

# Effectiveness of destination marketing campaigns in seychelles tourism essay



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## INTRODUCTION

Destination marketing has been proven to be a successful approach to increase visitor numbers (e. g. Blum and Fallon 2002; Cortes-Jimenez, Blake, McCabe and Pratt, 2009). Islands have long been popular tourist destinations, (Sharpley, 2001). Prevailing literature reveals that their physical and climatic characteristics, combined with the less tangible elements of ‘ island-ness’, insularity, strategic location, remoteness, traditions and enclave nature, create a particular allure to ever-increasing numbers of tourists, (Conlin and Baum, 1995; Lockhart, 1997a). Such singular characteristics give them a distinctive status among global tourism markets and can hence be used to their destination marketing advantage. ‘ Destination marketing is an integral part of developing and retaining a location’s popularity’, (Kotler, Bowen and Makens, 2006, p. 729) and to enhance sustained destination competitiveness, (Buhalis, 2000). Overall, destinations use a combination of marketing communication tools to support their strategies and alter themselves from others, (Zupanovic, 2007). Developments and innovations in such marketing tools have led to an improvement of marketing efficiency of small island nations, Martin, (2008). The methods of marketing tools that destinations use will depend on the types of the tourism product and the market characteristics, (Buhalis, 2000; Wang and Russo, 2007).

However, marketing efforts are being compromised as the increasing number of events and trends affecting the tourism industry in the global environment are becoming more complex and fast-paced (Faulkner, 2001).

Small island destinations face particular challenges when seeking to

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compete in the global market, (Lopez and Baum, 2004). Destination marketers have to proactively shape, adapt to, and passively struggle (Courtney, 2001), through changes in customer preferences, fierce competitions, technological progress, (Bieger, 1998) and more recently through the prevailing global economic crisis. The biggest challenge for such economies lies in the pooling of resources especially as they face pressure on already limited funds (Gretzel, Fesenmaier, Formica and O'Leary, 2006). Nonetheless, such constraints can however be overcome by designing effective strategies with particular focus on their distinctive characteristics to adapt and survive on the global market, (Poon, 1993; Sheldon, 1997).

Tourism destination marketing is amongst the most prominent and influential means of inducing increasing visitation and maintaining stays within a destination, (Blum and Fallon, 2002; Cortes-Jimenez, Blake, McCabe and Pratt, 2009, p. 1). However, marketing activities requires intensive capital input and for small economies facing pressure on already limited funds and faced with increasing competition in the global market, the question of effectiveness emerges as a prime issue, critically in terms of assessing if and how marketing efforts affect consumer behaviour. Fotiou, Buhalis and Vereczi, (2002, p. 79), argued that islands are among the most frequently visited destinations in the world and in essence possess certain attributes that set them aside from mainland destinations.

Island tourism has been a subject of increasing interest to researchers in terms of its contribution to social and economic development and resulting impacts (Conlin and Baum 1995; Lockhart 1995; Russell 2006) as well as the debate about their sustainability (Weaver 2000; Bianchi 2004; Oreja-  
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Rodríguez, Parra-López and Yanes-Estévez, 2008) and questions of destination management (Keane, Brophy and Cuddy 1992). However, whilst destination marketing has been a relatively well-studied line of inquiry in the field of hospitality and tourism for many years, destination marketing issues and concerns for small island destinations remain relatively untouched as evidenced by the apparent lack of published research in this area. The latter henceforth provides the basis for the current study, which aims to review and evaluate the effectiveness of destination marketing campaigns in the Seychelles Islands, the challenges and opportunities faced by destination marketers and their responses to the radical changes taking place in the global environment to ensure destination marketing success in the future. In a climate where the future of destination marketing is under increased scrutiny, it is important that researchers extend this line of inquiry to all corners of the globe especially small island nations that are largely influenced and challenged by global forces.

## **Aims and Objectives**

The aim of this study is to review and evaluate the effectiveness of destination marketing campaigns in Seychelles, the challenges and opportunities facing destination marketers and strategic solutions being employed.

## **Objectives**

Review destination marketing activities and tools utilized in the Seychelles archipelago

Measure the effectiveness of destinations marketing campaigns in Seychelles from both destination marketers' and visitors' perspectives

Highlight key challenges and opportunities facing Seychelles' destination marketers in face of the changing marketplace

Identify solutions and strategies being adopted in Seychelles for destination marketing success in the future

## **Relevance of Destination Marketing**

With the general increase in island tourism in the Pacific, Caribbean and Indian Ocean in the last two to three decades, individual island destinations are facing increasing competition from other islands offering similar products and targeting the same markets, (Pearce, 2008). The question therefore under scrutiny is how to market or brand an island to appeal to the global market and attract international capital. Ideally, destination marketing is conducted using a combination of marketing instruments with careful management of the four P's (Product, Place, Price, and Promotion), which is done in accordance with consumers needs to woo and capture the right audience, (Zupanovic, 2007, p. 773). According to the WTO (2004: 10) '..... destination marketing covers all the activities and processes to bring buyers and sellers together; focuses on responding to consumer demands and competitive positioning; is a continuous coordinated set of activities associated with efficient distribution of products to high potential markets; and involves making decisions about the product, branding, price, market segmentation, promotion and distribution '.

Destination marketing is usually the function of non-profit entities, so-called Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs), (Blumberg, 2000, p. 47) generally responsible for generating tourist visitation for a given area. However, since the destination comprise of ‘ clusters’ of businesses, that offer experiences achieved through a combination of a diverse array of products and services, (Heath & Wall, 1994; Scott, Parfitt & Laws, 2000), destination marketing thus involves a plethora of stakeholders who are responsible for components of the total offer (Wang, 2008, p. 192; Goodall & Ashworth, 1997). Hence, destination is not only marketed on a collective basis by DMOs that ideally should represent the overall destination but also by individual stakeholders involved in the tourism industry who singly markets their own products, (Prideaux and Cooper, 2003, p. 37). Generally, both forms of marketing are essential but nonetheless, agreeing and maintaining a consistent image throughout individual promotions have become a concern, which thus requires DMOs to effectively consult and coordinate the conflicting interests of the different stakeholders in order to develop a destination image that is owned and utilized by all groups, (Beeton, 2005). Given the complexity and interdependency among stakeholders, (Soteriades and Avgeli, 2007, p. 336), destination marketing is hence increasingly being undertaken using a collaborative approach connecting the various public and private stakeholders into working interactively and exchanging ideas, expertise and pooling of financial and human resources (Wang, 2008, p. 191; Palmer and Bejou, 1995; Selin & Myers, 1998), to provide an integrated ‘ destination tourism product’. Such collaborative strategies can produce consensus and synergy, giving way to new opportunities and emerging innovative solutions and a greater level of

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effectiveness that would not have been achieved by solo undertakings as argued by Bramwell and Lane (2000). This is supported by Baker and Cameron (2008, p. 83) who claimed that collaboration between stakeholder is fundamental to success in destination marketing. These forms of cooperative are particular efficient especially in small island nations where a great challenge in destination marketing is often, as discussed by Bennett (1999), the lack of expertise, resources and flexibility.

Destination marketers, not exempting those of small island destinations, often use a myriad of traditional promotional sources with verbal and visual messages, (Perdue and Pitegoff 1994). Owing to the intangibility of tourism products, promotional materials are deemed significant given that they represent the ' destination tourism product' (MacKay and Fesenmaier 1997; Sirakaya and Sonmez 2000). Advertising is the most visible activity of destination marketers (Gee and Makens, 1985) and the most manifest form of promotion aimed at either consumers or the travel trade. Consumer advertising is mostly common, particularly using prints, television, radio, outdoor and predominantly the internet. With the increasing trend in internet use (Gretzel, Yuan, Fesenmaier, 2000, p.; Soteriades and Avgeli, 2007, p. 339) and purchase of holidays online, the internet provides small island destinations to receive maximum visibility internationally and hence to help widen the scope and ways of reaching consumers from all over the world. However, one cannot disregard the crucial role of trade advertising for instance in travel magazines and newspapers. Personal selling is another prominent tool employed by destination marketers mostly conducted through travel trade for example trade shows, exhibitions and events, trade

familiarization tours, training workshops, media trips, meetings and conventions, (Dore and Crouch, 2002, p. 137).

Sales promotion technique is used mainly by individual operators of tourism products whilst DMOs' use of such technique is limited to facilitating promotional partnerships among organizations. Direct marketing methods have also been given prominence in destination marketing, (Murphy, 2003, P. 316) with increasing use of direct mail of destination brochures and visitor guides/magazines and the extensive use of global distribution systems and destination websites to facilitate communication and bookings. According to Dore and Crouch (2002, p. 137), publicity is normally seen to be of lesser importance relative to the aforementioned elements of the promotional mix. The authors argued that publicity campaigns can be useful in targeting and developing new market segments, capitalize on major events such as sporting events, to soften or reverse adverse trends such as the decline in leisure traveling following the prevailing economic crisis, or to improve poor public relations. Kotler, Armstrong, Brown and Adam (1998) identified publicity tools as news, speeches, special events, written and audio-visual materials which communicates the organization's information to its public.

Despite the increasing use of technology, package vacations are still preferred and sought by most international tourists, (Budeanu, 2003, p. 94). For this reason, small island destinations also make use of intermediaries more particularly tour operators and travel agencies to sell their products in the international outgoing tourist markets, (Lopez and Baum, 2004, p. 207).

The latter further contends that tour operators have conventionally been important figures in tourism distribution channel serving small islands such <https://assignbuster.com/effectiveness-of-destination-marketing-campaigns-in-seychelles-tourism-essay/>



as the Balearics, Canaries, and Turkey. Being an intermediary between the supply and demand sides and having higher credibility and ability to reach mass crowds, island destinations depend on tour operators to sell the existing capacity of tourism facilities, (Carey and Gountas, 1997, p. 426) given the extreme competitive rivalry in the global market. In their study on the Canary Islands, Lopez and Baum, (2004), found that organized package tours are still being used by most international leisure Europeans despite changes taking place in advances in technology of distribution.

Pricing plays an important role in determining the image of destinations. A wide range of pricing techniques are applicable to tourism destinations (Meidan, 1995; Kotler et al, 1996). However, pricing a destination is an extremely complex process because due to the fragmented nature of the tourism industry, it is determined by the pricing and marketing policies of individual firms at the destination and distributors in the country of origin, (Buhalis, 2000, p. 17). Pricing can in essence deter or attract visitors, and thus pricing policies should be enforced on maintaining fairly standardized price structure. Due to their vulnerable economies, small island nations often overprice their tourism products in order to boost their profitability, (Buhalis, 1999b). For especially long haul island destinations, pricing plays a vital role in determining the willingness and ability of travelers to visit. However, as Buhalis, (2000, p. 18), argued destinations can only charge premium prices if they offer a unique experience. This can therefore justify as Lockhart (1997, p. 4) states, ' island tourism planners are now seeking to diversify away from the attraction of " sun, sea and sand", which are typical of mass tourism, into special activity holidays and business travel characterized by

higher spending patterns and niche segments of the market'. To support this, certain destinations e. g. Mauritius, Seychelles, are branded and promoted unique-exotic-exclusive as they are regarded to offer a unique, 'one-in-a-lifetime' experience and thus promoted premium prices, (Buhalis, 2000, p. 8).

## **Alternative marketing approach for small island destinations**

In the context of small island destinations, the deployment of the basic traditional promotional mix is evidently not sufficient in face of a competitive market. Unlike developed, mainland destinations, islands rely exclusively on external markets for tourism given that their small size limits the potential for domestic tourism, (Reid and Reid, 1994, p. 42). Thus, accessing these markets using such conventional mass media tools requires substantial capital, (Ogilvy and Mather, 1988), economies of scale, management and marketing skills, presence in the electronic marketplace, among others, (Furr and Bonn, 1998; Buhalis, 1999; Main, 2002) which are already lacking in such nations. However, several authors are in consensus that small island nations have features and characteristics which give them a distinctive status among global tourism markets, (Reid and Reid, 1994; Baum, 1998; Lockhart, 1997; Lopez and Baum, 2004). These dissimilarities have strong implications upon marketing initiatives which they must utilize in order to attract visitors and thus compete in the global market, (Baum, 1998, p. 121). Remoteness, perceived 'difference', smaller size, slower pace of life, distinct culture, exotic wildlife, and pristine environment are some of the basic distinctive attributes of islands (Baum, 1997; Lockhart, 1997). Such

attributes have the potential to appeal to a particular spectrum of visitors, and often small sun-drenched, white-sanded, palm-fringed paradises like the Seychelles, Mauritius, Maldives predominates visitors' interests in search of distant and exotic locations. Butler (1993: 71) professed that the islands' appeal ' may relate to the very feeling of separateness and difference, caused in part by their being physically separate, and perhaps therefore different from adjoining main-lands. Where such physical separateness is accompanied by political separateness, the appeal can be expected to increase, and given people's desires for the different while in pursuit of leisure, different climates, physical environments and culture can all be expected to further the attractiveness of island tourism destinations'.

A major element in the success of small island destinations thus will be their ability to develop and project a unique and recognizable brand (Prideaux and Cooper, 2003), that represents value in the eye of the customer based on the above distinctive characteristics and advantages. Morgan, Pritchard and Piggott, (2002, p. 335) identified destination branding as ' the most powerful marketing weapon available to contemporary destination marketers' due to ' increasing product parity, substitutability and competition'. This is confirmed by several authors arguing that destination branding is a sound framework to manage the destination image ( Kavaratzis, 2004), and that branding is at the very heart of destination marketing strategy (Pike, 2004). Successful brand logos not only enhance a strategic market position but also create an emotional bond between the target markets and the destination, (Williams, Gill and Chura, 2004). This view is echoed by Morgan and Pritchard (2004) who purported that it is crucial to build a brand on values that connect a

destination to the consumer in a unique way that the competition cannot surpass, as Rome and Paris have done.

Another key marketing weapon at the disposal of island destination is bringing environmental and social development responsibility to the product as suggested by Bennett (1999, p. 54). Given their geographical isolation, island destinations have more scope for preservation of eco-systems and environmental control which gives an island unique physical characteristic (Reid and Reid, 1994, p. 44). Therefore potentials of eco-tourism are great given that it is one of the fastest-growing niche markets in the travel industry, (Kotler, Bowen, Makens, 2006). The Seychelles Islands, for instance is mostly cited as a good example of eco-tourism by Fotiou, Buhalis and Vereczi, (2002) in their study ' Sustainable development of ecotourism in small islands developing states (SIDS) and other small islands'. Moreover, while islands are constraint by their size which limits tourism growth, the same characteristics may confer a sense of community and personalized ties (Wheeller, 1991) which are essential to boost the preservation of local culture and identity, an important aspect in achieving distinctiveness. Their small size also makes it feasible to offer highly personalized service which is a key feature of small islands tourism (Reid and Reid, 1994, p. 42) and highly sought by travelers. Bennett (1999, p. 54) argued that destinations that behave responsibly in ensuring that tourism both benefits local communities and is conducted in an environmentally sound manner will outsmart those that do not.

## **Market characteristics**

Developing a marketing mix for destinations will vary according to each destination and especially the types of target markets. Firstly, understanding destination types and characteristics is of vital importance for its marketing. Each particular destination will be able to match certain types of demand only and therefore, understanding travel motivations is crucial in order to develop appropriate products and brand destinations for the right target markets, (Buhalis, 2000, p. 5). The same author asserted that destinations should not be aware only of the needs and wants of the existing customers but also of potential ones they can attract. A product portfolio can then be developed, which will enable the maximization of benefits and adaptation of the marketing mix to the target markets, (McKercher, 1995; Tribe, 1997). A perusal of relevant consumer behavior literature reveals that tourism products are selected according to a wide range of criteria. These criteria are altered according to the purpose and features of the trip, elements of the external environment, the characteristics of the traveler and the particularities and attributes of destinations (Gilbert, 1991 and 1993; Swarbrooke and Horner, 1999; Goodall, 1988 and 1991; Kent, 1991; Mansfeld, 1995; Mayo and Jarvis, 1981; Sirakaya et al, 1996; Mazanec, 1989; Mazanec, and Zins, 1994; Moutinho, 1987, Ryan, 1997, Woodside, and Lysonski, 1989).

For the purpose of this research, three market characteristics have been identified and discussed. Firstly, geographic origin represents the basis for collecting and interpreting tourism data in most regions as it seems to offer information relevant to developing marketing strategies, (Reid and Reid,

1994, p. 52). Substantive differences exist in seasonal and destination visitation patterns among nations. For instance, it has been accounted that USA, Canadian, UK and European tourists to the Caribbean islands differ along several dimensions, including: average daily expenditure, length of stay, season visitation patterns, type of accommodation patronized, kind of meal package used and number of countries visited per trip (North American Demand Study of Tourism, 1983; European Tourism Demand Study Update, 1983; Caribbean Tourism Statistical Report, 1987; Bogino, 1979; U. S. Travel Service, 1978). Hence, origin markets provide destination marketers with substantial information to develop marketing strategies.

Secondly, the purpose of travel also serves as a significant variable affecting visitor behavior. Reid and Reid, (1994, p. 41) argued that given their geographical isolation and small size, island destinations appeal mostly to leisure travelers, especially the 'allocentric'. These consumers seek authentic and unique experiences and are willing to pay a premium for such, (Buhalis, 2000, p. 17). This is supported by Baum (1998), who contended that islands do provide a sense of adventure to travelers and are perceived by visitors to offer a significantly different environment to their mundane lives. Therefore, visitors' expectations when visiting island destination would be driven by their perceptions of an undisturbed phenomenon of nature, (Valentine, 1992), which encompasses a range of tourism experiences including adventure and ecotourism, (Priskin, 2003, p. 501). The exploitation of such differential opportunities should therefore be at the heart of marketing policies in island destination through enhancing and emphasizing on their uniqueness.

Lastly, the marketing literature reveals that visitors with different experiences (e. g. potential, first-time and repeat visitors) have different information, perception, image and demand about a destination, (Wang, 2004, p. 103). In an empirical study conducted on ‘ Tourism marketing management in small island nations’ by Reid and Reid, (1994), it was argued that characteristics of repeat visitors deserve particular attention due to high repeat visitation levels reported for island destinations. Such characteristics have several implications for marketing as underlined by findings in the literature that it is more effective to attract repeat visitors than it is to gain new ones, Oppermann, (1998), as it implies lower investment in time, money and creativity in contrast to pursuing new markets. Moreover, the distinctive buying behavior signals the ability of a destination to generate loyalty in the form of repeat visits. The important issue thus is acquiring knowledge of repeat visit characteristics such as visitation frequency, visit duration and period and size market to help focus on a market concentration strategy, (Reid and Reid, 1994, p. 51). However, destinations should not ignore the potentials of expanding their market base by targeting new visitors as such can open profitable avenues for them.

## **Overview of Seychelles and its marketing strategies as a tourist destination**

Seychelles is a Unique Archipelago comprising of around 115 islands in the Western Indian Ocean. Till-to-date, tourism remains the pillar of the country’s economy, through direct and indirect contributions to GDP and through inflows of foreign currency including tourism receipts and foreign direct investment. As a tourism destination, Seychelles offer an ever-expanding

kaleidoscope of experiences to visitors seeking quality and diversity as well as unrivalled opportunities for global investors. With the islands' distinctive natural features and home to a diversity of endemic and indigenous species, the archipelago is well-known for its sound environmental protection which forms the basis for inbound tourism. However, although much emphasis is placed on preserving the ecological marvels and natural purity of the islands, Seychelles offers a multitude of modern tourism facilities, services, infrastructures and attractions.

Promoting tourism to the Seychelles was entrusted to the Seychelles Marketing Authority (STMA) established in June 1999 as the official destination marketing organization representing the local community. Since the year 2000, Seychelles had largely been marketed under a black and white campaign using the slogan 'as pure as it gets', with the focal point of Seychelles' 'untouched beauty and natural perfection'. The brand logo of the campaign was represented by four circles symbolizing the lush green tropical islands, the white beaches, the coral reef, and the Indian Ocean. Since then, the marketing function was driven by the collective local expertise supported by international marketing experts and Seychelles Representation Offices overseas. A myriad of marketing tools was employed including magazine and website advertising as well as joint promotions with stakeholders, which featured highly evocative black and white imagery to portray Seychelles' Unique Selling Points (USPs) and as the preferred long-haul 'Sun, Sea, Sand' destination for the affluent visitors.

In 2005, the destination marketing function was conferred to the Seychelles Tourism Board (STB) which in 2008 became a parastatal organization after it <https://assignbuster.com/effectiveness-of-destination-marketing-campaigns-in-seychelles-tourism-essay/>



was handed over to the private sector whilst the government moved back to being the 'facilitator' of the industry. At the onset of its establishment, STB continued in pursuing the tasks of the previous DMO until 2007 where it unveiled a new tourism brand bearing the slogan, 'Not just another place, another world'. The underlying aim was to move away from the traditional promotion of Sun, Sea, Sand, to reflecting the diversity of Seychelles as the World's only mid-ocean granitic islands and depicting the range of attractions and activities that are part of the Seychelles experience. With this, STB embarked on an aggressive program to revise and further enhance its traditional marketing tools to re-launch the destination in a bid to ensure that Seychelles is recognized as one of the most desirable tourist destinations in the world. With this saw changes towards a fully-fledged e-marketing section, greater enforcement on Seychelles' USPs and the launching of the 'Affordable Seychelles Campaign' in March 2009 at the ITB trade fair in Berlin to help promote the country's smaller establishments under the brand name 'Seychelles Secrets'.

Whilst destination marketing has been a relatively well-studied line of inquiry in the field of hospitality and tourism for many years, destination marketing issues and concerns of small island destinations remain relatively untouched as evidenced by the apparent lack of published research in this area. The latter henceforth provides the basis for the current study, which aims to review and evaluate the effectiveness of destination marketing tools in the Seychelles Islands. References are made to other practical researches whilst exploring the theoretical and research issues related to destination marketing

## **METHODOLOGY**

Given the descriptive nature of the research, both primary and secondary data were collected for the study. A plethora of academic journals and books were reviewed to provide a comprehensive review of destination marketing studies in small island destinations and to present additional perspectives to the field of inquiry at both conceptual and methodological levels. Primary research included both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The sampling method of this study was twofold. First the study's focus necessitated a sample of organizations whose roles and purpose paralleled the research topic. The first subsample thus consisted of organizations that are directly involved in marketing the Seychelles destination selected using a non-probability quota sampling. The targeted organizations were the Seychelles Tourism Board, Travel Agencies, Airlines and Hotels. The research subjects were then conveniently selected as per the size of the marketing department. A total of 25 participants were targeted for the first subsample. Secondly, a non-probability, convenience sampling was used for the second subsample which composed of tourists' respondents visiting the Seychelles during the period with a sample population of 100 subjects. Given the size of the archipelago and the time frame of the research, the number of research subjects was assessed as satisfactory.

Two separate self-administered questionnaires were developed for the study designated for the two subsamples. The relevant literature and survey instruments developed by past researchers provided the basis for developing the questionnaires. A response rate of 64% was recorded for the

organizations and 83% for tourists' respondents. Statistics were analyzed by <https://assignbuster.com/effectiveness-of-destination-marketing-campaigns-in-seychelles-tourism-essay/>

the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17. 0. The results have been elucidated by means of descriptive statistics and cross tabulations. Content analysis was employed to analyze the data derived from open-ended questions.