CHAPTER 3

THE DESTINATION BRANDING PROCESS AND COMPETITIVE POSITIONING

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

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3.1   INTRODUCTION

It is a worldwide trend that destination branding is increasingly becoming a competitive tool for repositioning destinations. In this chapter an exposition is given of the destination-branding process and an attempt is made to synchronise several branding, positioning and destination-image models that are used in the branding and positioning process. Destinations should continuously differentiate their offering in order to remain competitive. Chapter 3 also discusses the concept of destination image as being an important element of destination branding.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned aim of this chapter, the following objectives were formulated to:

- explicate the destination-branding process and illustrate its strategic role in positioning a destination;
- explore the challenges of destination branding in destination marketing
- discuss the benefits of re-branding a destination
- highlight the importance of destination-brand equity and indicate how it relates to brand identity;
- detail the strategic brand-management process and its impact on the health of the brand;
- provide examples of the manner in which a destination can effectively and sustainably be branded on the web;
- discuss the role of positioning and re-positioning as an element of destination branding; and

- discuss and explore the strategic role and impact of image as an element of destination branding and positioning.

3.2 THE DESTINATION-BRANDING PROCESS

Destination branding commences with the asking of the following cardinal questions:

Where are we now?

Where would we like to be?

How will we get there?

How well are we doing in comparison with the competition? (Heath, 2007:19).

A destination should have a vision. Fabricius (2006b: 6) states that ''a vision that is shared by all the stakeholders and potential consumers should be clearly expressed in the core values of the brand at the launching of the brand''. Ooi (2003:5) emphasizes the actions of monitoring, evaluation and review, which can assist the destination to communicate a clear identity, consistency and a unique brand identity.

Destinations should therefore transcend brands in order to create "trust marks", a name or symbol that links a destination emotionally with the desires and aspirations of its tourists and ultimately creates "love-marks" (Morgan *et al*. 2002). The first stage in the process of building or rejuvenating a destination brand is to establish the destination's core values, which should be durable, relevant and salient for the potential tourist (Heath, 2007:176). The values should also represent matters that are deliverable, differentiating and enthusing and should resonate with the consumers (Morgan *et al.* 2004:70).

3.2.1 The phases in building a destination-brand

The decision to use a branding approach to destinations, similar to what is done in respect of products, means that it is accepted that, for marketing purposes, destinations can be treated similar to products such as Coca-cola or McDonalds' burgers (Laws, 2002:204). This acceptance implies that the rules of mass communication could be followed and applied to tourism-destination marketing in the same way as these rules are applied to products.

According to Heath (2007:176), there are five phases in the brand-building process. These phases are differentiated as follows:

Table 3.1   The five phases in destination branding

Phase one:	Market investigation, analysis and strategic recommendations
Phase two:	Brand identity development
Phase three:	Brand launch and introduction, i.e. communicating the vision
Phase four:	Brand implementation
Phase five:	Monitoring, evaluation and review.

Source: Adapted from Heath, 2007:176; Morgan, Prichard & Pride, 2004:69.

The branding of a country should not commence with the country itself, but with the consumers and the marketplace (Morgan *et al.* 2004:36). Furthermore, consideration should be given to how relevant the brand is for the contemporary tourism consumer and how it compares with the brand of key competitors. Because branding involves the creation of mental structures and the assistance given to consumers to organise their knowledge about the products and services concerned, it tends to simplify the customer's decision-making and provide value for the destination. Therefore, in determining the destination's competitiveness, resources available and the customer-demand segments, it is important to comprehend the quality of the experiences that are offered at the

destination level. There is a close relationship between the five phases of destination-brand building and the branding key links identified by Fabricius (2006a:4), as stated in Figure 3.1.

Figure. 3.1   Branding key links
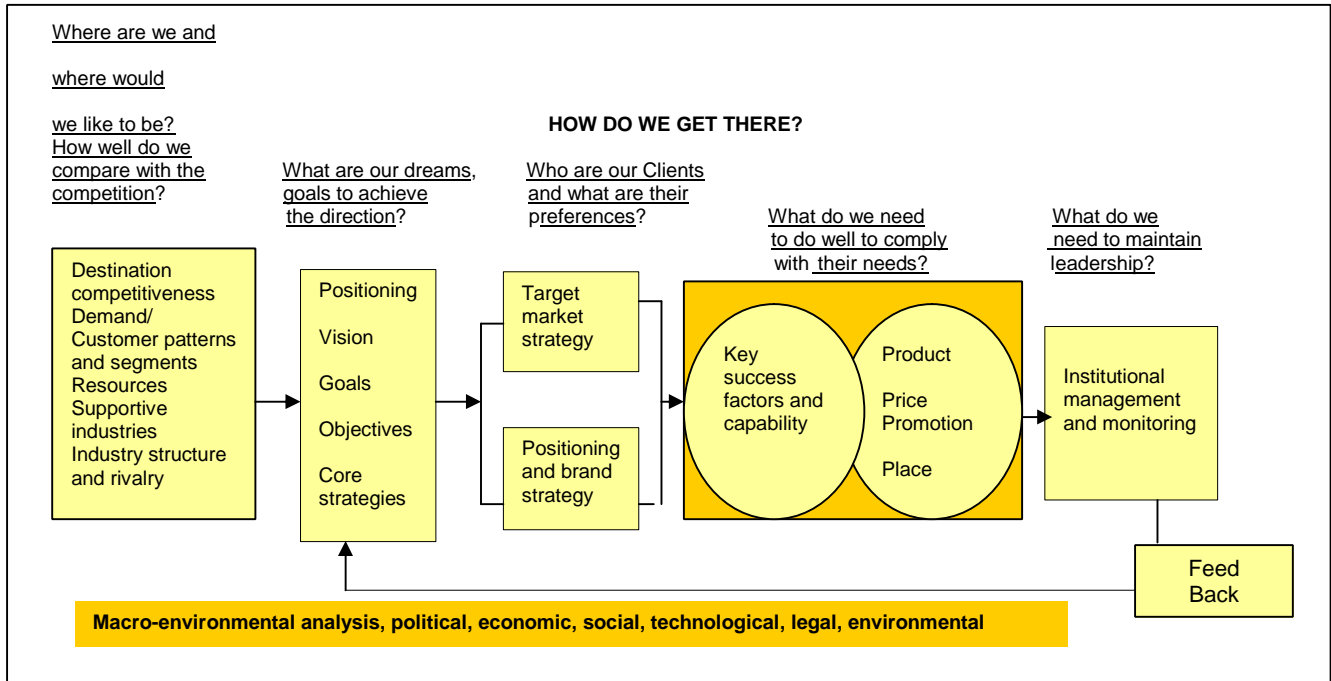
Source: Adapted and modified from Fabricius, 2006a:4

Table 3.2 below shows how target marketing and the brand strategy can be linked to identity in the brand-building matrix while communication can be linked to the four ''P''s. However, Cai (2000) warns that destinations should attempt to convey a sense of experiencing the brand, rather than merely delivering the encounter with the site. Similarly, Buhalis (2000:102) notes that successful brands never atrophy, but reflect and respond to changes in the consumer's life. While the brand's core values remain the same, its personality continues to evolve.

Therefore Morgan *et al.,* (2002:26) recommend that destinations should use research to ascertain the particular benefits that consumers associate with in the establishment of brand equity. As shown on Table 3.2, the brand building process should take cognisance of experiencing, identity, communication and quality. These four components are very important in developing a brand

architecture. Table 3.2 presents a brand-building matrix that has four important components, which should be considered in the brand-building process.

Table 3.2 The brand-building matrix

EXPERIENCE	COMMUNICATION
Customer expectations Customer service Actions of sales delivery staff and other staff Brand evolution over the years, changes to any aspect of the brand should reflect the changing market demands Seeing and believing/disbelieving	Public relations and advertising strategies Quality letterheads and writing materials Internet presence News releases, sponsored press and articles etc Other verbal and non-verbal means of communication Road shows and events
IDENTITY	**QUALITY**
Strong and visible Memorable names Logos and colours /packaging Sponsorships Shelf position/display Vehicle displays/branding Corporate uniforms	Tastes and level of service Ingredients and raw materials Product durability Guarantees Cutting-edge technology Country of origin effect

Source: Adapted from Olins, 2002:244 & Nworah, 2005:3

3.2.2. Destination-brand equity

Brand equity is the value of the brand. It is based on the extent to which the brand is accompanied by high brand loyalty, name awareness, perceived quality, strong brand associations and other assets such as patents, trademarks and channel relationships (Srivastava & Shocker in Hart, 2003:297; Vicente, 2004b:3).

The concept of destination brand equity is concerned with the emotional value that results from the consumer's association with the destination. Fundamentally, the concept of brand equity emphasises the importance of branding in the development of marketing strategies. According to Joachimsthaler & Aaker (1997:10), the role of visibility in creating brand equity is often underestimated, because the mere recognition of a product can affect perceptions. The brand

equity concept involves the design and implementation of marketing activities and programmes that can be used to build and measure the brand's performance. The components of brand equity appear in Figure 3.2 below.

Figure 3.2   The brand equity model
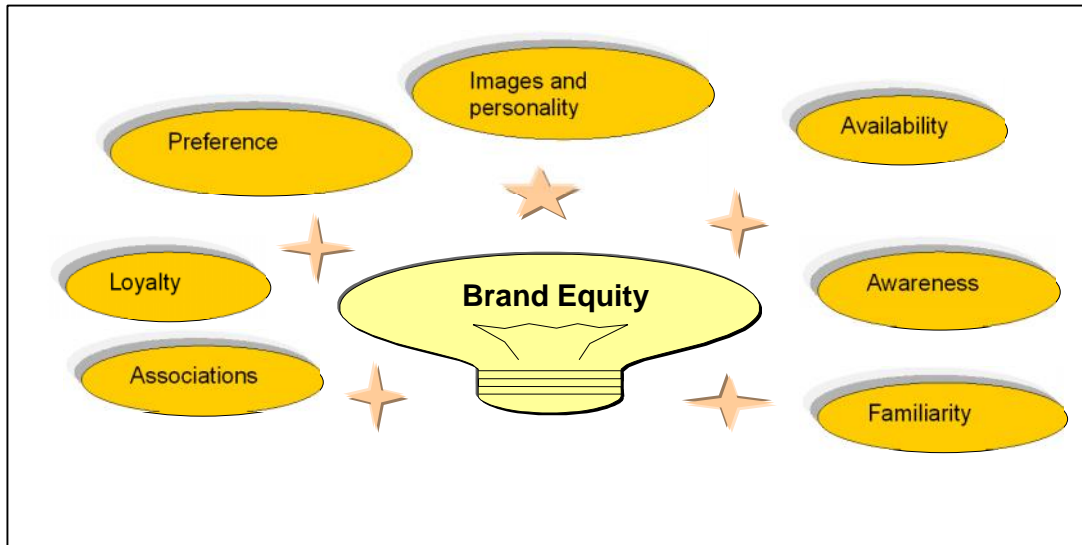
Source: Adapted and modified from Brandt & Johnson in Fabricius 2006b: 6

According to Aaker (1996:7) ''brand equity is a set of assets that are linked to the brand's name and symbol, which add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and that firm's customers''. Ritchie & Ritchie (1998: 95) ''argue that brand equity is the total accumulated value or worth of a brand''. Brand equity includes the tangible and intangible assets that a brand contributes to the destination. These assets can either be financial or their value could lie in their ability to leverage brand equity. To develop brand equity, the destination should carry out a brand audit. A brand audit is a comprehensive examination of the brand that involves the various activities that are meant to assess the health of the brand, while uncovering its sources of equity and suggesting different ways to improve and leverage that equity (Keller, 1998: 266). A brand audit requires an understanding of the sources of brand equity from the perspective of both the destination and the tourist. The true value and future prospects of a brand usually rest with

consumers and their knowledge of the destination (Keller, 1998: 267). Therefore, if the power of a brand lies in the minds of the consumers, depending on what they have experienced and learnt about the brand over time, DMOs should use this knowledge (utility function) to build on the destination brand equity (Hart, 2003: 299). But to what extent is this relevant to the Zimbabwean brand?

Brand equity attempts to provide marketers with a vital strategic bridge that links the past to the future. Thus, it is the *quality* of the investment made in brand building that becomes the most critical factor and not necessarily the *quantity* of the investment that is made beyond some minimal threshold (Keller, 2003). If a customer has a high level of awareness of a brand, familiarity with the brand and holds some strong favourable and unique brand association, he or she is likely to purchase that brand (Aksoy, Atilgan & Akinci, and 2006:75). However, if the brand has some salient unique negative associations for the customer, then the customer's response could be different.

Evans & Berman (1990: 110) emphasise that ''the key to brand equity is to ensure that tourists do not form the opinion that all brands in a certain category are the same''. For example, consumers' preference for wine that is produced in a particular region has been linked to their interest in travelling to that particular wine-producing region (Heath, 2004). In most cases, tourist destinations enjoy strong brand equity that has been built over time on the basis of the products and services that they produce. For example, the lesser known wine pinot noir featured in the movie entitled, ''Sideways'', brought a number of visitors to the sleepy California town of Santa Barbara (Chan, Leung & Chan, 2005:40). Similarly, Switzerland has been associated with Rolex watches, while Kentucky is known for its bourbon (Heath, 2004). Therefore, product association could play an important role in the development of a destination's brand equity. It is understandable that consumers will attach themselves to products or brands that bear cultural meanings that match their cultural self-concept. Other related studies (Aaker, 1999:48; Hogg, Cox & Keeling, 2000:645) have revealed that consumers match their self-concept with consumer goods. Such matching

relates to the categories, such as class, status, age, gender and occupation, with which the customers associate the goods. This view strengthens the cultural branding school which shows the appropriateness of these models in destination branding. The essence of developing destination-brand equity is to have a sustained competitive advantage over one's competitors. Keller (2003:76) suggests that there should be four steps in the development of destination-brand equity, namely:

- Ensure that the consumers identify the brand by clearly understanding the product's image and the factors that influence it;

- establish the totality of the meaning of the brand in the minds of the customer and select a strategic direction through the use of points of parity and difference;

- elicit customers' responses to the identification and meaning of the brand and convert responses to the brand to create an intensely active loyalty relationship between customers and the brand; and

- convince as many stakeholders as possible to align with the strategic direction.

Figure 3.3 illustrates the process of developing brand equity.

Figure: 3.3 The customer-based brand-equity pyramid
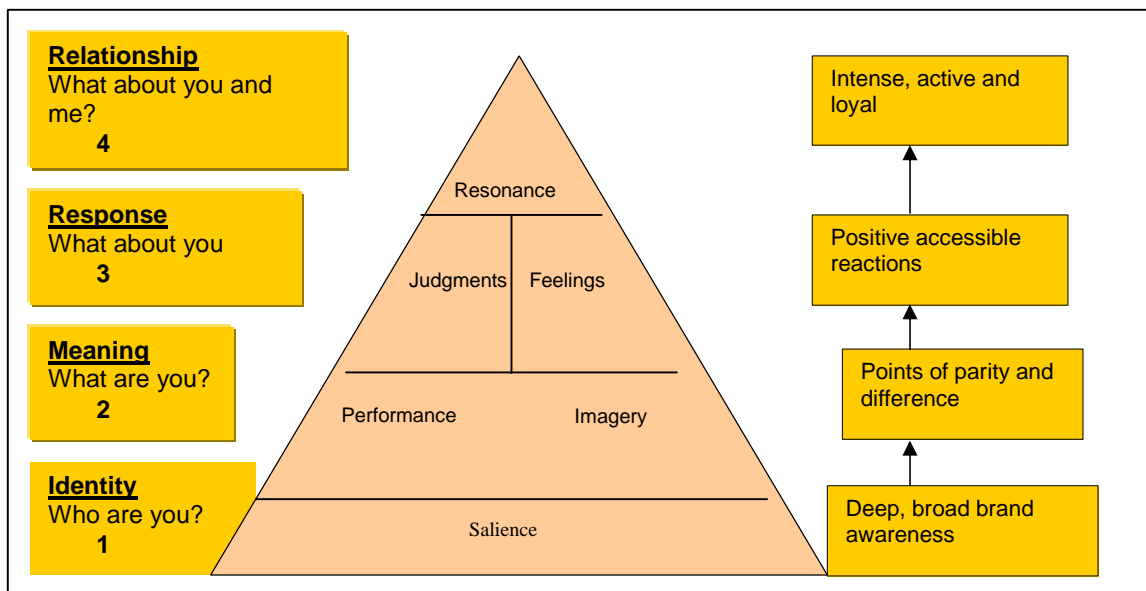
Source: Adapted from Keller, 2003:76

Keller (2003:76) explains that destination-brand equity is epitomised in a hierarchy, as shown in Figure 3.3 above, with salience being the foundation of the hierarchy. Salience may represent the level of awareness of the destination brand. The consumer is aware of a number of similar brands. At the first level, the tourist is able to select the most appealing destination, based on personal reasons. Salience is also closely related to an association with importance, which is a cardinal aspect of identity. An association is a direct result of the benefits and attributes of a given holiday destination as perceived by the customer/tourists. Salience alone may be insufficient especially if there is no resonance with the brand in terms of visitation or intended visitation, in this case the brand may not have any meaning to the tourist.

The second stage in the development of destination-brand equity is the establishment of the meaning of the brand. This stage is concerned with the consumer's understanding of the points of difference and points of parity in respect of brands, such as the performance and reliability of various brands (Donald & Bettina, 1999:48). The third stage in development of destination-brand equity is the eliciting of customers' responses, Consumers are invited to judge the brand in terms of rational ("their heads") and emotional ("their hearts") criteria. Consumers judge brands in terms of criteria such as credibility, expertise, trust and worthiness. Their feelings at this stage could be divided into two categories, namely, experiential and enduring. At the top of the hierarchy, which is the final stage, loyalty to the brand is established. This last stage could be represented by word of mouth communication and repeat visits by tourists, which builds lasting relationships with the destination. This last stage is also referred to as the resonance, intense, active and/or loyal stage. The loyal stage is the one in which the customer feels a connection or sense of community with the brand and would miss it if it were no longer there (Keller,2003).

The belief that a destination brand is a totality of perceptions that consumers hold about their experiences that are associated with a particular place should give rise to effective management of these perceptions and experiences (De Cherntony, 2006). These perceptions should secure enduring value for the destination, its partners and customers (Keller, 2003). Therefore brand

equity should be built at every point of contact between customers and the destination. Each of these points, whether during or after the visit has a vital role in building the experience embodied in the brand. Brand equity should be managed effectively in order to build a destination-brand identity.

3.2.3   Destination-brand identity

Brand identity has been used prolifically by many scholars (Keller, 2003; De Chernatony, 2006 & Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003) and consultants as a concept in branding (Keller, 2003). Identity gives direction, meaning and purpose to the brand as it drives the strategic vision of the brand. According to De Chernatony (2006:45), ''brand identity is a unique set of associations that the brand aspires to create or maintain as well as the manner in which the brand communicates these ideas to its stakeholders''.

These associations imply a promise to customers from the members of the organisation (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003:3) and they become a representation within an organisation of what the brand stands for and means to its customers. Therefore, in order to achieve optimum brand strength and to derive the maximum benefit from a brand strategy, the scope of brand identity should be broadened, thereby avoiding common identity traps. These identity traps include excessively restrictive, dysfunctional and ineffective brand association. The most common mistake that is made with the establishment of a brand identity is the fixation on attributes, in which case the organisation assumes that the foundation of competitive dynamics and customer decisions are based on attributes alone. The fallacy of this myopic view is premised on the fact that attributes can easily be copied and that attributes are perceived rationally by customers. These assumptions limit strategic flexibility.

Aaker (1996) presents four broad perspectives from which a brand can be viewed. These perspectives are the brand as a person, brand as a symbol, brand as an organisation and brand as a product. These perspectives can assist in clarifying brand identity. They are summarised in figure 3.4.

Figure: 3.4   The brand identity system

Figure 3.4 The brand identity system

Brand Identity

Extended — Core

Brand as a product	Brand as organisation	Brand as a person	Brand as a symbol
Product scope	Attributes	Personality	Visual
Product attributes	Innovation	Brand	Imagery
Quality/ value	Consumer	Customer	Metaphors
Uses	Concern	Relationship	Brand heritage
Users	Local vs global		
Country of origin			

Value proposition
Functional benefits
Emotional benefits
Self expression benefits

Credibility
Support and other brands

Brand -customer -relationship

Source: Adapted from Aaker, in Grillot, 2007

From a product point of view, a brand is considered to be the most important feature of brand identity, despite the risk of the fixation trap. The product-related associations that are made are directly related to the user's experience and choice (Grillot, 2007), which in turn is closely related to the character of the product. A brand identity involving a single product type can occur when an organisation attempts to dominate a particular market by positioning its brand to users by using the country of origin as the basis for the credibility of the product (Grillot, 2007). From an organisational point of view, a brand focuses on the organisation rather than on the product or service. It is

concerned with cultural matters such as innovation and consumer care or concern and this strategy could provide a link to consumers. The use of a brand from an organisational point of view may result in a greater understanding of customers' needs.

A brand as a person is concerned with personality issues and brand-customer relations, which form the soul of the brand. A brand as a symbol provides structure and strength to brand identity. The symbol relates to the image of the brand. The aim of the symbol is to reinforce the customer's recall and recognition. The purpose is to enhance customer-brand relations (Grillot, 2007). Although all these perspectives can not be used in destination branding, they should be considered when developing a brand identity and they should be linked to the brand personality.

3.2.4. Destination-brand personality

Kaplanidou & Vogt (2003:3) assert that ''brand personality is the set of human characteristics that are associated with a brand''. These characteristics include gender, age, socio-economic class as well as personality traits such as warmth and sentimentality. A brand's personality has both a head and a heart; its head refers to the logical attributes of the brand features, while the heart refers to its emotional benefits and associations (Heath, 2007:178; Morgan & Prichard, 2004:70). Therefore, the success of any destination brand is critically dependent on the extent to which the destination's personality interacts with the target audience on the emotional and the rational level (Morgan *et al.* 2004:70; De Chernatony, 2006:236).

Furthermore, Morgan & Prichard (2004) argue that the main challenge in branding is to develop a destination brand that has a rich personality and yet is complex and appealing to the target audiences. Such branding is rare, because attributes are mostly arbitrarily and superficially constructed. The destination brand pyramid that was developed by Cleverdon & Fabricius,(2006:9) and Kaplanidou & Vogt, (2003:2) is outlined in Figure 3.5 below and discussed thereafter.

Figure: 3.5   The destination brand pyramid

Nature and characteristics of the brand

Brand essence

Level 6
What is the Essential nature and characteristics of the destination brand?

Value of the brand to the visitor

Brand values

Level 5
What is the value of the typical repeat visit?

Unique destination characteristics

Brand personality

Level 4
What key traits and characteristics of the destination are communicated by the brand to both head and heart

Psychological & emotional rewards

Emotional benefits

Level 3
What are psychological rewards that tourists receive by visiting the destination? How does the tourist feel?

Benefits derived directly from the destination's features

Rational benefits

Level 2
What benefits to the tourist result from this destination's features?

Tangible & intangible

Level 1
What are the tangible, verifiable objectives and measurable characteristics of this destination?

Attributes

Source: Adapted from Cleverdon & Fabricius, 2006:9 and Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003:2

The destination brand pyramid has six levels. Level 1 represents the tangible, verifiable, objective and measurable characteristics of a destination. When these characteristics are delivered to the visitor, they should underpin the brand. On the first level, the destination wants to identify unique experiences that enable it to deliver on its promise. These experiences should be linked to the positive market trends and matched with the people that desire them. Levels 2 and 3 mainly focus on the benefits that the visitor derives from the destination's features. The destination considers the psychological rewards or emotional benefits that the visitor derives from visiting that particular destination. Levels 4, 5 and 6 are concerned to a greater extent with repeat visitors and the essential nature and characteristics of the brand. That is why Morgan *et al.,* (2002:33) propose that the branding process should be accompanied by the development of a positioning statement that is

a unique selling proposition and that can be achieved through socio-demographic criteria such as age, sex, occupation and income. In reality, these socio-demographic criteria could be very helpful, but the most favourable means of achieving a high rate of repeat visitors could be the use of a combination of predictive behaviour modes such as values, lifestyles and attitudes in order to match the nature and characteristics of the brand with the target audience.

3.2.5   Destination-brand architecture

Brand architecture can be defined as a blueprint that guides the brand building, development and marketing that should reflect all the key components of a destination brand (Heath, 2007:179). Brand architecture should reflect the positioning selected, which can offer either rational or emotional benefits to the tourists. The brand architecture should take cognisance of the destination's composition (National, Regional, City and Town) and should facilitate synergy. The synergy should include the identification of supra-brands and sub-brands that are based on geographical and product differences (Cleverdon & Fabricius, 2006: 6; Heath, 2007: 179).

The brand architecture can be reflected on the destination's trade marks (logos), marketing collaterals and advertising concepts. A case in point is the campaign regarding the branding of Australia (Brand Australia), which has a logo comprising a yellow kangaroo against a backdrop of a red sun and a background of green and blue sea. The brand is epitomised as being youthful, energetic, optimistic, genuine, and open and it promises fun.

The brand personality is projected as being youthful, stylish, vibrant, diverse and adventurous. The colours and inferences that are used in the brand architecture of this campaign include red earth, a desert, a blue-sky, the sea, endless green bush, a rainforest and a clean environment. Its construction is combined with a yellow background, which represents warm nights, life, energy, sun, youth and friendliness (Cleverdon & Fabricius, 2006:8).

Cousins (n.d.) notes that the ''Brand Australia post-Olympics campaign wanted to portray the destination in a different light by projecting the brand with a futuristic image''. Through its combination of light colours, the brand was intended to position Australia as a youthful, energetic and friendly country with a focus on the future. Another relevant example of a good brand architecture is the campaign involving Britain, which is summarised in Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3   The brand architecture of Britain

Area	Positioning	Rational benefits	Emotional benefits	Personality
Britain	Traditional heritage & the unconventional	Heritage, landscape, arts, culture & people	I feel stimulated by the crunching, often paradoxical, experience of Britain. At ease in the open and friendly culture	Great, solid, yet accessible. Cold in appearance, yet friendly. Traditional, yet innovative
England	Bush, green, discovery	Afternoon teas, quaint pubs, cathedrals, rivers, canals and lakes	I feel fulfilled by experiencing the quaint culture, relaxed by the harmonious countryside and soothed by the outdoors	Conservative, pleasant, refined, harmonious and approachable
Scotland	Fire and stone	Ragged, unspoilt, wilderness, dramatic, scenery, romance, heritage, folklore, warmth & feisty people	I feel in awe of the elements in Scotland. Embraced and rejuvenated by the warmth of the people	Independent, warmth, mysterious, ragged and feisty
London	Pageantry and pop	Diverse culture, arts, glamour, pageantry, nightlife, music, cosmopolitan and fashionable	I feel liberated by the vibrancy of London, the wealth of heritage and culture.	Open minded and casual. Unorthodox, vibrant and creative.
Wales	Nature and legendry	Natural, dramatic beauty, poetry & song, legend and mystery	I feel inspired by the lyrical beauty of Wales. I am uplifted by the spirituality of the environment	Honest, welcoming, romantic and down to earth

Source: Morgan, Pritchard & Pride, 2002:34-35.

Destinations that have sound brand architecture are likely to attract the customers and remain competitive over a long period of time (Morgan *et al,* 2002). The development of sound brand architecture requires the usage of a unique combination of product characteristics and added value, which could be both tangible and non-tangible. These characteristics should have a relevant meaning that is inextricably linked, consciously or intuitively, to destination awareness.

3.2.6. Strategic brand management

Melin, in Grillot (2007:42), developed a brand management model that focuses on the brand-building process. The model has two distinct perspectives, namely the internal brand-owner perspective and the external consumer perspective. The model, featured in Figure 3.6, illustrates brand building as a value-creating process that occurs in the minds of consumers and within the organisation itself.

Figure 3.6   The destination-brand management process
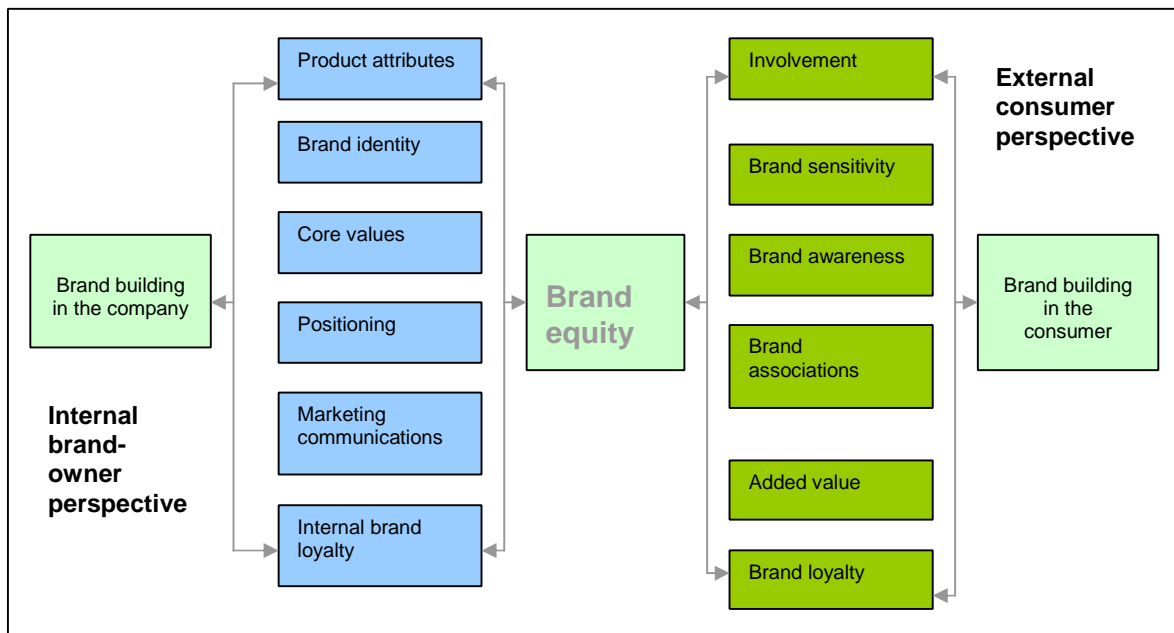
Source: Adapted from Melin in Grillot, 2007:43.

3.2.6.1   The external customer brand perspective

The main aim of a brand-building process is to establish a broad perspective on the level of brand loyalty (Grillot, 2007). From a consumer perspective, brand loyalty comprises six steps, namely; involvement, brand sensitivity, brand awareness, brand associations, added value and brand loyalty, as set out in Figure 3.6 above. These concepts represent a value-creation process and are interconnected. At the involvement stage, the destination wants to encourage the consumer to be

90

involved and encourages an active interest in the product. A high level of customer involvement could result in the establishment of their brand loyalty and increase their brand sensitivity (Grillot, 2007). If a customer is brand sensitive, the result could be that he or she would use known brands as the primary source of information when faced with a choice when purchasing. Therefore, if consumers are well aware of a brand and its competitive advantage, their awareness could result in them associating the brand with quality. Brand association is an important aspect in branding as it is a prerequisite of brand awareness. Brand awareness has an influence on the brand-image dimension and it could contribute to the creation of a positive perception of the destination in the customer's mindset (Grillot, 2007). All these factors could contribute towards brand equity forming the basis of trust, which was discussed in the previous subtopic in this chapter.

3.2.6.2   *The internal brand perspective*

Viewed from a company perspective, brand equity represents accumulated knowledge. Within the organisation, the branding process may proceed in a sequence that involves the following: product attributes; brand identity; core values; positioning; marketing and communication; and internal brand loyalty. These issues may lead to the development of a strategic brand platform, which is a potential source of competitive advantage.

The brand attributes should be linked to the brand. As long as the brand is not linked to the product, there is no (functional) value creation. It is the functional brand value that could result in brand identity. The name of the product fulfils a significant role in brand identity and it is considered to be a primary carrier of identity. Some secondary associations could result from the identity. These secondary associations, which play a supportive role, include the type of logo, marketing communications and packaging. The activities of the identity makers should be co-ordinated to carry and create a uniform identity (Grillot, 2007).

Melin, in Grillot (2007), discusses the identity-reinforcing factors that include distinctiveness, communicability, credibility, potential for extension and potential for internationalisation. These factors are differentiated from identity-developing factors that include name, origin, personality, function and distribution. Melin furthermore alludes to the core values of the destination which are essential factors in a destination that are communicable and valuable to the consumer and these factors can not be imitated by competitors because of their uniqueness to the destination.

3.2.6.3   Other branding models

In their study, that is similar to Melin's, Tasci & Gartner (2006:300) developed a destination-branding model   They recommend that brand researchers should conduct more empirical studies that involve both the supply and the demand perspective. They advocate that the branding of a destination involves positive image building with the use of several elements of a destination such as terms, names, logos, designs, symbols, slogans, colour, packages, architecture, photographic styles as well as heritage, language, myths and legends. As such, destinations should develop brand meanings and assets on both the supply side and the demand side of the market. The branding process could therefore be enhanced through the use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Some of the most recent destination-branding exercises are analysed and discussed in Table 3.4 below. These exercises have been reported by Olins (2000); Buhalis (2000); Kotler & Gatner (2002); Brymer (2003); Baker (2005); Fabricius (2006b); and the WTO (2007).

Table 3.4   An analysis of other destination-branding frameworks and approaches

		Destination brand building steps							
Author	Principle	Destination vision in consultation with all stakeholders	Strategic resource analysis	Brand image analysis	Brand development	Brand positioning	Brand promotion and integration	Brand management	Brand monitoring and evaluation
Olins (2000)	Seven- point brand-building plan	X		X	X		X	X	
Buhalis (2000)	Four principles for destination brand building	X				x	X		
Kotler & Gartner (2002)	Practical steps in branding			X	X		X		
Brymer (2003)	Branding process	X	x	X	X		X	X	x
Baker (2005)	Ten successes of destination Branding	X			X	x	X	X	x
Fabricius (2006)	Brand strategy framework	X		X	X	x	X	X	
WTO, (2007)	Brand-building process	X		X	X				

Source: Researcher's own construction

3.2.7 Destination branding on the website

A web strategy for destination branding could contribute to leveraging the popularity of a destination by making that organisation the hero of a destination of choice (Price & Starkov, 2003). Branding on the web can take many forms, including the use of a destination section or page, destination web pages, destination website or destination web portal. The web strategy could mainly be achieved mainly by providing valuable and relevant information to enable online travellers and search engine spiders alike to find value on the website beyond the destination brand content (Price & Starkov, 2003). A destination website should turn the organisation into the gravitational centre of the destination (Price & Starkov, 2003). The following diagram portrays a step by step process in the construction of a website for a destination:

Figure 3.7   Steps in developing a website strategy

Website strategies

Launch stage

Developing a destination web strategy

Planning stage

- Devise a destination-focused strategy
- Develop an invisible copy, page titles, description tags, meta tags
- Weave the key words throughout the copy
- Develop a credible copy based on research
- Rank the key words in accordance with popularity
- Evaluate the most popular key words
- Identify consumer's online purchasing habits
- Identify local attractions and styles that are related to the brand
- Identify local events that can be used to attract tourists
- Identifying relevant lifestyles, categories, attitudes and values of the existing and potential customer base for the destination.
- Identify the most popular attractions

Web branding steps

Source: Adapted and modified from Price & Starkov, 2003

According to Kaplanidou & Vogt (2003:5), ''the use of the internet is increasing and people continue to turn to this communication vehicle for more information regarding destinations''. There has been a significant increase in the number of people who use websites for travel planning. Therefore, effort should be put in communicating the destination brand with the target audience through the consistent use of websites. Websites should reflect all the components of a destination while communicating the destination's brand identity to the potential visitor (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003:4).

3.2.7.1   Benefits of a destination website strategy in tourism

A destination website strategy strives to enable the visitor to the website to view and read highly informative content. In cases in which it is difficult to choose among brands, consumers are likely to pick the brands that they prefer or that they are familiar with (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003:5; Kania, 2001: 122). Therefore, website users spend more time visiting their favourite sites than they do visiting new sites. To create a website that becomes one of the travellers' favourites is very important, because it encourages repeat visitation while increasing opportunities for choosing the destination described on that website.

The website can be a base for the cardinal communication that moves a customer's perception from brand awareness to brand preference (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003:4). Tourists' use of a particular website could also lead them to develop loyalty towards the brand concerned. Because destination websites differ from most product websites, they should offer a pleasant first-time visit and portray a distinct and clear image of what the destination represents. Visitors could be attracted to visit the website again by sending them e-mail messages on new and existing information about the destination (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003:5). The website brand strategy could eventually lead visitors to speak to others about the destination and its website.

In order for the website to be effective, the mistakes identified by Temporal in Kaplanidou & Vogt (2003:5) should be avoided. These mistakes include the inclusion of time-consuming downloads; poor quality of the content on the website; failure to ensure ease of navigation; and failure to use direct and relevant language that is capable of evoking immediate responses and feedback.

The key element in the establishment of brand loyalty on a website is to measure its impact by using any of the following key measures that have been proposed by Kaplanidou & Vogt (2003:5), namely website conversion rate, customer satisfaction, repeat visitation numbers and commitment to the brand. Most destinations particularly Zimbabwe has not established brand loyalty measures as proposed by Kaplanidou & Vogt (2003). Vicente (2004b:31) advocates a:

''one-stop country website or official gateway because it could contribute to consistency for a country's brand allowing the country to showcase its brand graphics and consequently leverage itself in the process".

Websites are equally important for reflecting the country's commitment to customer service. Internet users could visit one website to obtain all the information they would need about the destination. Therefore, if all the country's brands are presented on a website, such presentation could increase the level of visitation by internet users and simultaneously shape the users' perception about the destination (Price & Starkov, 2003). Several countries are still to launch such websites (Morgan *et al*, 2002). South Africa launched its website through the International Marketing Council in 2001 (IMC, 2003). The use of a website has internationalised the importance of branding on the web. It has made South Africa a world-class competitor in this area.

3.2.8   The role of government in destination branding

The government as a major stakeholder in this study plays a significant role in developing and sustaining a tourism destination brand (Rijksen & Gillemore, 2000:8). Every government has political ambitions, agendas and development strategies and therefore it is the government that ultimately determines and controls the image of a destination. A Government plays a co-ordinating role in destination branding. Olins (2002:243) outlines the following roles of a government in destination branding:

- It maintains a record and profile of all the visitors that come to a destination;
- it controls all the marketing and communication activities, including the messages that are sent out to the global village;
- it co-ordinates all the branding efforts, from the local and regional to the national level;
- it controls the tourism environment, making it conducive for visitation; and
- finally, it is responsible for the maintenance of all the natural and man-made attractions, local culture and heritage.

A government can, however, also act as a challenge to the branding of a destination, especially if there is no or little consultation with the other stakeholders. If a government's political ideologies are in conflict with tourism objectives, it could have a very negative impact on the brand. This is perhaps an important challenge for a place like Zimbabwe.

3.2.9.   Stakeholder power in destination branding

According to Cheong & Miller (2000:381), ''power is everything in tourism''. Viewed from a macro perspective, power is an important component of the development of policies,

planning and, analysis. Power is also related to tourism in terms of political economy and development (Mowforth & Munt, 2003). At a micro and image perspective, power in tourism shapes the development of a gaze that projects a tourism destination as a combination of symbols and images (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride, 2004:30; Pike, 2004:6). The tourism system is structured around a core that comprises an assemblage of structures, goods, services and other resources that contribute directly to tourism. The system includes, the social, economic, geological, geographical and ecological components, along with the processes and functions that complement its totality, which is essential to its sustainability (Marzano & Scott, 2005:205).

In order to comprehend the power structure within the tourism industry, it is essential to realise that it is a complex system and that it is fragmented. In this study stakeholders comprise the Government, Tourism service providers, Tourism authority and Tourism representative bodies, who have separate values and interests. Yet, the decision-making processes in tourism are dependent on collaboration. Therefore, destination branding will always be at risk of being influenced by power imbalances, which can inhibit both its initiation and its success (Trist, 1983:252; de Araujo, & Bramwell, 2002:1143; Keogh, 1990:452; Ladkin & Bertramini, 2000:79). Viewed from an image perspective, tourism manifests its self in the form of power in society, operating as a mechanism in respect of inequalities are articulated and validated through different cultural discourses (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998:7). Power is also manifested through communication, because the use of images, language and representations is a clear demonstration of political, intellectual, cultural and moral power.

 According to Morgan, Pritchard & Piggott (2002), the creation and management of a destination brand requires collaboration among stakeholders. The destination brand is considered to be a common good, which is the outcome of an ongoing process of collaboration amongst stakeholders (Hardy & Philips, 1998:220). Mundt (2002:341) ''labels

destination branding as both a myth and a fallacy due to the lack of ownership of the brand and states that it is therefore beyond the responsibility of destination management''.

Despite these incongruences, the concept of destination branding is widespread. Collaboration amongst stakeholders should be balanced, because the various stakeholders have different roles and agendas and even benefit from tourism in different ways (Aas, Ladkin & Fletcher, 2005:34). Although destination branding has positive outcomes of unity and collaboration for the various stakeholders, an assessment of the roles of individual stakeholders is likely to reveal how power influences the collaborative process (Prideaux & Cooper, 2002:37; Laws, Scott & Parfitt, 2002:50; Marzano & Scott, 2005:205). Power particularly in the Zimbabwean context has affected the tourism marketing process especially on the branding context.

Collaboration occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders in a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared values, rules, norms and structures, or act or decide on issues related to that domain (Reed, 1997:570; Wood & Gray, 1991:142). Since the collaboration process is not universal, it can be either constrained or enhanced by the definition of a problem that exists within a domain and through collaboration. Stakeholders are inclined to influence the course of action that is taken in respect of certain issues (Savage, Nix, White, & Blair, 1991:64-65). Therefore power in destination branding can be described as the ability of various stakeholders to bring their competing values and interests to the process of branding in order to influence the manner in which the destination is perceived and portrayed. Such conflicting views, interests and power bases will always remain a challenge to the branding endeavour. As it is the case in Zimbabwe, the political and ideological principles of the current government have resulted in the creation of conflicting interest groups and this has tended to challenge and impact negatively on the tourism marketing domain.

3.2.10 The role of the media in destination branding

Worldwide, the tourist customer is exposed to newspapers and travel supplements; magazines; television travel programmes; and guidebooks (Cleverdon & Fabricius, 2006:10). He or she is bombarded with information that can convey a positive or a negative message about a destination. A destination can itself also improve its collection of data and undertake an analysis of data that appears in the media. Managing a destination is different from managing a product. Whereas a product can easily be taken off the market, destinations can not. It is therefore important not to underestimate the potential harm that a crisis can cause for a destination or the scope of the influence that the media can have.

According to Bianchi (2003:18), ''a destination should be prepared for any eventuality; it should have a crisis plan and update the plan regularly''. The plan may involve the setting up of communication centres as sources of information during and after a crisis. Above all, as Marzano & Scott (2005:205) advise that during a crisis, a destination should act speedily by providing regular updates on the prevailing situation. In such a case, the media can be used to rebuild the destination. Such preparedness calls for the training of the spokespersons of the destination on how to deal with the media. In addition, the crisis should be contextualised, without attempting to cover up the seriousness of the situation, while simultaneously remaining positive about the outcomes (Cleverdon & Fabricius, 2006:9). The media remain potentially harmful, but nevertheless powerful channels for a destination and can be used in respect of the image-modification process.

3.3 CHALLENGES IN DESTINATION BRANDING

Morgan *et al.,* (2002:13) suggest that ''political pressures, external environmental changes and product issues should all be successfully combated if a destination brand is to prosper

and grow''.

They argue that ''global brands could be the ultimate distributor of wealth… even the smallest nations could benefit from branding, partnerships and promotion''. But does branding ultimately provide all these benefits?

Szondi, (2006:12) is of the opinion that ''most tourism destinations have limited budgets and yet they are expected to market globally, competing with other destinations as well as with other global brands''.

The failure to acquire adequate funding for marketing and branding activities may render the brand obsolete. If brands have to be used as strategic tools, the approach should change. Cai (2000:750) notes that:

''branding should be about achieving a balance between applying cutting-edge advertising and public-relations approaches to the marketing problem, which is the essence of managing local, regional and national politics''.

Some destinations have no defined tourism strategy (Badal *et al*, 2008:5), which usually results in such a destination going through the usual stages of the destination lifecycle, namely exploration, fame, familiarity and fatigue, especially during a crisis situation (Heath, 2007:162).

According to Hill, Osborn & Plumptre (2002:10), the following factors can erode a destination brand:

- Friction and unnecessary competition amongst the tourism organisations and businesses;

- hostile and unfriendly attitudes of the local residents towards visitors;

- damage or permanent alteration of natural features or historical resources;

- loss of cultural identities, pollution, overcrowding and traffic problems; and

- stoppage of unique local-level events and festivals; loss of market share; and high seasonality.

The effect of the external environment may be difficult to control, especially when the media focus on the negative aspects of a destination. A brand may be well developed, but the destination may still face some challenges regarding the delivery of the promise as a result of product complexity and a focus on short-term results (Baker, 2007:1). While it is accepted that a brand should be deliverable, sustainable and believable, a destination may attempt to differentiate itself from competitors and end up over-promising and neglecting the customer's needs. Failure to base the brand on its strongest and most distinctive proposition can lead to brand ambiguity (Baker, 2007:2). It may also occur that a destination may fail to understand what is being branded as a result of its lack of adequate research and stakeholder support (Badal *et al*, 2008:5).

The efforts and inputs used in developing a brand remain invisible to the consumer. The promises, values and experiences created by the brand may not be credible, because consumers are increasingly becoming more confident, sophisticated and marketing literate (De Chernatony & McDonald, 2003:394).

Brand decay may begin if the brand is overextended into new products (deliverable) or after a merger or takeover that damages its essence. In such a case, brand revitalisation and repositioning becomes a priority. There are many other factors that may erode a brand's franchise and profitability. Some of these factors would include market decline, new technology, changing tastes, rising costs and new competition (Harsha & Chacko, 1991).

3.4 RE-BRANDING A DESTINATION

Hedberg in Bennett & Savani (2003:71), state that ''place re-branding could be implemented to revive a pre-existing, but outdated, place image, in order to make it more relevant to the market''. Re-branding can be defined as a change to a brand in order to stimulate a change in consumers' attitudes, perceptions and behaviours with the goal of generating positive market growth (Badal *et al.*, 2008:4). The benefits of re-branding lie in the opportunities created by the new or revived brand image. Re-branding tends to be descriptive and it uses short phrases to persuade the target audience about the brand. It furthermore tends to summarise and translate the intention of a marketing programme in a few short words or phrases. This statement of intention could assist tourists to internalise the meaning and the value of the destination in terms of what the brand stands for and what makes it unique and special (Lewis & Chamber, 2000).

Re-branding brings about awareness and helps to reinforce the brand positioning and desired points of difference. In fact, changing any of the tangible elements of the brand can be considered to be re-branding, whether advertising through corporate stationary and sales literature; packaging; design; staff uniforms; delivery vehicles; or corporate identity trademarks (Badal *et al*, 2008:4).

Re-branding acts as an image builder and carries meaning and relevance to the tourists (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2000). It can therefore be used as a base for developing a public catchphrase. Re-branding could lead to customer loyalty, which could ultimately result in increased commercial value. It could furthermore serve as a basis for the co-ordination of the private sector's efforts through the establishment of a link between communication tools and the promotion of other products.

3.5 POSITIONING AS AN ELEMENT OF DESTINATION BRANDING

Positioning is widely accepted as a central process in destination marketing. The process of positioning is applied in respect of consumer products; services, business to business relationships (Keller, 2001:149); marketing of hotels (Bramwell & Rawding, 1996:396); images of regions or countries as tourism destinations; as well as in political campaigning (Ries & Trout, 1986:26). Theoretical understanding and grounding of positioning is still rudimentary. There is a scarcity of documented empirical studies on positioning and an absence of tested frameworks that could provide a convincing exposition of the concept of positioning. The subject is therefore wide open to academic enquiry (Im, 2003:100).

Nevertheless, there is some evidence that positioning plays a major role in marketing (Prideaux & Cooper, 2002:36). Recognising the value of positioning, some positioning strategies have emerged in firms, organisations and even in place marketing, since place marketing is increasingly becoming an important element in the strategic destination-management process. At first it was used as a strategy for developing effective communication, but it has grown to include all aspects of the marketing mix. Whereas Lovelock (1996:160) refers to copy positioning that uses simple imagery or vague promises, De Chernatony & McDonald (1992:144) consider the positioning process to represent the most important decision and action that management has to take in regard to a destination.

3.5.1 The definition of positioning

Positioning is a form of marketing communication that plays a vital role in enhancing the attractiveness of a tourism destination (Chacko, 1997:5) by ''modifying the tangible characteristics and intangible perceptions of a marketing offering in relation to the competition'' (Arnott in Blankinson, 2004:317). It is important to note that positioning is not

determined by the product's image or the support that it seeks to elicit but it is rather the perception or image (that occupies a distinctive place) in the customer's mindset (Kotler, 1996:100). Positioning is a communication strategy, involving the development of a marketing mix, which forms the natural flow of information from market segmentation through target marketing (Morrison & Anderson, 2002:2; Payne, 1993:376; Pike, 2004:1). It is the act of formulating a competitive position for a tourist destination and subsequently enhancing its attractiveness (Cleverdon & Fabricius, 2006:1; Harsha & Chacko, 1991:2). Positioning does not primarily concern what you do to or with the product, but it is concerned with what you do to the prospective customer and how the customer perceives you (McDonald, De Chernatony & Harris, 2001:340).

The perception of the customer is central to effective positioning. An organisation's position should not be considered in isolation, but should rather be perceived in relation to the organisation's competitors (Blankinson & Kalafatis, 2001:36). A brand position in the customer's mind is a relative concept to the extent that it refers to a comparative assessment by the customer of how the brand is similar or different from competing brands (Blankison & Kalafatis, 2001:36). Therefore, in order to succeed in our over-communicated society, a destination should create a position that takes into consideration not only the destination's own strengths and weaknesses, but also the strengths and weaknesses of competitors (Blankison & Kalafatis, 2001:37). Successful positioning requires consistency, an attribute that may take many years to solidify in the consumer's mind.

Lewis & Chamber (2000) argue that positioning is about the optimum location of a brand and its competitors in the mind of the consumers in order to maximize the potential benefits to a destination. They point out that brand positioning guides marketing strategies by clarifying what the brand is all about, how it is unique, how it is similar to competitive brands and why consumers should choose the destination concerned. It enables a brand to fight through the

''noise'' in a market and enables the brand to occupy a distinct and valuable place in the target customer's mind (De Chernatony, 2006:239).

3.5.2   Internal destination positioning

In order for a brand to be authentic and deliver on its promise, the local community and stakeholders should believe in the brand and, in essence, live it. A destination-marketing organisation should therefore develop a strategy for the communication and promotion of the brand internally. In the case of the positioning of a country, the best brand champions are the citizens within that country, but they could also be its worst enemies if they do not subscribe to the brand. Positioning a brand internally involves the development of practical ways to instil the brand values within the destination's citizens.

The core brand values and brand mantras emphasise the importance of internal branding, which should ensure that members of an organisation or destination are properly aligned with the brand and with what it represents (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2004). If the brand positioning is explained and communicated internally in line with what the economy experiences, customers' desires can be reflected in the service economy (De Chernatony, 2006:270). A thorough explanation of the internal destination position to the people working within the tourism and hospitality industry is very important, because it enables them to gain a clear understanding of the basic branding notions and how these notions could promote or detract from the destination brand equity in the long run (Keller, 2003). The internal destination positioning should therefore be a high priority with the top management and the necessary resources should be allocated to it. Although the name chosen to reinforce the initial position of a brand may facilitate brand association internally, it may also make it harder to link the brand to new associations when it has to be repositioned at a later stage (Jensen & Kormeliussen, 2002:321). Ideally, the positioning of a destination is associated with

particular benefits and it is highly suggestive of the product class. These benefits should be meaningful and transferable to a wide variety of product settings or geographic conditions; have enduring meaning and relevance over time; and be strongly protectable, both legally and competitively (Keller, 2003:181). They should be inherently full of fun, interesting and have rich, creative potential.

3.5.3   Benefits of positioning a destination

A tourist product's position occupies a particular place in a given market as perceived by the relevant group of tourists who are known as the target market. A position evokes an image of the destination concerned in the minds of the customer (Domingo, 1988:60). It projects the idea that differentiates the destination from the competition and projects it as a place that can satisfy the needs and wants of the tourist (Domingo, 1988:61). An effective positioning provides a competitive edge to a destination that is attempting to convey its attractiveness to the target market.

If a destination has no clear identity or has a negative image in the customer's mind, it is difficult for its management to create customer demand (Harsha & Chacko, 1991:3). When a position for a destination is being established, the creation of an identity should not be confined to visual images only, but should attempt to create an emotional relationship between a destination and the potential visitor. The positioning process uses the marketing mix variables. The process of positioning a destination includes both a consideration of the products and services that are offered to the customer and how these products and services are presented and communicated to the target audience. Instead of attempting to appeal to a wider constituency with the use of a variety of positions, which may confuse the consumers and conjure up a fuzzy image of the destination, destination marketers should focus on specific target markets (Aaker & Myers, 1996:60). Therefore destinations like Zimbabwe need to focus on a specific target market by occupying a specific position in the marketplace.

3.5.4   Positioning strategies

Various positioning strategies require different resources and skills. In addition, an organisational structure can affect the implementation and control of the chosen positioning strategy, as summarised by Porter (1980:40-41) in Table 3.5 below:

Table 3.5   Generic positioning strategies

Generic Strategy	Key strategy element	Resources & organisational requirements
Cost leadership	• Investment in scale-efficient plant design of products for ease of operation, • Control of overheads, R&D, avoidance of marginal customer accounts. • High market share, substantial capital investment in modern technology, efficiency in process engineering. • Intense supervision of labour and low-cost distribution.	• Access to capital, process engineering skills • Frequent reports, tight cost control • Structured organisation and responsibilities • Incentives to achieve quantitative targets • Frequent detailed reports
Differentiation	• Emphasis on branding and brand advertising • Design service and quality • Strong marketing skills • Efficient product engineering with high creative flare • A strong market-research base coupled with a destination's reputation for quality and innovation • Technological leadership with a strong co-operation from channels of distribution.	• Marketing abilities, creativity and capability in research • Subjective rather than quantitative measurements and incentives to attract highly skilled and creative labour. • Strong inter-functional co-ordination across R&D, production and marketing • Responsive organisational structure that allows for initiatives.

Source: Adapted from Cleverdon & Fabricius, 2006; and Grant,   1995:168.

The above table can be summarised in three points in relation to Zimbabwe as follows:

- Zimbabwe as a destination should occupy a unique position in relation to competitors when it is differentiated in terms of its distinctive offering, cost offering or specialised forms of offering;

- its destination positioning should also be consistent with the market requirements when it is based on cost and value for money; market trends and preferences; convenience of purchase; and even demographic trends; and

- the destination's positioning should be consistent with the available resources, features and capabilities to deliver on requirements.

Kotler & Gartner (2000:250) offer a novel alternative strategy for organisations to pursue in their attempt to position their destinations. They suggest that an organisation should position itself as part of an exclusive club in which the products in the club will be perceived by customers to be different from competing brands. An alternative strategy is to position the competition relative to the destination's own offering. Ries & Trout (1986:26) see this strategy as the creation of an open position that the company can fill in. Organisations do sometimes position themselves through the use of comparative advertising (Framke, 2002:95). However, positioning strategies should also emphasise either the functional or the symbolic attributes of the product (Hall, 1999:230).

3.5.5 The positioning process

The positioning process comprises various approaches, such as effective positioning; market positioning and psychological positioning, that are needed to develop an effective positioning strategy (Harsha & Chacko, 1991:). The process should be continuous in order to keep pace with changes in the environment, including the changing needs of the customer and changes in the competitors' tactics (Harsha & Chacko, 1991). The positioning approaches are discussed in greater detail in the paragraphs that follow.

3.5.5.1   *Effective positioning*

Effective positioning is based on the basic principles of marketing. Products and services are created to solve consumers' "problems", including the satisfaction of their needs and wants and they are also promised various benefits (Harsha & Chacko, 1991:2). If positioning is to be effective, it should promise the benefit that the customer will receive and should create the expectation that it holds the solution to the customer's problem (Harsha & Chacko, 1991:2). If at all possible, the solution should be different from and better than the solution being offered by competitors. For example, Israel was considered to be a third-world country, a desert, a place for religious fanatics only and a war zone (Beirman, 2003:50). These perceptions did not lead to a total rejection of the possibility of holidaying in Israel. As a result of the peace process that was initiated in 1993, holidaying in Israel has been made possible. In its positioning, Israel branded itself as a quality beach holiday destination that offers the atmosphere of the Mediterranean and has a rich heritage and exotic overtones. Its strap line reads "HAV" A great holiday in Israel" (Morgan *et al.*, 2002:40).

Positioning is an encompassing concept. It functions as an umbrella that encompasses everything in the destination. Properly targeted, single-minded positioning affects everything that a destination does or stands for. It is not driven by advertising only, but by the totality of its promotional efforts (Harsha & Chacko, 1991:2). The benefits that it promises comprise everything that the attributes of the destination can do for the visitor. For instance, it could undertake to deliver a sensation of grandeur, an aura of prestige or the gaining of knowledge.

The credibility of these benefits may diminish rapidly if the expectations that are created are not fulfilled. The architecture is soon forgotten if the tour bus breaks down on the return trip and the impression of grandeur can be replaced by loss of credibility if visitors feel that their personal safety is threatened (Harsha & Chacko, 1991:3; Buhalis, 2000:101)

3.5.5.2   Market positioning

Market positioning is defined by some authors listed in this study as a process of identifying and selecting markets or segments that represent business potential (Harsha & Chacko, 1991:3). It is based on thorough knowledge of the needs, wants and perceptions of the target market together with the benefits offered by the destination. To achieve the desired market position, answers to the following questions should be provided:

- What is important to the target market?
- How does the target market perceive the destination?
- How does the target market perceive the competitor?
- What attributes should the destination use to differentiate itself in order to make the best use of its limited resources? (Kotler *et al.*1996:156).

Market positioning research is called for when evaluating the image that customers have of a tourism destination. The research process is used to identify the vital elements that can highlight the benefits of the destination. The beauty of a destination, the architecture of its buildings and the historic artefacts in a museum are examples of attributes that may produce a benefit, irrespective of whether they represent a tangible representation of an intangible benefit. These features should be evaluated and benchmarked with the features of competing destinations.

3.5.5.3   Psychological positioning

Psychological positioning utilises communication to convey the destination's identity and image to the target market (Harsha & Chacko, 1991:4. It converts the customer's needs into images and positions a destination in the visitor's mind. Psychological positioning is a

strategy employed to create a unique image of a product with the objective of creating interest and attracting visitors (Kotler *et al.,* 1999:245). Since it exists solely in the mind of the visitor, it can occur automatically without any effort on the part of the marketer and its outcome could be unpredictable (Harsha & Chacko, 1991:4). For example, two very different destinations may be perceived as being similar and two similar destinations may be perceived as being different. The marketer's task is to control the positioning and not to permit it to follow its own course. Moreover, failure to select a position in the marketplace and failure to achieve and hold a position may lead to undesirable consequences. There are two types of psychological positioning in marketing, which are discussed individually in the following paragraphs:

a) Objective positioning: According to Harsha & Chacko (1991:5), ''objective positioning is concerned entirely with the objective attributes of the physical product''. Objective positioning attempts to create an image of the destination that reflects its physical characteristics and functional features (Harsha & Chacko, 1991:5). If a destination has some unique features, those features may be used to objectively position the destination, create an image of it and differentiate it from the competition. One of the first rules of objective positioning is uniqueness (Harsha & Chacko, 1991:5) and therefore objective positioning is less successful when the features of the destination are not unique.

b) Subjective positioning: Harsha & Chacko (1991:5) note that ''subjective positioning is concerned with the subjective attributes of a destination''. It concerns the image perceived by the tourist rather than the physical and other attributes of the destination.

Aaker & Shamsby in Harsha & Chacko (1991:5) propose the following five approaches to the positioning process:

c) Position through price: Some international destinations may be positioned on the basis of price, with lower prices being perceived as being linked to lower quality. For example, Malaysia has positioned itself in regard to the promise of more natural value and has charged competitive prices (Morgan *et al.* 2002). Its positioning is intended to appeal not only in terms of more value for money, but also in terms of its natural attractions.

d) Position with regard to use or application: In this regard, a destination is positioned in terms of the reasons for visiting it. Bermuda positions itself to the American meetings market with the slogan "Something you have to leave the country for to get any work done", which promises productive meetings in a relaxed environment. Cancun, Mexico is positioned as "The meeting place of sun worshippers" (Kotler *et al*, 2002:258).

e) Positioning in accordance with the users or class of users: In this case, positioning features the people who should visit the destination (Harsha & Chacko, 1991). Hong Kong appeals to the incentive travel market with its statement that "When they have reached the top, send them to the peak". The statement refers to Victoria Peak, a major tourist site in Hong Kong. Fisher Island, a luxury residential development in Florida, positions itself as the place "where people who run things can stop running" (Morgan *et al.* 2002).

f) Position with regard to a product class: The technique of positioning with regard to product class is often used to associate a destination with experiences that are extraordinary or unique. For example, the Principality of Monaco is positioned as ''The fairly tale that does not end at midnight''; the holding of a convention in Thailand is as "Smooth as silk where the sky is the limit' or "If you are looking for an ideal meeting place, here is one that is close to heaven" (Morgan *et al.* 2002).

g) Positioning versus competition: The technique of positioning versus the competition is mainly meant to meet the competition head on by differentiating the destination's offering

from its competitors through the use of various strategies (Harsha & Chacko, 1991). However, this approach is not used frequently in international tourism destination marketing, because it could involve negative statements about another country or region. Therefore it is not appropriate in destination branding.

3.5.6 Steps in positioning a destination

George, (2001: 124 -125) differentiates the following steps in positioning. These steps are similar to those advocated by Kotler *et al.*, (1999:259).

- *Step 1: Identify a set of competitive advantages*

The first step involves the identification of a set of competitive advantages upon which to gain a market position. These advantages could include price, high level of service and particular benefits such as a unique, additional or alluring extra service that is delivered to the customer.

- *Step 2: Selecting the most appropriate competitive advantages*

Choose the most unique advantage that will lead to the destination occupying a distinctive position in the marketplace by asking the following question: Which competitive advantage should the company promote? For example, a destination in Africa could use its wildlife to gain a competitive advantage over European and other Western destinations.

- *Step 3: Communicating and delivering the chosen position*

The third step is for the marketer to communicate and deliver the selected position to the target segments by devising a marketing mix. The marketing mix is a set of tools that is used by marketers to achieve a strategic position or positions. Use highly trained staff and charge a premium price that is based on the value of the service delivery.

3.5.7 Positioning the destination by using points of parity and points of difference

Creating a strong competitive brand position requires the establishment of the most appropriate points of parity and points of difference. The most successful strategy is to develop a destination brand that performs well on both the negative and the positive attributes. Similarly, the success of the marketers of the BMW car was to establish the image of the car as occupying the position of straddling the luxury car and performance vehicle niches. The success was due in large part to product design and the fact that the car was positioned to be both luxurious and high performance (Keller, 2003:140). There is therefore a need to separate attributes by using two different marketing campaigns, each devoted to different brand attributes or benefits. One way of achieving this goal could be to leverage the equity of the destination by using well-known personalities and celebrities to lend credibility to one of the negatively correlated benefits. In order to achieve such credibility, it is necessary to redefine the relationship by convincing the consumer that the negative relationship between the attributes and benefits that exists in the minds of the consumers is in fact positive (Payne, 1993:376). In order to achieve this objective, the consumer should be provided with different perspectives about the destination by suggesting that he or she may be overlooking or ignoring certain factors or other considerations (Keller, 2003:145).

3.5.8 Updating the position of a destination over time

Even in the case of established brands, competitive forces often detect a shift in the positioning of the brand over time. The process involves two main issues. The first issue is concerned with deepening the meaning of the brand in order to tap into the core brand values or other more abstract considerations (laddering) (Keller, 2003:155). The second

issue is concerned with the response to competitive changes that threaten the existing positioning (reacting) (Keller, 2003:155). Laddering, therefore involves a progression from attributes to benefits and to more abstract values or motivations. It involves constantly asking what the implication of an attribute or benefit is for the consumer. Some of the strongest brands deepen their points of differences to create benefits and value associations.

A competitive advantage often exists for only a short period only, i.e. until competitors attempt to match the offering (Lewis & Chamber, 2000). A destination has to go on an offensive if competitive actions appear to be potentially damaging. It may be necessary to take a more aggressive stance and reposition the brand in order to address the threat (Keller, 2003:156). One approach could be to launch a product extension or an advertising campaign that fundamentally changes the meaning of the brand.

3.5.9 Crafting an umbrella position for the destination

A position is concerned with occupying a certain position in the marketing. This position starts with the development of an umbrella concept or core message that is rooted in reality and that can convey a message that is consistent with the destination brand. Positioning is a process that precedes branding and is based on the competitive advantage of the destination. It is based on the consideration of resources, strengths and other elements in a destination that could affect the brand (Keller, 2003:157). While segmentation and target marketing entail the identification of potential markets, the creation of an umbrella position involves the occupation of a certain position within the market itself. In addition, crafting an umbrella position entails the placing of continuous emphasis on those traits of a destination that are more appealing to each specific market category. These actions require an understanding of how the destination is perceived over space and time. Such understanding makes it easy to review and change the message over time.

3.5.10 Destination competitiveness as a positioning tool

Competitiveness is a key word for any destination manager. The concept of competitiveness is relative and multi-dimensional in that it should be consistent with international economics and business literature (Dwyer, Forsyth & Rao, 2002:344). To remain competitive as a destination includes the objective measurement of the number of visitors, market share, tourist expenditure, employment and the value added by the tourism industry. Subjective variables such as the culture, heritage and quality of life are also included in destination competitiveness.

Competitiveness is linked to the ability of a destination to deliver goods and services that are better than those of other destinations. Such perceptions concern, in particular, those aspects of the tourism experience that are perceived by travellers to be of superior value (Dwyer, Forsyth & Rao, 2002; Reisinger, *et al*, 2006:4). Competitiveness exists wherever customers have a choice between various alternative destinations regarding environmental factors, competition, destination and consumer considerations. While competitiveness is a tool for gaining a competitive advantage, it is not a guarantee for success. To achieve a competitive advantage, a destination should ensure that its overall appeal and the tourist experience offered is superior to that of and cannot be easily imitated by the competitors.

A destination may attain a competitive advantage by responding to external changes that bring opportunities, such as currency fluctuations in one destination or new technology in service delivery. In such a case, a destination should respond quickly to the external opportunity in order to enjoy a first-mover advantage and speed is therefore a critical factor. Responsiveness also includes anticipation of changes on the basis of a competitive advantage that may be due to changes in consumers' taste, technology or even competition.

If a destination is to take advantage of environmental changes that could produce a competitive advantage, it should gather information via environmental scanning. Competitive advantage can also result from innovation that overturns the competitive advantage of other destinations, for example, through the development of unique and novel attractions. Innovation is not limited to the technical development of new products and processes, but also includes new approaches and strategies for doing business (Dwyer *et al.*, 2002:345). Once a destination attains a competitive advantage, the competitive advantage becomes subject to erosion by the actions of a competitor who imitate or introduce further innovation. For a competitive advantage to be sustainable over time, there should be barriers to imitation, also called isolating mechanisms, such as the use of copy rights or the complexity of products. If the isolating mechanisms are strong, the competitive advantage survives for longer (Porter, 1985:112).

A destination could imitate the strategies of another destination, usually a competitor, in order to erode the other destination's competitive advantage. According to Grant (1995:157), certain conditions have to exist for imitation to take place. The imitating destination should identify with that which the rival possesses as a competitive advantage. Having identified that the competitor has a competitive advantage as evidenced by its above-average profitability; the imitating destination should believe that it could achieve a similar advantage by investing in innovation.

3.6   REPOSITIONING STRATEGIES FOR A DESTINATION

When providing brand-knowledge structures to guide the repositioning process, it is important to accurately and completely characterise the breadth and depth of brand awareness; the strength, favourability and uniqueness of brand association; the brand responses held in the consumer's memory; and the nature of brand relationships (Keller, 2003:653). Lewis & Chamber (2000) claim that, as the name implies, it constitutes the

changing of the position or image of the destination in the marketplace. Repositioning is concerned with the removal of the old positioning image and moving along a continuum with a back to basics at one end and reinvention at the other.

Repositioning of a destination is based on changing its image. Strategically lost sources of brand equity can be refurbished and new sources of brand equity can be established by leveraging new secondary associations. The repositioning process may include the bolstering of any positive association that has faded; neutralising of any negative association that has been created; and creating additional positive associations (Lewis & Chamber, 2000).

Revitalising a destination requires the establishment of more compelling points of difference. It could merely involve the reminding of tourists of the virtues of the destination's brand that they may have begun to take for granted. Repositioning is meant to create nostalgia and heritage in the consumers mind. Sometimes brands should be repositioned in order to establish a point of parity on some key image dimension (Keller, 2003:654), as discussed above. Repositioning requires an understanding and specification of the target market, its nature and level of competition. These issues determine the competitive frame of reference (Keller, 2003) for repositioning. Segmentation of the market should be done on the basis of demographic variables or other means of identifying neglected segments in order to make the brand viable (Heath, 2007). Another option could be to simply abandon the tourist group that previously supported the brand and choose a market segment that is completely new (Heath, 2007). On the other hand, the destination could create different marketing campaigns for each segment. However, if that is done, the results could be that conflicting messages are communicated, which could in turn lead to incompatible positioning. Heath (2004:99) has summarised the product portfolio strategies in repositioning. He looks at repositioning from four dimensions, namely: star marketing, cash cows, dog and the problem child. His summary appears in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6   Summary of product portfolios

PORTFOLIO	REPOSITIONING STRATEGY
Star marketing	Maintain market share by improving the destination's differential advantage relative to that of competing offerings. Use the star to defend yourself against competitors
Cash Cow	Harvesting the product probably involves draining cash from it as much as possible before withdrawing from the market. A cash cow no longer has the potential to capture a large market. This strategy may not be applicable to a destination's product, because these products may not be changed or possibly be drained of cash as much as possible before withdrawing them completely from the market.
Dog	Withdrawal of a product can take place when the product is faltering in the destination's portfolio. Withdraw the product as quickly as possible in order to keep the losses to a minimum or prevent further losses
Problem child	Build market share by making the significant investments desired to increase the product's relative market share. This could be done through quality improvement or an increase in the promotion campaign.

Source: Modified from Heath 2004:92 – 93

In order for a destination to compete effectively, it should formulate strategies on how to translate the current situation in the destination to the desired situation. Porter (1985:13) identifies three scenarios in regard to competitive strategies. These scenarios involve the application of the overall cost leadership, differentiation and focus strategies. Heath (2004:88) has concluded that:

'this model provides clear guidance for decision-makers on how to reposition their offerings in order to improve their destination's competitiveness (as discussed earlier), but it fails to address the specific needs of tourism and particularly the scarcity of resources at the destination level".

3.6.1. Steps in repositioning a destination

Heath (2004:131) advocates that:, ''once a target market has been selected, a repositioning strategy should be selected taking cognisance of other suppliers of similar tourism offerings that serve the same target market''. The process involves the development of a market and competitive analysis, which entails an analysis of the size of the competition, location and trends. The repositioning process is illustrated in the diagram below.

Figure 3.8   Developing a strategy for marketing the repositioning of a destination
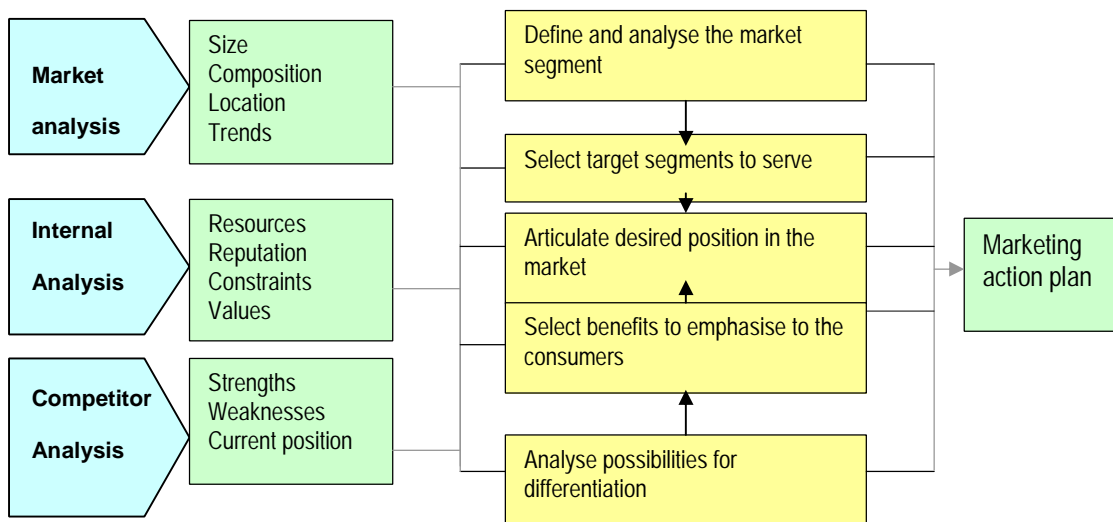
Source: Lovelock and Wirtz, 2004

Developing a repositioning strategy requires that an internal analysis be undertaken in which a destination considers its resources, reputation, constraints and also to what extent it offers value for money. The process includes the selection of target segments, appropriate position in the marketplace and benefits to be emphasised to the tourist. A competitor analysis should include a review of the strengths, weaknesses and current positioning of the competitor and identification of areas for possible differentiation.

An internal analysis is concerned with resource allocation and measuring the reputation, constraints and values held by the nationals. A competitor analysis is concerned with the strengths, weaknesses and current position, as has been alluded to above. The aim of the analyses is to assist the marketer to identify the possibilities for differentiation. When all the analyses have been done, the marketer selects and articulates the desired position and develops a marketing action plan (Kaczynski, 2003; Lovelock & Wirtz, 2004).

3.6.2 Sustaining a competitive position for a destination

In order to sustain a competitive advantage, an appraisal should be undertaken of the sources of competitive advantage, positional advantages and performance outcomes (Doyle, 2000).

Figure 3.9 below illustrates the creation and sustaining of a competitive advantage.

Figure 3.9   The creation and sustenance of a competitive position
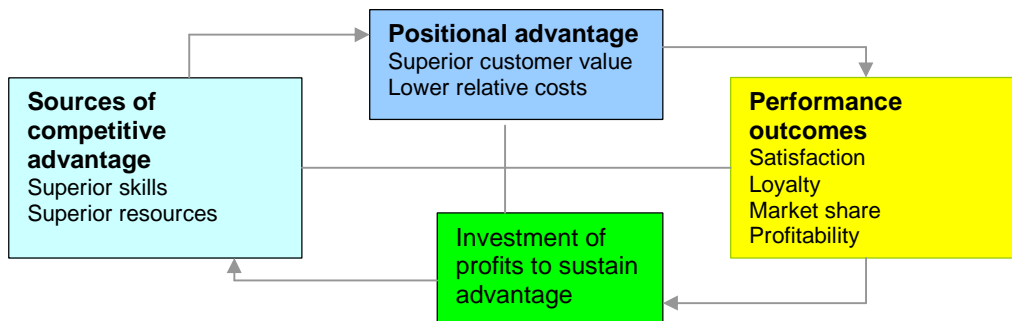
Source: Evans and Berman, 1990.

Sustaining the chosen destination includes the use of a unique selling proposition, which is both exceptional and appealing to market needs in comparison with that of the competitors (Evans & Berman, 1990). The process of sustaining competitive position can either be broad based or focused or it could be a combination of the two scenarios. If a competitive

advantage is based on skills and resources, the destination should continuously invest in superior skills and resources to make it difficult for competitors to imitate the advantage. The destination-repositioning process should be consistent with market trends and preferences (exploration, experiential, romanticism, and relaxation), demographic trends (family/individual, age groups etc) and resources (capability to deliver, features and requirements) (Cleverdon & Fabricius, 2006:3). The sustaining of a competitive advantage should also be aligned with the image of the destination.

3.7 IMAGE AS AN ELEMENT OF DESTINATION BRANDING AND POSITIONING

A destination image can be defined as the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has about a destination (Hosany, Ekinci & Uysal*.,* 2006:641; Aaker, 1996:71). Blichfeldt (2003:21) propounds that a destination image is something that tourists generate in their minds by means of selecting and compressing multiple associations and brand elements into a brand gestalt.

The image of a destination differentiates it from all other destinations and it is also an integral and influential part of the travellers' decision-making process (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997:12). Image has cognitive and affective states and comprises beliefs, ideas, impressions and expressions (Ryglova & Turcinkova, 2004:356). The definition of an image in this context varies from scholar to scholar, because there is no universal definition of and consensus on the term. However, it generally refers to the composition of beliefs and impressions that are based on information processed from a variety of sources over time and that result in an internally accepted mental construct. Therefore any success in promoting a destination is premised on attempts to differentiate it in terms of what it possesses over its competition or

how it is positioned in the minds of the customer (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991:7; Hosany *et al.*, 2006:639).

Consumers do not readily respond to hype, but want to know what they will get for their money. Repeated exposure to a brand could increase its familiarity and create brand awareness (Aaker, 1997), but the building of an awareness campaign is often enhanced by the development of a slogan, visual symbols, tone of voice, design style and a jingle. Brand awareness actively pairs the brand and the appropriate purchase cues, which then create a positive image and effectively promote and communicate the brand (WTO, 2007:40) in the process.

3.7.1 Developing a destination-brand image

An image is an important attribute that influences the traveller's decision-making process about a destination (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997:14).. Riege *et al.* (2001:2), however, view the marketing efforts of a destination as being directed at two sectors, namely the tourist-demand side and the supply side. A brand image is related to how the brand is currently perceived by customers (Aaker, 1997:339). In other words, people ask about the reputation of a destination brand in the marketplace before they make a decision to travel to that destination.

Image fulfils an important role in stimulating travel and generating expectations regarding travel destinations and host communities. Figure 3.10 illustrates the marketing partnership-based system in travel and tourism.

The partnership-based system results in two different types of projected and perceived images as reflected in the figure below.

Figure 3.10   Marketing partnership-based system in travel and tourism.

| Interest of the tourist Destination Projected image 1 | Interest of the export Industry Projected image 2 |

Travel and Tourism Organisations

Airlines

Intermediaries/ Cyber marketing

| Direct marketing and communication activities targeted at tourists Projected image 3 | Indirect marketing and communication activities targeted at tourists Projected image 4 | Direct marketing and communication activities targeted at tourists Projected image 5 |

Consumers: Purchasers of the tourism and export products

Source: Riege *et al.*, 2001:4.

The above diagram illustrates the two images that emerge when the destination has either the interest of the tourist (projected image 1) or the interest of the exporting industry (projected image 2) in mind. The image is transferred to three stakeholders, namely the travel and tourism organisations; the intermediaries or cyber marketers; and the airlines. An image can be transferred to the consumer through direct marketing and communication activities that are aimed at tourists (projected image 3); indirect marketing and communication activities (projected image 4); and direct marketing, communication and activities (projected image 4). These images are not usually the same due to a lack of co-ordination between the supply side and the demand side.

An image has both organic and induced components. These components include the components that are overtly induced and those that are, covertly induced (Beerli & Martin,

2004:660; Cai, 2002:760), as illustrated in table 3.7 on the typology of image-formation agents.

Table 3.7   Typology of image-formation agents

Type of agent	Explanation
Overtly induced 1	Consists of traditional forms of advertising used by destination-area promoters in the form of television, radio, brochures, billboards and the printed media.
Overtly induced 2	Consists of information obtained from tour operators, wholesalers and organisations that have vested interests in travel-decision processes, but who are not directly associated with a particular destination area.
Covertly induced 1	Consists of the destination images that are supported by the credibility of a celebrity spokesperson.
Covertly induced 2	A person influenced by this agent is aware that destination promoters are involved in the development of a projected image, i.e. reports or stories.

Source: Adapted from Gartner, 1993.

Gartner (1993) furthermore expands these image components into a continuum of eight image-formation agents. The image-formation agents have been further differentiated into the following categories: unsolicited organic, autonomous, solicited organic and organic images (Chen & Morrison, 2005:50). Viewed from the demand perspective, brands create images that reside in the mind of the tourist or customer. The true destination identity should be anchored in local heritage as this heritage contributes to the authentic stories of the locals and that may create a distinct competitiveness for a destination brand (Fabricius, 2006a). According to Gartner (1993), a gap occurs when the imagined, pre-visit images are not in line with the initially projected image as a result of the intervention of different image-formation agents. A gap may also arise when the tourism experience is not congruent with the tourists' expectations. In order to minimise this gap, a destination should co-ordinate the various images that are produced and desired by the various stakeholders (Klooster & Go, 2004:15). According to Gartner (1993:195):

''the organic image is the most important component in destination branding, because individuals appear to hold an image of a destination even if they have never visited it or been exposed to commercial forms of information on it''.

These images may be primarily based on general information; assimilated forms; and non-tourism and non-commercial sources, such as newspapers, magazines, books, movies and opinions (Wan & Hui, 2003:307), family, friends and even education. However, whenever an event in a particular destination is publicised, the publicity in various media generates or influences an image of the destination in the mind of potential visitors of what that destination would be like to visit (Etchner & Ritchie, 1991:6). According to Tarlow & Santana (2002:426),

''stories that have a negative tone, or depict a violent situation, are often judged newsworthy and thereby steer the public towards the formation of a certain opinion about the place concerned''.

While visitor-determined images reflect individual differences in respect of information processing and interpretation, destination-determined images mirror the actuality of a destination. Although an image is formed subjectively, through the evaluation of the external stimuli (Gartner & Shen, 1992:49), it is important to determine what the kind of stimulus is projected by the destination marketers by means of their promotional material.

3.7.2. The influence of image on a destination brand and on positioning

A destination image is influenced by several variables, which include education, personal contacts, advertisements, brochures, websites, experience, people, culture, economy and the quality of products with a comparative advantage (Embacher & Buttle, 1989:5). In a number of cases, the image of a destination is influenced by the category within which it is classified, i.e. a developed or developing country or an African, Asian or American country

(Eugene & Israel, 2001:20). The image of a destination is formalised at a very early age by means of education, the media, travel, product purchases and even stereotypes and clichés that do not conform to contemporary reality of the destination (Kotler & Gartner, 2002:254). Although the image of a destination is not a static phenomenon, it is usually enduring and very challenging to change. It is therefore necessary to have a continual image-management process that utilizes research on the destination's image dimension.

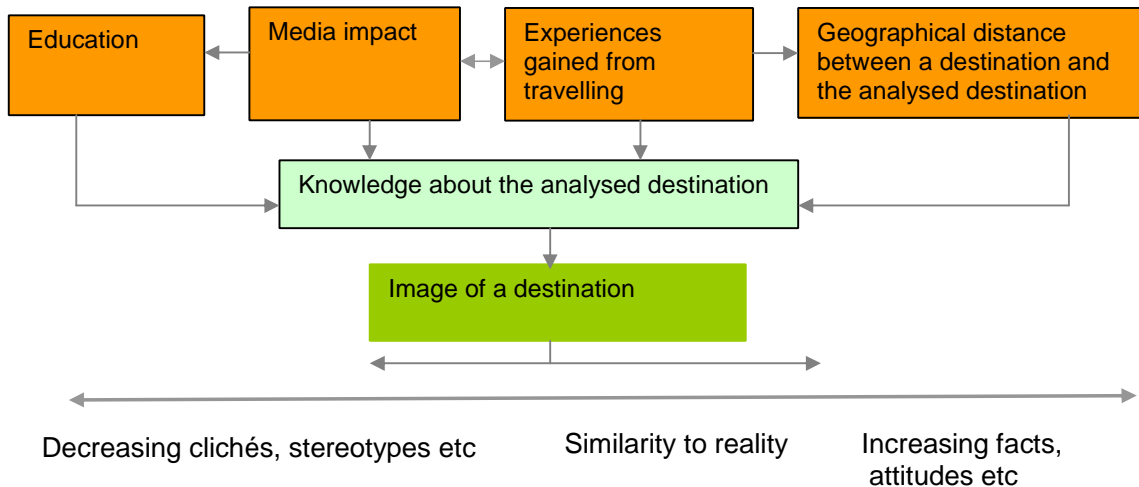### 3.7.3   Factors that impact on the image of a destination

By analysing its image, a destination can identify its unique selling proposition (Morrison & Anderson, 2002:3). A destination that has clear, strong, positive and generally accepted associations engenders trust, quality and integrity and these qualities provide the producers or service providers with a competitive advantage (Ryglova & Turcinkova, 2004:357; Cleverdon & Fabricius; 2006:6). There are, however, several factors that can impact on the image of a destination, including education, media, travel experiences and geographical distance that generate knowledge of the country concerned. The image of a country is also affected by clichés, stereotypes and attitudes.

Three measurement scales can be used to assess the image of a destination brand. These scales are the familiarity and favourability scale, the semantic deferential and evaluative maps. These scales can be used to reveal the image situation within a destination (Fabricius, 2006b). If the image is positive, the destination marketer can focus on amplifying and delivering the image to the target groups. If the image is weak, then it is better not to promote the destination, especially if it is too small and has inadequate attractions. If the image is negative, it requires a strategic change prior to image redevelopment (Cleverdon & Fabricius, 2006:6). The image could be contradictory due to opposing images being formed by different groups. In such a scenario the marketer could stress the positive factors to groups who hold negative perceptions (Genest & Legg, 2001:10). When the image is

ambivalent, there is a need to emphasize selected aspects, while rectifying incorrect or negative impressions.

The factors that could impact on the image of a destination are summarized in figure 3.11 below.

Figure 3.11   Factors that impact on the image of a destination

| Education | Media impact | Experiences gained from travelling | Geographical distance between a destination and the analysed destination |

Knowledge about the analysed destination

Image of a destination

Decreasing clichés, stereotypes etc   Similarity to reality   Increasing facts, attitudes etc

Source: Adapted from Ryglova & Turcinkova, 2004:357.

Dore & Crouch (2002:142) note that ''the majority of publicity for a destination is incidental''. It is not planned or deliberate, but occurs in the natural course of news events that are noted and transmitted by the general media and usually has nothing directly to do with tourism, but nevertheless has an impact on tourism. As long as the reported event has a bearing on the destination, the perception that the publicity creates influences the image that potential visitors develop about what it would be like to visit that destination (Chen & Morrison, 2005:53). The publicity that is created could emanate from world events, movies or even from celebrities who originate from the destination. In most instances, it is not the objective of the media to steer the general public towards pleasurable experiences. On the contrary, the media generally focus on negative issues that are believed to be newsworthy and gear reporting towards enlightening the public about certain situations.

According to Chen & Morrison (2005:52), ''a story is often judged to be newsworthy as a result of its startling qualities, which means that many publicised stories have a negative tone and often incorporate some form of violence''. In this light, the image of a destination is a vital factor in shaping the customer's perception of it. The image of a country should be rooted in reality and should connect with people internally and externally. It should therefore strive towards striking a balance between its image and its identity (Keller, 2003). The term ''brand image'' gained popularity as evidence began to mount that the feelings and images associated with a brand are powerful influences in respect of purchases made as a result of brand recognition, recall and brand identity, (Gartner, 1993). Consumers do not only buy a product, but they also buy characteristics such as power, wealth and sophistication that are associated with the users of the brand (Keller, 2003).

Brand images can be reinforced through brand communication such as packaging, advertising, promotion, customer service, word of mouth and other aspects of the brand experience (Cai, 2000:768). According to Ooi (2003:7), ''brand images are usually evoked by asking consumers to cite the first images that come to mind when a certain brand is mentioned (sometimes called "top of mind")''. When the responses are highly variable, not forthcoming or refer to non-image attributes such as cost, it indicates a weak brand image. For example, Singapore managed to develop a sound destination image and was perceived by a broad selection of travellers and tourist agents from the USA, Japan, India, Germany, Australia, U.K. and Sweden to be clean, modern and safe (Morgan & Prichard, 2004). China's dominant image is that of being multicultural; Malaysia, which comprises many "cultures", is perceived to be a multicultural destination that has many beaches (Morgan *et al.* 2004:160). Thailand has a brand image of predominantly "exotic, fun and friendly people."

If the image of a destination is unfocused or hazy, it could affect the destination's formal advertising and promotion of itself as a tourist destination in other countries. In such an instance, the destination will have difficulty in competing with the image established by

competing countries. Advertising, public relations and promotion should complement the informal information that the prospective tourist obtains through word of mouth and personal recommendations. It could complement the informal information by either building upon the latter or by correcting negative perceptions that may be based on incorrect facts (Kotler *et al.* 1996:283). Above all, the success of the development of a brand image depends on the extent to which a customer is encouraged to believe that one destination is different and better than its competitors. According to Morgan *et al.* (2004:160), ''Wales had an image problem for many years, but its identity deficit has been transformed into an identity premium''. In the context of this matter, Morgan *et al.* (2002) argue that:

''the environment of a destination almost always has political overtones and that much pressure is exerted to satisfy the aspirations and demands of a wide range of industry sectors, as occurred in Wales''.

Attempts to satisfy all such demands could lead to a compromise. Furthermore, the communication in Wales was focused on a destination rather than on market segments and highlighted those matters that make the destination special. Wales managed to re-brand itself as a destination with the slogan, "in Wales you will find a passion for life – Hyl", and by basing its marketing messages on a set of truths (Morgan *et al.*, 2002:115).

Boorstin in Morgan & Prichard (1998:18) comments that, ''in the long run, advertising and the media contribute to a process whereby the images that are generated in different gazes come to constitute a closed, self-perpetuating system of illusion''. Naturally, the attractiveness of a destination also contributes to the image-formation process. The latter matter is discussed in the ensuing section.

### 3.7.4. Attractiveness of a destination as an attribute of image

Tourists select destinations that have components that have the greatest appeal for them. Several attributes contribute to the attractiveness of a destination (Genest & Legg 2001:12). Tourism attractions are the primary sources of a tourist's motivation to travel (Etchner & Ritchie 1991:8). As the attractions become more diverse and unique, the more appealing and attractive the destination becomes (Reisinger, Vengesayi & Mavondo, 2006:6). The attractiveness of a destination is also enhanced by its ability to provide tourists with facilities and services that are efficient and effective. It has also been noted that support services, although essential, are secondary considerations in a tourist's motivation to travel to a particular destination. The attractiveness of a destination also includes the residents' support of tourism and the availability of professionally trained personnel who contribute to the attractiveness of the destination. Reisinger *et al.,* (2006:6) concluded in their study of the attractiveness of destinations that "tourists have a higher regard for the people-related factors than for the support services when rating the attractiveness of a destination".

Balabanis & Diamontopoulos (2004:85) emphasise that "the factors that render a destination attractive have an important implication for the building of destination brand images". As a person (i.e. a prospective tourist) reflects on a destination and the information related to it, the more the existing brand knowledge is developed and the stronger his or her brand association becomes. In order to choose a favourable and unique association to link with, a marketer should analyse thoughtfully the characteristics of tourists and the competition in order to determine the optimum brand position. Accordingly, Lewis & Chambers (2000) advocate for "the establishment of associations that are convincing to consumers". Such associations are established with the relevant attributes and benefits of brands that satisfy their needs to the extent that they form positive overall judgements of the brand.

3.7.5. The relationship between destination brand image and personality

There is a close relationship between the image of a destination and its personality. The image of a destination is premised upon the tourist's self-image and his or her basic and emotive needs. These matters are, in turn, determined by the destination personality. The diagram below sketches the relationship between destination image and the tourist's self-image.

Figure 3.12   Destination image and destination branding
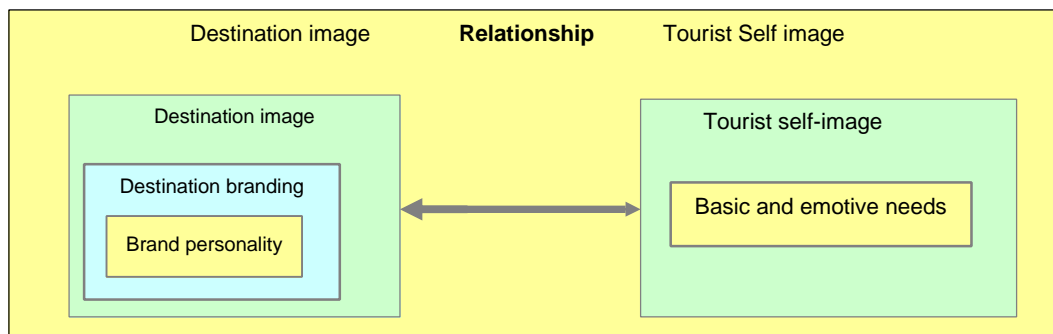
**Source*: Adapted from Murphy 2005*

According to Murphy (2005) ''brand personality is a mindset of human characteristics that are associated with the brand''. These characteristics are applicable and relevant to what the brand represents. Following Murphy's rationale, brand personality implies that consumers have certain personality traits, which Aaker (1997) categorise into five broad dimensions, namely sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. Studies by Ekinci & Hosany (2006) have tested the applicability of Aaker's personality dimensions to tourism brands and found three rather than five valid dimensions. These are the excitement, competence and sophistication. The findings of these studies have led to the conclusion that brand personality models that have been developed for the field of consumer goods are not entirely applicable to tourism destinations.

3.7.6. Perceived risk and its impact on the image of a destination

Destination marketers and decision makers should not underestimate the importance that the general public places on risk identification and risk management. According to Hang, Nunes & Dioko (2005:150), ''the spread of SARS in 2003 had a devastating effect on the tourism industry globally, but particularly in the Asian countries''. This incident illustrates that risks do not only have an impact on the environment, but also on politics and economics, at both the local and the international level.

Slovac & Weber (2002:4) have defined ''risk as a hazard, a probability, a threat, an uncertainty and a feeling of loss''. Roehl & Fesenmaier in Hang *et al.* (2005:151) applied to travelling for pleasure a common typology of seven risk components that are commonly mentioned in consumer-behaviour literature. The seven risk components are equipment risk (equipment problems or failures), financial risk, physical risk, psychological risk (the possibility that the destination may not reflect one's self-concept, image or personality), satisfaction risk, social risk and time risk (the possibility that the destination will be a waste of time). These risks can influence a prospective tourist's choice of travel and behaviour. Hang *et al* (2005:151), view these risks as ''applicable in most circumstances, because individuals place differing measures of importance on each component of each travel risk''. Individuals adapt their behaviour in accordance with their assessment of the risk component, which in turn is influenced by both the extent of risk and the nature of the past travel experiences. These authors even suggest that personal experiences may exert more influence on travel decisions than the information acquired from external sources (Sonmez & Graefe, 1998:115).

The past experiences that an individual has of a destination may ultimately influence his or her general preference for travel to a particular destination (by confirming or eliminating the risk factor) (Sonmez & Graefe, 1986:117). Travellers are likely to assess each destination on
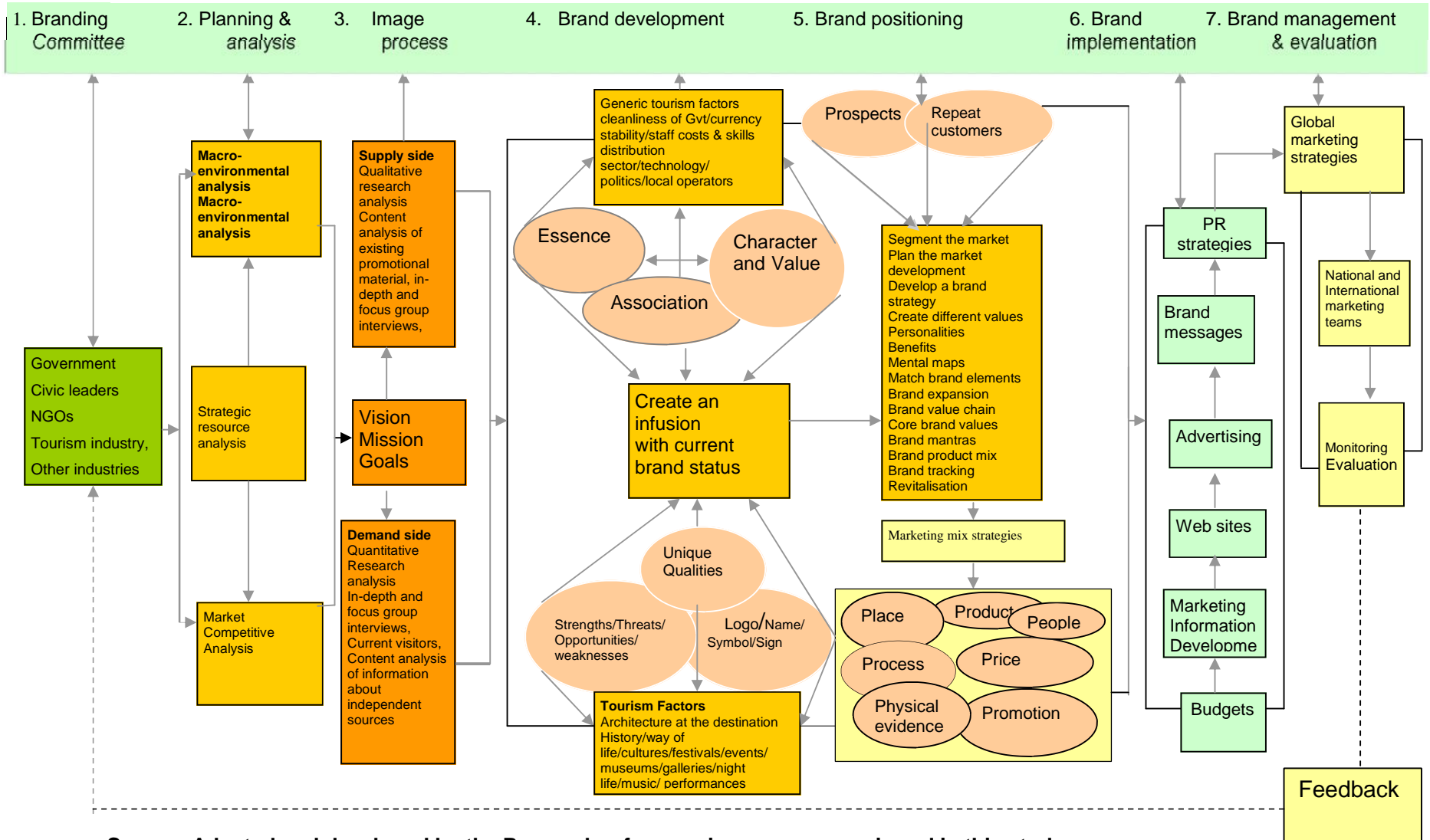
the basis of the risks associated with that particular destination (Sonmez & Graefe, 1998:117). Tarlow & Santana (2002:426) propose that, ''in evaluating risks, a traveller would consider the following characteristics: How great the risk is perceived to be in terms of control, potential for catastrophe, fatal consequences and inequitable distribution of consequences; and whether the risk is known, observable, new and delayed in its manifestation of harm''.

In their study of perceived travel risks, Hang *et al.,* (2005:154) concluded that ''man-made risks such as robbery, theft, cheating, corruption, and transport-related accidents, whose effects are random and not group specific, tend to be the most innocuous and least negative in their effect on the likelihood of visitors' future visitation''. However, the perception of risks in destinations, such as terrorism, bombings and kidnappings, whose effect are aimed to a greater extent at tourists and certain identifiable groups, tend to result in a reduced likelihood of future visitation. On the other hand, if a tourist has visited a destination before, the likelihood of future visitation increases, regardless of the type of risk associated with the destination. Destinations like Zimbabwe should therefore, use prior visits as a point of departure in destination marketing and branding.

3.8 PROPOSED FLOW CHART REGARDING DESTINATION BRANDING AND POSITIONING

A destination branding and positioning flow chart was developed after an intensive review of the relevant literature, The flow chart has seven components, comprising a branding committee; planning and analysis; image process; brand development; brand positioning; brand implementation; and brand management and evaluation. The flow chart that appears in the following table exposes the relationship of these concepts in brand development.

Figure 3.13 Proposed destination branding and positioning flow chart

| 1. Branding Committee | 2. Planning & analysis | 3. Image process | 4. Brand development | 5. Brand positioning | 6. Brand implementation | 7. Brand management & evaluation |

Government
Civic leaders
NGOs
Tourism industry,
Other industries

Macro-environmental analysis
Macro-environmental analysis

Strategic resource analysis

Market Competitive Analysis

Supply side
Qualitative research analysis
Content analysis of existing promotional material, in-depth and focus group interviews,

Vision Mission Goals

Demand side
Quantitative Research analysis
In-depth and focus group interviews,
Current visitors,
Content analysis of information about independent sources

Generic tourism factors cleanliness of Gvt/currency stability/staff costs & skills distribution sector/technology/ politics/local operators

Essence

Character and Value

Association

Create an infusion with current brand status

Unique Qualities

Strengths/Threats/ Opportunities/ weaknesses

Logo/Name/ Symbol/Sign

Tourism Factors
Architecture at the destination
History/way of life/cultures/festivals/events/ museums/galleries/night life/music/ performances

Prospects

Repeat customers

Segment the market
Plan the market development
Develop a brand strategy
Create different values
Personalities
Benefits
Mental maps
Match brand elements
Brand expansion
Brand value chain
Core brand values
Brand mantras
Brand product mix
Brand tracking
Revitalisation

Marketing mix strategies

Place
Product
People
Process
Price
Physical evidence
Promotion

PR strategies

Brand messages

Advertising

Web sites

Marketing Information Developme

Budgets

Global marketing strategies

National and International marketing teams

Monitoring Evaluation

Feedback

Source: Adapted and developed by the Researcher from various sources reviewed in this study

3.8.1 Destination branding committee

The process of branding a destination should commence with the appointment of a national branding committee that comprises representatives of the government; civic society; non-governmental organisations, especially those involved in conservation issues; and the tourism industry. The committee should also include representatives of other related sectors such as industry and commerce, agriculture and mining.

3.8.2 Destination planning and analysis

The first step in destination branding should be an analysis of the macro and micro environments, strategic analysis of resources and competitive analysis of the market. The following table is a summary of destination planning and analysis.

Table 3.8   Summary of destination analysis

Macro and micro environmental analysis	Resource analysis	Competitive analysis
o Lack of corruption in government o Stability of currency o Staff costs and skills o Sound distribution sector o Level of technology o Market potential o Strategies of local operators	o Architecture at destination level o History o Local way of life o Various cultures o Festivals and events o Museums and galleries o Night life	o Safety and security o Tourism infrastructure o Sports tourism & agro-tourism o Rural & cultural tourism o Shopping & merchandising o Accommodation & amenities o Internal transport o Regional strategy o HR development

Source: Researcher's construction from various sources reviewed in the study

3.8.3 Destination brand image analysis

When carrying out an analysis of the image of a destination, it is important to define the beliefs, ideas and impressions that a tourist has about the destination. The analysis of the image of the destination should take two forms, namely it should focus on both the supply side and the demand side. The supply-side analysis involves the conducting of qualitative research in the form of content analysis. It involves the analysis of the existing promotional material and in-depth and focus-group interviews with the tourism stakeholders. The demand-side analysis involves quantitative research in which in-depth and focus interviews are conducted with the current visitors as well an analysis of the current information that is undertaken by independent sources. This information should contribute to the articulation of a vision, mission and goals for the destination.

3.8.4 Brand development process

The destination-brand development process involves the review of tourism and generic tourism factors in order to create a fusion of ideas. These factors include the brand essence, brand character and the existing association. The review of tourism factors involves the determination of strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of the current brand. Included in this review is an analysis of the existing logos, names, signs and/or symbols. The understanding of the brand development process should create a fusion of ideas that could see the birth of a new brand that has its own personality, brand character, values, brand identity and brand architecture.

3.8.5   Brand-positioning process

The brand-positioning process is a very important facet of destination branding. It involves a review of the prospective tourists and repeat customers. It is concerned with the market-segmentation process. The process is aimed at the development of a marketing plan. It involves the drafting of a brand strategy by establishing the various values, personalities and benefits of the brand in order to outwit the competitors and to drive competitive advantage. To achieve these objectives, the management of the destination should develop mental maps by matching various brand elements. Other strategies used in the brand positioning include the use of the marketing mix ingredients.

3.8.6   Brand implementation

The brand-implementation process involves the compilation of budgets to support the marketing programmes; development of marketing information; and launching of e-marketing strategies, advertising and brand messages. The process also includes the use of public relations to counter negative equity and to advise and inform tourists about certain events.

3.8.7   Brand management and evaluation

The last step in destination branding is to develop global marketing strategies and form both national and international marketing teams that act as representatives or attachés. At this stage the brand is evaluated and benchmarked against other

competing brands in order to devise unique brand-management strategies. The aim is to protect and consolidate the brand's dominance. The destination branding and positioning flow chart developed after an intense literature study sets the basis for the development of a branding and positioning framework for this study.

3.9   SUMMARY

This chapter has reviewed the relevant literature on the destination branding and its impact on competitive positioning. It considers the concept of brand equity and the importance of establishing a brand awareness campaign. The chapter has furthermore discussed the significance of destination positioning. The exposition of this matter is followed by a detailed outline of destination-positioning guidelines. Thereafter, positioning is closely linked to market segmentation and target marketing. The chapter also discussed the points of parity and points of difference that can act as measures of competitive advantage. Finally, several re-branding and repositioning concepts were reviewed, including various frameworks that could be used for developing marketing strategies and sustenance of competitive advantage. The influence of an image on a destination brand was discussed and the competitiveness factors that are associated with a destination, including the destination's attractiveness. The next chapter focuses on the international best practices in destination branding.