed a confidence in their industry experience and intuitive skills, which somehow resembled the academic confidence in theory.

This confidence in experience and intuition is indeed a positive trait for any practitioner; however, destination marketers should be careful to not entirely dismiss the value of theory in favour of it. Within the interviews, the respondents showed a hesitance to support the full and detailed utilization of the reflective tool in every day practice. They argued that experienced practitioners would implement the majority of its theoretical elements 'automatically' or 'intuitively'. The author generally agrees with this, however, would like to point out that due to the rushed and multi-tasked working routine of many practitioners, a regular evaluation of the strategic planning process remains vitally important. This can be done with help of theoretical frameworks such as the reflective tool. It will prevent that important strategic elements are being neglected or forgotten, and it ensures that the planning process takes place in a logical and hierarchical order. Furthermore, it might point practitioners to aspects they may not have considered yet.

Professionals claim that many practitioners limit the impact of their marketing efforts through the lack of correct planning (Pühringer and Taylor, 2008 p.177; Bagaric, 2010 p.237). The author would like to argue that due to the complexity of the discipline, practical experience alone is not sufficient to provide long term success in the marketing of a destination. As noted by a practitioner within a previous destination case study 'Anyone can do a bit of brainstorming to come up with some nice ideas, but to develop outstanding and differentiated concepts you need the theory' (Tourist Officer, 2012) . Again, the solution lies in the right balance. As in any other business discipline, the amount of effort put into the strategic planning has to be in proportion with the 'return on investment'. Academics are advised to consider this 'ROI of Theory' when constructing new concepts and frameworks. In order to be useful, research and theory need to be pragmatic, not esoteric. Practitioners, on the other hand, are encouraged to see theory not as 'waste of time' but rather a pragmatic means of problem solving. They may be reminded that throughout history, theoretical reasoning in combination with empirical testing has provided the industry with the most capable practices.

However, there are currently several factors which prohibit the widespread industrial implementation of destination theory. Firstly, destination marketing theory is still in a fragmented state and only offers very few holistic approaches 'ready to use' for practitioners. Secondly, there is no platform for the exchange of information and dialogue between practitioners and academics. Whilst many academics discuss and exchange the latest concepts at conferences, the majority of DMOs might not even be aware that there is an academic discipline of 'Destination marketing'. Thirdly, a lot of theory is made obscure to practitioners through its complex academic presentation and language. Interestingly, though, it seems that practitioners are drawn to basic and generally acknowledged business concepts such as segmentation, marketing mix, monitoring or customer profiling. There are obvious reasons for their attraction to these concepts: All of them are measures which are easy to understand and make sense even to the non-expert. Most have been proven to work and are generally accepted in common business practice – 'everybody knows they work and uses them'. And most importantly, they show immediate or obvious benefits once used.

Whilst practitioners are happy to implement these basic and established concepts, they seem hesitant to employ more sophisticated theory. As mentioned earlier, this might stem from the fact that a lot of theory has not been made accessible by its academic creators. Furthermore, there seems to be a strong belief amongst practitioners that the implementation of sophisticated theory generally takes more effort than is justifiable by its return on investment. Again, the author agrees that to some extent this may be true, as in the enthusiasm of theory development some academics give little consideration to its implementation. However, by rashly dismissing all sophisticated theory as a 'black hole of investment', practitioners are missing out on a valuable source for problem solving. Also, a lot of the more elaborate theory is concerned with long-term success rather than ad hoc solutions, which may make it less popular for implementation. Practitioners have to realize though, that these long-term solutions present the key to ongoing success within the industry. This relates to the fact that the destination marketer should over time build up a network between the different players. This will help with the continued successful delivery of the destination product. Short term solutions may seem convenient in the pressured work environment, but are much less likely to have a remaining effect on the network and hence the product.

Overall, it is evident that academics and practitioners have to co-operate much more in order to overcome these obstacles. As a solution the author suggests the foundation of an 'Institute of Destination Marketing' for the exchange of information and ongoing dialogue. Once this platform is established, it will not only enable practitioners to keep on track with the latest theoretical developments, but also help academics to find

suitable contacts for the testing of their concepts. A continued dialogue will furthermore allow academics to gain better insight into the practitioner's concerns and working ways and vice versa. It is the author's firm belief that theory and practice need to work together in order to create the most effective frameworks. As so often in destination marketing, it is a mere matter of networking.

9.1.4. Implications of the reflective tool

The reflective tool represents the heart of this research project and has exceeded the author's expectations in many ways. At the same time, substantially more remains to be achieved within the field of destination marketing. When first anticipating this research journey, the vague plan was to find low-cost digital solutions for destination marketers struggling with a limited budget. Through the course of the literature review, however, it became apparent that it would be much more beneficial to provide marketers with a blueprint of how to find these solutions themselves. Due to the great variety of destinations and DMOs, context plays a vital role in the conceptualization of destination marketing solutions. Consequently, every destination requires their very own 'low cost digital solutions' in order to add value to their operations. Had the researcher continued with the original plan, the result would have been a case study consultation project. A number of short term recommendations could have been made for the benefit of the respondent organisation and perhaps a few 'low-cost digital solutions' would have been found which other DMOs could have used for their own purposes. However, these would soon have been outdated and the outcome of this research would have no longer been relevant to neither academics nor practitioners.

In contrast to this, the approach of the 'reflective tool' has several advantages. Firstly, it presents a comprehensive synthesis of available fragmented theory, which in its pieces is of little use to anyone. Secondly, it is a prototype rather than a fixed framework, which marketers can modify and extend for their own purposes. The reader is reminded that this 'reflective tool' was never intended to remain static after the conclusion of this project. Rather, fellow marketers are encouraged to question, modify or even take it apart and pick the elements useful for their own purposes. This way it follows the path of greater business frameworks before it. An example is the BCG Matrix (in Brassington and Pettitt, 2006), which was originally constructed to help marketers reflect on their product portfolio. Some companies might take the effort of going through the entire calculation; whilst some might only do rough estimates and again others might simply use the BCG Matrix principle to reflect on their portfolio for future strategic decisions. Similarly, the media selection 'reflective tool' is intended to be used by practitioners according to their own needs.

Thirdly, this project blazes a trail into the largely unexplored and theoretically fragmented jungle of destination marketing. The reflective tool offers a very pragmatic means of problem solving to both academics and practitioners, and its principle can be applied to many other areas of the discipline. Fellow researchers may now follow this approach and develop further tools which can help destination marketers to make the right decisions in areas such as stakeholder management or direct marketing strategy. Future research will hopefully continue the path of this work and bit by bit complete the puzzle of comprehensive destination strategy planning. The 'reflective tool' merely represents a part of the overall strategy for the destination. To complete the blueprint for an overall strategic destination plan, many other elements are yet to be clarified or even identified. Finally, it remains questionable to what extent a generally applicable strategic blueprint can actually be conceptualized. Again, the balance between general applicability and its ability to adapt to the individual DMOs needs remains a challenge.

Within the 'reflective tool' the author hopes to have found a reasonable balance between both. The principle of reflection itself allows general applicability and customization at the same time, as the marketer is made aware of relevant factors but is left to choose and determine the answers by himself. In a way, it is the framework which offers the general theory whilst it is the marketer who with the help of his industry knowledge and experience tailors the strategy according to the destinations needs. Since the tool is deeply rooted in general marketing strategy principles, the author believes that only minor modifications are necessary to turn it into a general 'media selection tool'. As its general strategic principles apply to all areas of marketing, it would only be necessary to exchange the destination specific elements for those of industrial products and services. The current reflective tool therefore presents a prototype for further media selection frameworks. In other words, it provides a foundation for future frameworks, whose development requires a solid base to build upon.

Overall, the scope of this work is significantly smaller than the author had hoped for at the beginning of the project. Ideally, further elements such as the communication strategy with stakeholder or direct marketing within the destination context could have been covered in much more detail. However, the author concludes that although this research project may have only covered a fraction of the work that is still to be done in destination marketing, it lays the foundation for future works. This chapter has hopefully demonstrated to the reader why this project has in many ways achieved substantially more than expected and yet substantially less.

9.2. Limitations of the research

Fellow researchers may criticize the fact that the framework has been based on the findings of a single case study. They may further argue that as these findings are context specific they will limit the framework's general applicability. However, the author would like to clarify that within the scope of this project general applicability was never attempted nor was it a primary objective. Rather, it was the creation of a prototype which could then serve as a foundation for future works. Within its limitations, this project has achieved a considerable amount of 'ground work' through the synthesis of fragmented theory into a comprehensive pragmatic tool.

Unfortunately, the time limitation of 12 months only allowed the construction and revision of the 'reflective tool'. Since the model has not yet had the opportunity to be tested through use in the industry, it is left to future research to test and reveal its full applicability. Ideally, this would involve several case studies and a continued revision of the framework through an extended Delphi process. Once this step has been taken it can then fully serve as a blueprint for practitioner media selection decisions. In the meantime, the author encourages academics and practitioners alike to utilize any of the tool's elements according to their needs and so continue to widen the trail that has been blazed within this research.

9.3. Implications for future research

As indicated in the previous chapter, much work remains to be done. Firstly, the fragmented destination theory needs to be converted into cohesive and accessible frameworks. Secondly, theory has to be accompanied by more empirical evidence to prove its industrial applicability. Thirdly, the dialogue between practitioners and academics needs to be organized so that it can take place on a larger scale. For this the establishment of an 'Institute of Destination Marketing' was suggested in one of the previous chapters.

Due to its largely unexplored nature, there are numerous fields within destination marketing which would require further research. This includes destination strategic planning, external visitor CRM schemes, stakeholder management and relationship management, and the use of current digital platforms and direct marketing within the destination context. However, a priority should be the refinement of network driven solutions, as they hold the key to success in future destination marketing. In fact, they could be a way of finally taming the intangibility of the destination product and increasingly place control over its creation and delivery into the destination marketer's hands. Whilst other areas of the discipline might add value to the overall work process,

network driven approaches could therefore help destination marketers to gain serious competitive advantage.

9.6. Final thoughts: A reflective account of the research

Within this thesis, I have attempted to comprehensively convey to reader the research journey I have been on. It has been an iterative and very loopy process, however, highly linked to the input of my field research. Furthermore, the subject area focus is rather complex and interdisciplinary. Whilst it is focused on media selection, it is still based on a very general understanding of destination marketing and ‘back to basics’ has been a reoccurring theme. I have hopefully convinced the reader that theory and practice need to work together in order to create the most effective frameworks. I believe that problem solving theory is an answer to destination marketing and its practical complexity. The tension between theory and practice continues, but through works like these bridges can be built to eventually narrow the gap between the two. I say narrow, as it is unlikely that it will ever be completely overcome. There will always be individuals on both sides which will for various reasons hesitate to cooperate and hold prejudice against each other. However, I would like to present this thesis as a first step to narrow the gap between destination marketing theorists and practitioners, and appeal to all destination marketers, whether that may be academics or practitioners – to continue to do so through increased dialogue for the future success of this discipline.

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Appendix

A.1. Literature Review Additions

A.1.1. Outdated and classical destination marketing concepts

The Place marketing mix

Two different place marketing mixes have been proposed, the 'geographical marketing mix' by Ashworth and Voogd (1990 cited in Kavaratzis, 2005 p.331) arising out of the urban city marketing field and a more classical approach by Kotler et al. which mainly focuses on gaining competitive advantage (1999, in Kavaratzis, 2005 p.331):

Geographical Marketing Mix (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990)	Classical Destination Marketing Mix (Kotler et al., 1999)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Promotional measures➤ Spatial functional measures➤ Organisational measures➤ Financial measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Design (Place as character)➤ Infrastructure (Place as environment)➤ Basic services (place as service provider)➤ Attractions (Place as entertainment & recreation)

Kavaratzis, by discussing both place marketing mixes, emphasizes the difficulty of deciding what to include into the place marketing mix due to the peculiarity of the destination product nature; as places vary in character this inevitably limits the relevance of the elements of the traditional marketing mix (2005, p.331). Even more importantly, the concept of the place marketing mix in the destination context remains questionable due to the limited influence of the destination marketer on the elements of the marketing mix (product, price, place/distribution, promotion) 'since those responsible for destination marketing are typically not the same as those concerned with the production, operation and pricing of its components' (Bieger, 1999 p.182 cited in Blumberg, 2005 p.48).

Segmentation

Hanlan et al. have examined to which extent segmentation can aid destination marketing within the context of tourism (2006). As in classical marketing, segmentation in destination marketing can help to create a more effective communication mix by identifying target segments and their specific needs, which then leads to informing the overall strategic decisions (2006, p.6), for example to influence travellers' decision making.

In the past, academics have explored the link between segmentation and marketing strategy rather than focussing on the practicalities of integrating findings into operational marketing tactics. Particularly in the context of tourism destination decision

making, this has been neglected (2006, p. 6). According to Young et al. (1978, cited in Hanlan et al., 2006 p.8) segmentation studies often fail in the implementation stage, because they neglect the consideration of the competitive structure of the market and general marketing environment. Furthermore, the wide range of service providers involved in delivering the destination experience, matching service attributes with consumer demand presents a specific challenge in destination marketing (Hankinson, 2001 cited in Hanlan et al., 2006 p.9).

It seems that the effectiveness of segmentation lies within its integration of an overall strategic plan. The main difficulty for destination marketers remains the multitude of involved suppliers and audiences.

Unfortunately, neither the marketing mix nor segmentation have been accompanied by much empirical evidence, as criticized by Blumberg (2005, p.45). The question as to whether classical marketing theory can directly be transferred onto destination marketing remains a point of disagreement amongst academics. This again relates back to the issue of the intangibility of the place product, as the lack of control over it still represents one of the primary frustrations for destination marketers (Scott et al., 2000 cited in Fyall and Leask, 2006, p.55; Kavaratzis, 2005 p.334).

A.1.2. Destination branding review

Branding as a major theme

The area of destination branding is dominating the literature around destination marketing and has been more widely discussed than any other aspect within this field of study. Unsurprisingly there are numerous concepts to be found that vary in their approaches to firstly define and secondly bring together the various elements of the idea of destination branding. For some academics, it is branding that represents the most obvious means by which destinations can distinguish themselves from the mass of commodity destinations around the world (Foley and Fahy, 2004 cited in Fyall and Leask, 2006 p.59) and it has therefore in the past often been seen as a suitable approach to destination marketing itself (Baker and Cameron, 2007 p.79). Destination branding as place management is the concept of controlled influence on how places are perceived by its various users and audiences (Florian, 2002 p.24 cited in Kavaratzis, 2005 p. 334).

The place brand consists of a varied collection of functional, emotional, relational and strategic elements forming a unique set of associations in the public mind (Aaker, 1996 p.68 cited in Kavaratzis, 2005 p.335). Furthermore, there is a complexity and variety in the branding of places, with the numerous aims and audiences making it a lot more

difficult to control than conventional product brands (Kavaratzis, 2005 p.334). From a consumer's perspective, the destination product can be seen as an integrated tourist experience where the components are delivered by different actors (Buhalis, 2000 cited in Elbe et al., 2008 p.286). This may cause the consumer to perceive the whole destination as the provider of the product. Thus it makes sense to treat the destination as an entity in the marketing process – as a brand – rather than as means to promoting the offers made by every single supplier in separate market-communication activities directed towards tourists choosing from a set of competing destinations (Buhalis, 2000 cited in Elbe et al., 2008 p.286).

Kavaratzis divides the destination brand into three entities: Brand personality – the set of human characteristics associated with the destination (Aaker, 1997 cited in Yuskel and Sameer, 2006, p.127), brand positioning – the marketers desired placing of the brand within the consumer's mind and brand reality – the fact that promotional effort cannot substitute for the quality of a product (Kavaratzis, 2005, p.338). Hankinson furthermore identifies four types of brand functions: Brands as perceptual entities, brands as communicators, brands as relationships and brands as value-enhancers (2004, p.111 cited in Kavaratzis, 2005 p.338).

Out of all these functions it seems that brands acting as relationships find the most widespread support by other academics in the subject area, followed by brands acting as communicators. Within this context, Hankinson points out three significant features of place-branding (2004, p.111 cited in Kavaratzis, 2005 p.338):

- a. The notion that the consumer acts as a co-producer of the product
- b. The experiential nature of place consumption
- c. The importance of marketing networks acting as vehicles for integrating stakeholders in a collaborative partnership of value enhancement

Brands as relationships

Based on the idea of brands acting as relationships, Hankinson proposes that brand personalities are capable to build up relationships with consumers as a result of congruity with the consumers self-image (2006, p.111) and is widely supported by fellow academics (e.g. King, 2002; Ekinici, 2002; all cited in Murphy et al, 2007 p.6). Research by Murphy et al. (2007, p.6) and Yuksel and Sameer (2006, p.127) confirm the capability of brand personalities' positive effect on destination differentiation; however, emphasize the lack of empirical work done in this particular field. Aaker and Joachimsthaler name consistency and good differentiation as two key requirements of modern day branding (2000 cited in Miller and Henthorne, 2006 p.50). For the latter, the USP (Unique Selling Proposition) plays a significant role (Miller and Henthorne,

2006 p.49), and competitive advantage can be gained through enforcement of the chosen USP reinforcement at every consumer contact (Turnbull, 2004 p.152).

Brands as communicators

Associations connected with a destination's personality can derive from direct contact with the elements of the destination product (Aaker, 1997 cited in Yuksel and Sameer 2006 p.137). Brands can hence act as communicators of a destination, as messages sent by the destination product build a representation of their behaviour in consumer's minds. Consequently, effective communication methods are needed to launch a distinctive and attractive destination personality (Yuksel and Sameer 2006, p.137).

For DMOs, this represents a communications-related challenge through the multiple audiences and messages that should be communicated, as well as the increasing number of constituencies wanting to be heard and represented (Buhalis, 2000 cited in Gretzel et al., 2006 p.119). As modern-day customer demands are demanding more personalized and customized messages (Windahm and Orton, 2000, in Gretzel et al, 2006 p.119), individual preferences need to be reflected and the 'voice of the consumer' understood. Gretzel et al., as a solution to this, propose the composition of a community relations plan, identifying the key audiences and the best way to communicate with them, including visitors as well as stakeholders (2006, p.119).

A.1.3. Digital Marketing Issue 2 – Web 2.0 and the Social Media

Finally, it is inevitable to mention the role of web 2.0 applications and social media. Web 2.0 applications include blogs, social media sites, online telephoning such as Skype, information sites such as Wikipedia, as well as direction tools such as Google maps (Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.14). They are especially important to the travel and tourism industry as future tourists and travellers nowadays use the internet at all phases of their journey, fully enjoying benefits offered by new applications (Rudic and Bilos, 2010 p.179). In fact, web 2.0 consumers are in control like never before, as they decide when and where to access what online. Also the increasing use of CGC (Consumer generated content) enables online users to share their own voice with friends, peers and the general public for free (Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.15). It has to be noted that web 2.0 is not a revolution in technology, but an evolution in the consumer use of it: 'It's about harnessing the distributed collaborative potential of the internet to connect and communicate with other like-minded people wherever they are: Creating communities, sharing knowledge, thoughts, ideas and dreams.' (Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.14). The trends in web 2.0 require a shift of marketing paradigm from delivering a message to influencing customer conversations (Bing et al, 2011 p.373). This includes conversations between customers as well as business partners and stakeholders (Bing et al, 2011 p.373).

Especially social networks are growing, as they are increasingly utilized by tourist boards (Rudic and Bilos, 2010 p.183). Social media constitute a significant part of the general travel search results, so that travellers are likely to be directed to social media sites by search engines. Research by Bing et al. has confirmed the importance of social media in online tourism and shown that businesses still have little control over it (Bing et al, 2011 p.369). Social media are 'free web applications which provide one or more channels to their users for communication with other users in the form of self-presentation and creation of audience (followers) or interactive communication (Friends).' (Rudic and Bilos, 2010 p.178). The general shift of marketing paradigm towards web 2.0 applications also applies to social media: Marketers need to be content creators, producers and entertainers rather than the classically trained media professionals or marketers (Marsey cited in Levy and Birkner, 2011 p.16).

A particular strength of social media networks is the incredible amount of time people spend on them and consumers are not just sitting back consuming, but are leaning forward engaged. This presents an enormous opportunity for marketers to build a two way dialogue, get feedback and interact (Fisher, 2011 cited in Levy and Birkner, 2011 p.16). However, experts note that social is still an early stage of development which

arguably requires more time and research rather than financial space investments (Riley, 2011 cited in Levy and Birkner, 2011, p.18). In terms of social network delivery, it is therefore important to acknowledge that every network is unique. They might at times be used by the same people but often for very different purposes and in very different contexts. Creative teams should hence individually figure out the best way to message on each platform (Levy and Birkner, 2011, p.17).

Finally, the return on investment and capability to measure results within social media remains a debated aspect. Since the economy has increasingly tightened, marketers become more and more accountable for their actions and the social ROI has somewhat turned into the 'holy grail' of the online industry (Fisher, 2009 p.189). Various attempts have been made to reinvent the ROI for the online social sphere, including Return on influence, or Return on Engagement and so on (Fisher, 2009 p.189). However, the author supports the view that 'Social media measurement is like driving a modern car. You may have a dashboard with all the lights toggles gauges and metrics but remember the most important piece of data to have in front of you is your GPS. The GPS indicates where you want to go (your objective) where you are now, and how you will get there (Owyang, 2011 cited in Fisher, 2009 p.195).

A.4. Glossary for the old framework

Phase 1 – Marketing Considerations

Since this phase is particularly important and lays the foundations of the entire strategy, a whole section was dedicated solely to establishing a thorough strategy in which the destination marketer is challenged to question and rethink what it means to be a 'destination marketing organisation'.

It is important to note that there are two different types of DMO:

- a. The **Corporate Single Entity** which may consist of a number of resorts in different places, e.g. such as Disney, who have their own identity and establish their own strategy of how to market and represent themselves to an external audience
- b. The **Destination Network Collective Representative** which acts as interface organisations representing the numerous stakeholders / product and service providers of a destination to an external audience. It follows that through this dynamic, this type of DMO has to consider whom they are representing and whether there are already any shared objectives amongst the chosen 'Destination Network Collective'.

Within this thesis, the focus is solely put on the latter type of DMO, as the respondent organisation in this project is in fact a 'Destination Network Collective Representative'. Furthermore, academics would argue that this is the 'true type' of destination marketing, since the ultimate aim of it is to 'provide suitable gains to all stakeholders' (Baker and Cameron, 2008 p.82) and 'includes all activities that brings buyers and sellers together (WTO, 2004 p.10 cited in Baker and Cameron, 2008 p.82). It is therefore a highly network-driven discipline.

Consequently, a vital part of establishing your strategy is to firstly ask what the purpose of your DMO is [Company Mission], secondly what you offer as a business [Product and Service offering] or rather whose offer you are representing [Do we represent our own or someone else's product and service offering or both?], and thirdly what interests of your network you are choosing to represent as well as finding out whether there is any overlap of interests in the parties involved [Which stakeholders do we represent? / Are there any shared objectives?].

Once the marketer has established these destination network internal aspects, they can move on to clarifying their aim towards the external audience: Which parts of the available market do we want to reach? [Which market are we targeting? / Do we know international markets to be considered?]. This also determines the geographical scope of the marketing activities, which an important consideration in media planning (Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.77) particularly in the destination context.

Only after these internal and external factors have been clarified, the marketer can move on to the classical steps of strategic marketing planning: Formulating SMART marketing objectives and setting a segmenting, targeting and positioning strategy [Marketing objectives clearly defined / SMART? Segment / Target / Position clear?]. This step concludes the marketing considerations phase and the marketer can move on to the next phase of the Flowchart, which is 'Communications Considerations'.

Phase 2 – Communication Considerations

Due to Tapp's recommendation of structuring the planning sequence into marketing, communications and media planning phases (2005 cited in Chaffey, 2006 p.358) phase two of the flowchart has been specifically dedicated to all communications-related input.

First of all, it is important to distinguish between long-term planning and short term projects including events and campaigns since this will result in long-term or short term objectives (Chaffey, 2008 p.366). Hereby, it is important to establish annual objectives

as well as campaign specific objectives and base the latter on the first [Long-term/ Annual or Campaign].

Secondly, since this framework covers all types of communication and not just promotional activities, it is important to remember who is being addressed. The type of communication or message to be conveyed will have a major impact on how it should be communicated. Is it an internal communication from the DMO to one of the network players? Is it the DMO negotiating between the players? Is it from the DMO to the external audience? Considering these aspects will help the destination marketer to clarify what it is they are trying to achieve with their communication within a rather puzzling network environment [Communication Dynamic: DMO->Player or Player<DMO>Player]. Another tool to aid the marketer in this process might be the Six Markets Model by Christopher et al. (1991 cited in Christopher et al., 2005 p.860).

Once these inputs have been considered, the marketer can establish SMART communications and media objectives, based on a competitor analysis, a clear definition of the audience and message to be communicated [Communication / Media Objectives]. Hereby it is important to not confuse media choice with objectives – a good way to check this is ensuring that objectives are an action, something to be done and achieved (Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008, p.p.55).

A next step, vital to a clear media strategy, is determining the channel strategy (Tapp, 2005, p.134). The marketer can either decide to go for direct marketing communications or general marketing which includes advertising, PR and sales [Channelling Decision, General Marketing, Direct Marketing]. This does not mean that one cannot use both if appropriate, however, by considering the options marketers will be made aware of the strategic purposes and strengths and weaknesses of either channel. This is reflected within the flowchart by the arrows leading back to the same stream thought and into the creative strategy.

Now that the broad communications strategy has been established, the specifics - namely the creative strategy - can be determined. Hereby it is important to distinguish between creative strategy and creative delivery. The creative strategy consists of what is to be communicated, how it will be executed and what it is supposed to accomplish (Sissors and Baron, 2010 p.15). It contains instructions for the creative team which enables them to work on the creative delivery. It is important to determine the creative strategy before the media selection stage as some media are better suited to one medium than another. Furthermore, the creative strategy determines the prospect profile in terms of demographics (Sissors and Baron, 2010 p.15). This step concludes

phase 2 of the flowchart and now the marketer can finally move on to the actual stage of media selection: Phase 3 – Media Mix Considerations and Media Selection.

Phase 3 – Media Mix Considerations and Media Selection

Now that the marketer has established a thorough marketing and communications strategy, he has laid the foundations to finally move on to the actual media mix and media selection stage. First and foremost, the marketer should consider what sort of media mix strategy might be most suitable. Mix strategies can broadly be identified in two variations:

- a. The concentrated media mix – which focuses most of its budget allocation on one particular media type or a very limited number of media vehicles
- b. The assorted mix – this mix strategy uses several different media types and is particularly likely if the audience is subdivided into several discrete groups which can only be reached by the use of separate media channels (Smith and Taylor, 2002 p.182).

Since this framework is based on the idea of Media Neutral Planning, the combination and integration of media vehicles for increased efficiency is highly recommended (Jenkinson, 2002 p.82).

Finally, the marketer can move on to the actual stage of media selection. Here, it was decided that a decision making checklist would be more appropriate than a grid listing of the various media and its strengths and weaknesses. This was due to the fact that the offer and number of media is constantly shifting so that a listing would constantly have to be updated. Furthermore, every destination marketer will have their own specific selection of available media at hand and hence a tool which helps to evaluate the use of these media would prove far more useful.

A number of relevant criteria for media evaluation were selected from a variety of media selection and communications literature (Fill, 2009 p.235-237; Yeshin, 1998 p.48; Smith and Taylor, 2002 p.168-189; Chaffey, 2005 p.186-405; Strauss et al., 2003, p.395; Tapp, 2008, p.358-429; Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.4-77; Sissors and Baron, 2010 pp. Xxi-20). Finding that Tapp's framework AIMRITE (2005, p.134) proved the most comprehensive and relevant summary criteria listing out of all, it was used as a basis for sorting any remaining relevant factors from other authors under the headings of Audience, Impact, Message, Response, Internal Management, and The End Result. The full list can be seen in the final part of the framework [Media Selection Criteria Checklist]. It is a synthesis of the most relevant criteria suggestions by academics and is supposed to act as a guideline for the marketer in assessing his own

collection of available media and choosing the most suitable vehicles / vehicle combination for the proposed communication task.

At this stage it has to be noted that this is a first draft of the media decision making flowchart and in the chapters of this thesis will be assessed on its applicability through field work research and practitioner feedback.

A.5. Three main considerations for the Media Selection Model

a. The idea of a hierarchical and rational planning sequence:

A logical and hierarchical planning sequence is imperative to a successful media planning strategy – however, practitioners often seem to be confused with the order of planning steps (Tapp, 2005 p.134). Hence, a clear guideline to the planning order seems essential to the framework. Here, the hierarchy is important – steps are taken from general to specific – one has to establish the basis of the strategy before clarifying the details. Consequently, the overall business and marketing strategy have to be established first, followed by communications and channelling decisions and only at the very end can media selection take place (Tapp, 2005 p.134; Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.51)

b. The idea of Media Neutral Planning:

Supporting the notion of Media Neutral Planning, this framework will equally consider every medium as a potential candidate during media selection (Jenkinson, 2002 p.2). Furthermore, multiple mix media will be preferred to single media approaches (Jenkinson, 2002 p.2). Both have several reasons: Due to today's mixed media landscape, both traditional and digital media had to be considered. However, they work best in combination and integration as this way synergy can be achieved since most multi-channel customer's journey involve both media (Chaffey, 2006, p.354). Marketers are cautioned not to focus on digital media and neglect traditional media (Chaffey, 2006 p.354), which through MNP can be prevented. Furthermore, it keeps lazy or habitual marketers from pre-selecting specific media and hence missing out on potential opportunities (Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2008 p.54).

c. The destination context: Maintaining flexibility

As Bennett states, it is vital for successful destination marketing to consider its context (1999, p.48). Destinations are not created equal (Ritchie and Crouch, 2000 cited in McCartney et al., 2008, p.183) and extremely variable in resources, size, character and setting. Furthermore, their responsible DMOs vary just as much in organisational

structure and set up. Any framework which addresses marketing issues within a destination context therefore needs to maintain a certain flexibility to be generally applicable. After all, effective marketing is about boxing clever: Every marketer needs to pick and choose the elements that are specifically relevant to their own business, and construct its unique strategy based on its own set of circumstances – there is no one-size fits all approach (Ryan and Jones, 2009 p.22). The framework should therefore not be seem as a tool which tells you to use medium a or b, or strategy x or z, but rather guideline for marketers aiding them to make their own.

A.6. Methodology – Detailed Focus Group Methodology

Taking all these aspects into consideration, the following structure was decided on for the focus group:

1. The individual elements of the reflective tool will be presented to the respondents without any explanation – this aims to see whether they will be able to make sense of it themselves without any support from the researcher. This is particularly important as
 - a. Not all of the respondents are marketing experts and
 - b. It aims to see whether the language and concepts used by the researcher mean anything to practitioners – exploring the gap between practice and theory so to speak.

Only in case of the respondents' utter confusion will the researcher provide the smallest amount of information possible to make them understand the context. Furthermore the order of the elements will be from simple (few bullet points – market foundation box, communication / media objectives box, in-house /outhouse, beware of) to more complex (numerous points and sub-points – channelling/ creative, AIMRITE, TMCs). This will ensure that the respondents are not overwhelmed at first, but gently introduced bigger amounts of theory throughout the process and the mindset of the reflective tool.

The researcher will point out at the beginning that it will be very likely that they will come across terminology they might not be familiar with, or find that the researcher uses incorrect terms. In that case the researcher would like to encourage the respondents to ask for the meaning of terms / correct the researcher. This is to address the issue of being in a group discussion where some respondents might not like to admit their lack of knowledge in front of other colleagues and hence not ask or respond to questions as they might not understand the context. Hopefully this introductory announcement will make them hesitate less and be more open to ask questions. If the researcher struggles to understand the context of any response, he will try to clarify statements through further questioning such as 'can you elaborate on this?' whilst avoiding affirmative gestures and keeping a neutral attitude so that respondents feel free to express their opinions.

2. In the next step the respondents will be given a two minute time limit and be asked to quickly and intuitively place the boxes in a rational and then justify their choice of sequence. This is to see whether the order of the planning stages within the

reflective tool is intuitively justified and naturally makes sense. The model will not be divided into more than 7 pieces to not overcomplicate the experiment as the main aim is to just justify the general order.

3. Next, the researcher will assemble the model in front of the respondents, revealing the intended sequence and ask for general feedback. Unless the following issues are raised within the discussion naturally the respondents will be asked whether:
 - a. The sequence within the reflective tool makes sense
 - b. What the respondents make of the analogy of the house, does it say anything to them?
A main research interest here is whether this analogy makes sense in what it suggests about the planning process and where its elements fit.
 - c. They find the framework useful or not and why? Are there any particular parts the respondents would use? Or all of it?
4. Finally, the researcher will tell the respondents his view on the model and its functions, explain the exploded model approach and will point out the aspects which still remain debatable for various reasons. He will then ask the respondents whether they have any constructive feedback or solutions to offer for these points of struggle from a practitioner's point of view.
The schedule is quite tight as there is an assigned hour and twenty minutes, hence each stage will be strictly timed.

A.7. Interview Guideline

- Could you tell me a little bit about your position within the tourist board: What responsibilities do you have? Who do you work with?
- What is your personal understanding of destination marketing and the role of your tourist board in this context?
- How are you involved in media selection?
- How do you go about media selection then, can you give me an example? (Are there any set ways, strategies, planning sequences?)
- What do you consider most important when making media selection decisions? And why? Any specific criteria?
- Are there any factors that influence your decision making? (Opinions, routine, availability, finances)
- Are there any destination marketing specific factors which you have seen within your work, that are important for this field compared to other industries?

- How does the role of the tourist board affect media selection / your understanding of destination marketing?
- What about the product and service offering?
- What role do stakeholders play? Do their interests influence your media selection?
- How do you define the target market – do you research them specifically? What about international markets, are they considered at all?
- What is important for you when you set your marketing objectives? Separately from that, do you set communications or media objectives? Do you set separate objectives for the creative strategy?
- When it comes to the communication itself, does it make a big difference what type we are dealing with? How does this affect your media selection?
- What about channel strategy, is that something you consider separately?
- When it comes to planning, do you handle long-term and short-term communications separately? And why? What is important to consider here?
- Digital vs. traditional media: Are these handled separately or together? And why?
- Do you think there are specific aspects for either that have to be considered? How do you decide on the balance of both in your media mix?
- Media mix: how do you decide whether to concentrate on one medium or use a range of different ones?
- How do you ensure that the effectiveness is kept up in long-term communications, evaluations?
- How does the success or failure of past campaigns affect your future media selection?
- Do you ever use past campaigns as 'template' for future campaigns, or do you always start from scratch? And why?
- How important would you say media selection is for destination marketing, compared to other activities? And why?
- Any comments?
- Please could you write down in 100 words what you have learned from this interview, and by being questioned about destination marketing and media selection?