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scopus

Impact factor 6.2

# Geoscience Journal

ISSN:1000-8527

## Indexing:

» Scopus

» Google Scholar

» DOI, Zenodo

» Open Access



[www.geoscience.ac](http://www.geoscience.ac)



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## Boosting Tourism through Sales Promotion Techniques and Destination Branding: A Conceptual Model

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### Abstract

**Objective:** *The present study focuses on the concept of Destination Branding & Sales Promotion and how these can be used to promote Tourism and know about the concept of destination branding and to formulate strategy for promoting tourism with a blend of Destination Branding & Sales Promotion with a conceptualized model.*

**Method and statistical analysis:** The study is descriptive in nature as it describes the concept of destination branding and sales promotion. The data is collected from secondary sources like journals, blogs, websites, newspapers, reports and various academic books.

**Findings:** Destination Branding is a long term process while Sales Promotion techniques are short term tools. Hence, for a proper implementation of this model Sales Promotion techniques can be applied at proper intervals during Destination Branding process to attract the customers for availing the services.

**Application/Improvements:** Destination Branding is relatively a new marketing term that can be used for enhancing the image of a destination and creating brand identity in the minds of the Tourists. Furthermore, Sales Promotion Techniques are those tools which are used to accelerate the sales of a particular product/service.

**Key Words:** Tourism, Sales promotion, Marketing, India, Destination Branding.

### 1. Introduction

Tourism is a very important sector for Indian economy, for generating money as well as jobs. It is important to note that in India, tourism is the largest service industry ("Indian Tourism Industry", 2017) with 9.6% of the nation's GDP in 2016 and 9.3% of its total employment ("Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2017 India", 2017). The sector is expected to grow to 10% of the GDP by 2027. Tourism provides direct as well as indirect benefits to the economy in a number of ways. It not only helps country's local markets and businesses but also contributes to foreign currency reserves. Many indigenous industries, craftsmen, artisans etc are directly or indirectly getting benefits of travel & tourism industry in every corner of India. With its diverse cultures, traditions & geographical features, India is not only a potential destination for foreign nationals but also for domestic tourists. Although the performance and growth of tourism industry is appreciable but owing to the potential that India holds, it can be taken to new heights.

For the promotion of tourism within India and abroad, The Ministry of Tourism runs a campaign termed as “Incredible India” since 2002. However, until 2009 it was meant only for promoting international tourism. Under this campaign of government, advertisements spreading awareness and education are being broadcasted creating a India as a tourist destination brand. Various schemes related to visa relaxation and accommodation are undertaken in this campaign. Likewise, marketing campaigns for different states and famous destinations within India has been launched by Government from time to time.

In addition to Government schemes and policies, travel agencies, tour operators, guides, etc also play a very important role in boosting tourism. Their customized itineraries, bundled service packages and promotional strategies contribute to the tourists’ decision making. In the present study we intend to study about the Destination Branding strategy and Sales Promotion used for the management & promotion of Tourism. A model comprising of Destination Branding & Sales Promotion is also conceptualized for promoting tourism.

## **2. Objectives of the Study**

**3.**

1. To know about the concept of destination branding.
2. To know about the concept of Sales Promotion with regards to tourism.
3. To formulate strategy for promoting tourism with a blend of Destination Branding & Sales Promotion with a conceptualized model.

## **3. Methodology**

The study is descriptive in nature as it describes the concept of destination branding and sales promotion. The data is collected from secondary sources like journals, blogs, websites, newspapers, reports and various academic books.

## **4. Destination branding: An Overview**

“Destination Branding is relatively a new marketing term that is used to build a destination (nation, city, region, etc) as a brand to differentiate it from other destinations” (Shamsi & Fatima, 2016). To have a deeper and closer insight of ‘Destination Branding’, we should split it into ‘Destination’ and ‘Branding’. In words of Roy & Hoque (2015), “When a place has attributes such as natural, historic, or manmade; lodging and dining facilities, favorable environment, satisfactory level of security system, entertainment and amusement activities, shopping facilities, standard accessibility system, it is treated as an attractive destination”. In simpler words, we can say that a Destination is any place with some sort of attractive attributes which differentiate it from other places. These attractive attributes may be naturally present like mountains, beaches, desert, etc or may be man-made like monuments, recreational venues, artificial island, etc. They can either be holding a historical importance or an innovative modern outlook. In layman terms

we may say that destination is any place where a person is going or is being sent but when we talk in terms of tourism it can be understood as a place of interest where tourists would go. It may be a place, town, city, region or a country which has one or more attractions for tourists. Whereas, Branding is the process of creating a unique identity & image of a product or service in the consumer's mind. This process is undertaken to make a product easily recognizable and recall-able. It can be said as a marketing tool used to differentiate products of a particular manufacturer and to position the product in consumers' minds. Therefore, we can define Destination Branding as a marketing process to differentiate a destination from others and to create its unique & positive image in minds of the consumers. Cai (2002) mentions it as "selecting a consistent element mix to identify and distinguish it through positive image building". However, it should be noted that destination branding is quite different from the conventional product branding, former being a service that is intangible in nature.

## **5. Sales Promotion**

Promotion is a key element of marketing mix for both products as well as services. It plays a wide role of creating awareness, attracting & retaining customers, building image, etc. Under the promotion mix, a very popular element is Sales Promotion. Kotler defines Sales Promotion as, "Sales promotion consists of a diverse collection of incentive tools, mostly short-term, designed to stimulate quicker and/or greater purchase of a particular product by consumers or the trade" (Kotler et al, 1998). In comprehensive terms, Sales promotion is the strategy used to accelerate the sales of a particular product/service, being promoted, by providing monetary as well as non-monetary benefits to the customers, trade or the sales force. This marketing practice can be either directed towards the final consumers or the customers to motivate them buy the product or it may be directed towards the retailer & sales force to motivate them push the product towards the customers. Commonly used Sales Promotion techniques are discount, free sample, premium, bonus, bundle packs, contest, coupons, etc. However, the techniques used for products may vary from those used for services. Most of the past researches point that the basic purpose of Sales Promotion activities is to influence consumer behavior, in one way or other. The objectives of sales promotion techniques include attracting prospective customers, retaining existing ones, stimulate the purchase pattern of customers, induce brand switching, impulse buying, etc.

## **6. Past Studies on Tourism & Destination Branding**

With tourism becoming the world's largest industry, it is becoming a major field of study among students and practitioners round the globe (Raju, 2009). In fact, with significant contribution to foreign exchange earned, Tourism Industry is considered as one of the most productive in the country (Shamsi & Fatima, 2016).

As per Morrison & Anderson (2002), Destination branding can be defined as "a way to communicate a destination's unique identity by differentiating a destination from its

competitors”. In this era of growing competition, destination branding has come up as a strategic tool (Garcia, Gomez, & Molina, 2012). Lack of destination differentiation and diverse tourist opportunities has made destination branding a vital tool for destination marketing (Pike, 2005) that helps in positive image creation of a destination and give it a competitive edge over others (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). For becoming tourist’s choice, a destination needs to be unique and differentiated (Qu, Kim & Im, 2011). It should be noted that Brand Identity and Brand Image are two different concepts. For branding a destination, a marketer tries to reflect the Brand Identity as per the features & attributes of the place being marketed and the consumer perceives it to form the Brand Image (Florek, Insch & Gnoth, 2006). Qu, Kim & Im (2011) conceptualized a model of destination branding which proposes intention to revisit and intention to recommend a destination depends on its overall image formed in their mind.

As per previous researches (Ashworth & Goodall, 1988; Bigné, Sánchez, & Sánchez, 2001; Cooper et al., 1993; Mansfeld, 1992), destination selection decision or the purchase decision of tourist is simulated by the overall brand/destination image. Woodside & Lysonski (1989) argues that there is a positive correlation between destination image & tourist’s purchase decision making destination image a vital element of tourism marketing. Aouni, Cascón-Pereira & Hernández-Lara (2013) suggests that final consumer decision about a destination depends largely on the brand image of the destination and thus destination branding mainly focuses on analyzing & shaping brand image as it directly influences consumer behavior. It has been evident from empirical researches that brand image of a destination can be improved through destination branding (Blain, Levy, & Ritchie, 2005). The activities undertaken in the task of branding a destination develops an image that contributes to consumer destination choice (Blain, Levy, & Ritchie, 2005). Ekinçi (2003) states that although destination brand, destination branding and destination image are often confused together but they are different. Destination branding carves a positive destination image which in turn influences consumer decision making.

## 7. Past Studies on Sales Promotion

As per Kotler et al (1998), advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, personal selling, publicity and public relations are the tools of promotion mix. As a layman understanding, Sales promotion includes all the marketing activities excluding advertising, selling or public relations (Paettie & Paettie, 1996). Sales promotion uses variety of tools like coupons, samples, gifts, discounts etc to stimulate consumer’s behavior and influence his purchase decision. For converting a potential customer into an actual buyer, sales promotion must be used along with publicity and other promotional tools (Larisa, 2014). Neha and Manoj (2013) states “Sales promotion, a key element of promotional mix has been widely used to sustain competitive advantage, increase sales and stimulate consumer purchase decision, is becoming a valuable tool for marketers to influence purchase decision”. In the words of Khan (2016), Sales Promotion is a vital tool for creating awareness among consumers about a destination which can, in turn, persuade a consumer to travel a particular destination. Sales promotion is thus expected to accelerate the selling process and shape consumer’s behavior (Gupta & Singh, 2013).

## 8. Discussion & Conclusion

Tourism is a very important sector for a developing economy like India having so many tourist attractions and attributes. It yields a healthy income to the country along with job creation. However, its potential is still underutilized thereby making it inevitable to promote the tourism in different parts of the country. As per the literature reviewed it is quite clear that a destination has to be differentiated from others and Destination Branding is a successful tool for creating a unique Brand Image & Identity for a destination (Morrison & Anderson, 2002; Garcia, Gomez, & Molina, 2012; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Pike, 2005). Sales Promotion provides incentives for boosting up sales by influencing consumer behavior (Paettie & Paettie, 1996; Larisa, 2014; Neha and Manoj, 2013; Gupta & Singh, 2013). The tourists' destination decision depends on the image of the destination carved out in their minds (Ashworth & Goodall, 1988; Bigné, Sánchez, & Sánchez, 2001; Cooper et al., 1993; Mansfeld, 1992; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989; Aouni, Cascón-Pereira & Hernández-Lara, 2013; Blain, Levy, & Ritchie, 2005).

Therefore, it can be taken down through the past literature that to differentiate a destination from others Destination Branding can be used effectively and to attract customers towards it, Sales Promotion techniques can be applied. Moreover, tourists' destination decision can be influenced by creating the desired image of the destination in their minds.



Figure 1 Conceptualized Model For Tourism Promotion.

Figure 1 explains the conceptualized model for promoting tourism with the help of Destination Branding and Sales Promotion. As per the past studies reviewed and discussion done above it is quite clear that Destination Branding contributes significantly in creating a Brand Image of the destination which is a strong influencer for the customers (tourists) for making a purchase decision. In addition, Sales Promotion provides incentives to customers (tourists) which influence their Consumer Behavior directly, motivating them to take a positive Purchase Decision. Hence, a well designed Destination Branding strategy with attractive Sales Promotion techniques can contribute to the development of Tourism sector in India giving a strong support to overall economic development.

### Limitations of the Model and Probable solutions

1. The model is conceptual in nature, based on past literature and researches which needs to be empirically tested.
2. Destination Branding is a long term process while Sales Promotion techniques are short term tools. Hence, for a proper implementation of this model Sales Promotion techniques can be



applied at proper intervals during Destination Branding process to attract the customers for availing the services.

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