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# Successful Marketing Strategies for Promoting Event Destinations

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## Successful Marketing Strategies for Promoting Event Destinations

Successful Marketing Strategies for Promoting Event Destinations

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science in Human Environmental Sciences

by

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University of Central Arkansas  
Bachelor of Arts in Telecommunications, 2000

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This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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## Abstract

Travel and tourism has been recognized as being an important driver of jobs, growth and economic recovery in the United States. Meetings, events and incentive travel contribute \$98.7 billion of the direct spending, \$15.0 billion in taxes and 859,000 jobs. As a result, destination marketing organizations (DMOs) in the United States are taking advantage of this impact for growth in their destinations. As a destination marketing organization's main job responsibility is to promote their destination to attract visitors, which requires superior marketing strategies to achieve these goals.

This research investigates the marketing strategies of DMOs in the United States. The specific purposes of the paper are: (1) to explore the incentives and marketing strategies used by DMOs to attract clients to a destination (2) to explore the importance of the strategic marketing features on a destination's desirability and (3) to provide the most effective destination marketing strategies for promoting a destination.

The data for this study were obtained by way of a survey and documentation. The target population for this study was DMOs in the United States of America and the unit of analysis was each individual DMO. The sample limitation for this study was destinations with populations less than 300,000. The sample selection acquired from the DMAI membership list for this study was a convenience sample consisting of 142 DMOs. Out of 142 surveys, 19 were collected and 13 were usable. Therefore, the data from 13 respondents were analyzed in this study. Descriptive statistics (Mean, Percentage, and Frequencies) were used to analyze the data collected for this study.

The results of the research reveal the importance of when DMOs are developing the marketing strategies for promoting their destination, there are some key elements that should be involved in their planning for success in attracting groups, (1) incorporating valued incentives, (2) using the most effective marketing strategies such as word-of-mouth and (3) enhancing and promoting the features of their destination, such as accessibility, cost of living, attractions, facilities and services, and image, brand and perception .

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I give my sincere thanks to my father, Evans Seawood, and mother, Vera Seawood for your wisdom, discipline and values that you instilled in me at a young age. I am always proud to tell people that while my parents didn't attend college, they are the proud parents of six children who are college graduates. To my siblings, Gregory, Angela, Genette, Rodney, and Chris, I have always looked up to each of you my entire life. The support, love, laughter, and encouragement that you all give me keep me going. Our family is a testament of the goodness of God. Can anything good thing come out of Forrest City, AR? Well, I can name eight! To all of my nieces and nephews (all 19 of you), you all have a special place in my heart and I am proud of each of you! Dream big! And just when you think that is big enough, dream bigger!

To my brother and sister, Naccaman and Angela, thanks for serving as my second set of parents and the huge role you play in our family! Many thanks for all of your help!

## Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my mom, Vera Seawood, who is my hero and the wind beneath my wings. This process has been very challenging for me. This was only intensified with my mom's diagnosis with dementia. Some days the challenge and uncertainty of the process coupled with my mom's condition and her not being there in the same capacity was hard to bear. However, all of the lessons that she taught me, unconditional love she always showed and my desire of always wanting to make her proud is what sustained me. I will love you always, will continue to make you proud and be the strong woman that you taught me to be!

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

Travel and tourism enhance the quality of life for a local community by providing jobs; bringing in tax dollars for the improvement of services and infrastructure; and attracting facilities, such as restaurants, shops, festivals, and cultural and sporting venues that cater to both tourists and locals (Fenich, 2011)

According to the U.S. Travel Association, the economic impact of the travel industry on the U.S. economy is \$1.9 trillion, producing \$124 billion in tax revenue generated by travel spending for federal, state and local governments, and this spending also supports 14.4 million U.S. jobs. Meetings, events and incentive travel contribute \$98.7 billion of the direct spending, \$15.0 billion in taxes and 859,000 jobs. When visitors travel to a destination, their spending has a substantial effect on a destination's economy in the areas of food service, public transportation, lodging, auto transportation, recreation and amusement and retail.

As a result of this significant impact on the economy, cities are capitalizing on this phenomenon for growth in their destinations. Therefore, there is more competition among cities for promoting their destination to attract key stakeholders such as the consumer, policy-makers, investors, event organizers and destination marketing organizations.

A destination is a city, area or country that can be marketed to groups or individuals as a place to visit or hold an event (Fenich, 2011). Although they differ from each other, destinations share certain characteristics, and their success in attracting tourists will depend upon the quality of three essential factors: (1) adequate attractions, (2) amenities or facilities, and (3) accessibilities for tourists (Holloway, 1998). Attractions differentiate destinations from each other. They are very critical to a destination and receive mostly attention from tourists. Whereas tourists may appreciate a destination's attractions, they may not be motivated to visit the

destination if the amenities and accessibilities are inadequate. Thus, destination marketing must coordinate the attractions, the amenities, and the accessibilities to achieve competitive advantages. Destination marketing should be concerned with long-term goals of the destination, policy development, and should specify the methods suitable for achieving those objectives (Getz, 1991).

This procedure requires sophisticated marketing planning and product development that increasingly attract visitors while providing them with satisfying memorable experiences in a profitable way, and at the same time enhancing the well-being of destination residents and preserving the natural capital of the destination for future generations (Ritchie and Crouch, 2003).

This study explores the incentives and marketing strategies used by DMOs to attract clients to a destination. It explores the importance of the strategic marketing features on a destination's desirability. Finally, this study provides the most effective destination marketing strategies for promoting an event destination.

The results of this study are important to the critical stakeholders- DMO's, the city and the hotel as they develop or maintain a competitive and promotional advantage as a destination.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Definition of terms

This section provides definitions for terms used in the study that are uncommon, have special meaning and acronyms. Also included in this section is a list of conditions that were adapted for the purpose of this study. The following definitions and conditions are included to add consistency and understanding of these phrases and ideas used throughout the study. All definitions and conditions that are not accompanied by citation were established by the researcher.

**Accessibility:** The transportation and road systems of a destination (i.e. buses, airports, freeways)

**Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB):** Also synonymous as DMO. CVB and DMO are used interchangeably throughout the study.

**Destination:** A destination is a city, area or country that can be marketed to groups or individuals as a place to visit or hold an event (Fenich, 2011).

**Destination Marketing Organization (DMO):** Create the marketing strategies for destinations and guarantees that the objectives are accomplished.

**Groups:** Tourists who visit destinations

**Group Success:** For the purpose of this study destinations were classified as achieving group success if their largest group totals were at least 500 or more annually

**Marketing Strategy:** According to Tribe (1997, p. 13) 'Strategy...[is] the planning of a desirable future and the design of suitable ways of bringing it about.' Marketing strategy specifies the long-term goals and objectives of an organization, identifying opportunities and the scope of activities needed to realize them.

**Sample Limitation:** For the purpose of this study the samples were limited to destinations with populations of 300,000 or less. This was established as a result of the destination with the highest population that responded to the survey; who had a population a little less than 300,000.

**Unit of Analysis:** DMOs

## **2.2 Travel and tourism impact on a destination**

Tourism is a powerful economic force providing employment, foreign exchange, income, and tax revenue (Hudson, 2005). According to the U.S. Travel Association, the economic impact of the travel industry on the U.S. economy is \$1.9 trillion, producing \$124 billion in tax revenue generated by travel spending for federal, state and local governments, and this spending also supports 14.4 million U.S. jobs. Meetings, events and incentive travel contribute \$98.7 billion of the direct spending, \$15.0 billion in taxes and 859,000 jobs.

This impact also occurs on the local and state levels within various market sizes. There are numerous destinations throughout the U.S. that have achieved success in tourism and exemplify good destinations to benchmark. For example, according to the Longwood Travel USA Visitor Report and Kentucky State Department of Travel, Louisville, has a total of 16.7 million visitors, which provides the city with expenditures of \$1.7 billion and 25,000 jobs in the greater Louisville area as a result of people visiting the destination each year.

Similarly, According to the North Carolina Convention & Visitors Bureau (2010), Moore County in North Carolina is receiving its fair share of growth from tourism considerably. Moore County's domestic tourism revenues in 2009, was over \$321 million. On average, that means in excess of \$880,082 is pumped into the economy via travel and tourism every day. As a result of this impact, Moore County employs 4840 people to support the travel industry in the area.

The report indicates that thousands of other Moore County residents indirectly depend on the travel industry for their livelihood: retail merchants, financial services, real estate firms, food and beverage vendors, and construction trades. In Moore County, visitors generated \$28.1 million annually in state and local taxes, representing savings in excess of \$1065 annually for every household in Moore County. Moore County ranks third in total travel revenues generated per capita, meaning that local government and its citizens rely heavily on travel revenues. Without tourism support, many of the amenities in the county would not be available for the residents to enjoy.

In a study conducted by Gladstone and Fainstein (2001), they compare the impact of tourism on New York and Los Angeles. The states are the two largest metropolises in the United States and have large internationalized workforces and visitors that significantly impact their economies. The study finds that visitors to New York City spent over \$13.5 billion in 1997 with the entire metropolitan region accounting for about \$15 billion of tourist-generated revenue (NYCVB, 1999).

In Los Angeles, visitors contributed \$11.3 billion to the regional economy (LACVB, 1998). Moreover, the study finds that tourism contributes a significant source of employment for each destination. New York tourism firms employed about 130,700 workers directly and about half as many indirectly as a result of the tourism industry's link to other New York industries. The tourism industry is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest industry in New York. Although New York attracts more visitors annually, the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC) ranks tourism as the third largest industry in Los Angeles. The city employed over 253,000 people in 1997.

As indicated by Business Travel Destinations.com, for too long, travel and tourism has not been fully embraced by some in the public sector as the economic machine that it is for local

communities, cities and states and countries. Yet recently, the industry is receiving its overdue recognition. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) stated that the G20 world leaders for the first time have recognized the importance of Travel and Tourism as a driver of jobs, growth and economic recovery. WTTC states that the industry directly will contribute \$2 trillion in GDP and 100 million jobs to the global economy in 2012. Travel and Tourism is forecast to contribute some \$6.5 trillion to the global economy and generate 260 million jobs-or one in twelve of all jobs on the planet. The United Nations World Travel Organization (UNWTO) projects that the world will reach the milestone of 1 billion international travelers in 2012.

### **2.3 Destination marketing organizations (DMOs)**

Destination marketing organizations (DMOs), also synonymous as convention and visitors bureaus (CVB), is an organizational concept which originated in the USA. DMOs have been the central force in the growing power and influence of local destination marketing organizations (Morrison, Bruen, and Anderson, 1998). For the purpose of this study DMOs and CVBs will be used interchangeably. With the advancement in tourism, destination marketing organizations (DMOs) focus has increased in attracting their portion of visitors.

DMOs exist to promote and manage tourism in their destination (Gartrell, 1988) in a way that enhances the positive effects of tourism in the long run (Pike 2004) or maximizes competitiveness in a sustainable manner (Buhalis, 2000; Ritchie and Crouch, 2000). DMOs create the marketing strategies for destinations and guarantees that the objectives are accomplished.

DMOs, a critical component of the destination tourism industry, is often expected to communicate and market a large and diverse range of destination attributes, including natural features, commercial and non-for-profit facilities and amenities, and people (Blain, Levy &

Ritchie, 2005; Pike , 2004). In their role, DMOs are required to (1) produce a coordinated strategy for tourism within the region in liaison with the local municipalities and other parties in the region; (2) represent the interests of the region and the interests of the tourism industry at the destination; (3) encourage the development of tourism amenities and facilities that meet the changing needs of markets; (4) market the region by providing reception and information services and undertaking miscellaneous promotional activities (Heath and Wall, 1992, Holloway 1998).

Fenich (2011) states that a DMO in each city, country or region has three prime responsibilities (1) to encourage groups to hold meetings, conventions, and trade shows in the city or area it represents; (2) to assist those groups with their meetings and meeting preparations; (3) to encourage tourists to visit and enjoy the historic, cultural, and recreational opportunities that the destination offers.

According to Gartrell (1988), CVBs are distinctive organizations that “represent and market their communities in a very competitive market place that involves meetings and conventions, group tours, and visitors” (p.54). Most bureaus are classified as independent, not-for-profit organizations; some are part of city or county governments, or the local chamber of commerce; while others have special legal authority (Gretzel, Yuan, and Fesenmaier, 2009).

Since the vast majority of people are not aware of the role of the DMO, they are missing out on how much of an asset a DMO can be to them when planning a meeting or event. DMOs make planning and implementing a meeting or event less time-consuming and more streamlined by giving planners access to a range of services, packages, and value-added extras (Fenich, 2011).

#### **2.4 DMOs collaboration with stakeholders**

Collaboration partnership has been a key research paradigm in destination marketing literature (Jamal and Getz, 1995). Collaboration for destination marketing occurs at the interorganizational domain level rather than at the individual or organizational level (Lawrence, Philips, and Hardy, 1999). Hall and McArthur (1998) describe collaboration as an interactive or integrative approach which requires participation and interaction between the various levels of the responsible local organizations or stakeholders.

In fact, the establishment of collaborative relationships between Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) and local communities is becoming increasingly crucial for sustainable destination marketing (Gartrell, 1998). Collaboration as a means for marketing destinations has been practiced through organizations such as CVBs in the USA and Tourism Development Action Programs (TDAP's) in the U.K. (Palmer and Bejou , 1995).

Destination marketing organizations (DMOs), play the central role in marketing their geographic areas to meeting and convention planners, the travel trade, individuals and other groups (Beldona, Morrison, Anderson, n.d.). Perhaps the most interesting characteristic of a DMO is that they generally do not own or control the products and services they market yet they are held accountable for the effective marketing of their destination (Beldona, Morrison , Anderson).

Gartrell (1998) says that a CVB must “sell the city” by performing the following six roles:

1. Developing an image to position the city in the marketplace as an attractive destination for meetings and visitors.
2. Coordinating the constituent elements of the industry and public sector.
3. Working with meeting and group planners.
4. Representing both buyers (the demand side) and sellers (the supply), so that an Autonomous organization is required in order to avoid conflicts of interest.

5. Providing information and responding to visitor inquiries.
6. Providing leadership for the industry.

The main stakeholders for destination marketing, the destination promotion triad, are the destination marketing organization (DMO), the city and hotels. These three entities are reliant on each other and are the driving forces behind the promotion of event destinations.

In a case study conducted by Sheenan, Ritchie and Hudson (2007), representatives from the triad- the DMO, underwent a series of questions during an interview about their roles, relationships with each other and interactions. The study shows that within this triad, it is the responsibility of the city (the public sector) to provide most of the financial resources to the triad. It's role is unique to the city because tourism destination promotion is a public good (Bonham and Mark, 1996) that benefits all residents and businesses in the destination and therefore warrants public funding (Sheenan, Ritchie and Hudson, 2007). Other responsibilities of the city include providing a vision for the economic development of the community and for tourism, identifying areas where the DMO can help attain the city vision and how the city can assist the DMO achieve tourism vision.

The role of the hotels (private sector) is to provide critical nonfinancial or operational resources to the triad. Hotels partner with DMOs by providing in-kind resources (complimentary or discounted rooms) to promote the destination to key travel influencers, information on room prices and availability to support DMO initiatives to bring in large groups to a destination. Finally, the role of the DMO is the most complex, as the DMO role is to provide organizational resources. The main goal of the triad is to work together cohesively to attract more visitors to the destination.

For the triad to reach its full potential, members of the triad should actively dialogue with each other and understand each member's role. (Sheenan, Ritchie, and Hudson, 2007).

## **2.5 Impact and role of hotels with DMOs**

While all of the relationships within the triad are essential for the promotion of destinations, the relationship between the DMO and the hotel is perhaps the most critical and should be leveraged most often due to their interesting dynamic. Destination Marketing Organizations such as Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs) are funded by locally collected room taxes from hotels. Hotel occupancy/transient taxes, or "room (bed) taxes" as they are often called, have been a major catalyst in the growth of CVBs in the USA (Morrison, Bruen, Anderson, 1998). Over half of the bureaus in the USA receive their funding from these taxes, with the smaller bureaus being even more dependent on funding from these taxes.

Possibly, the most important role of the CVB within its community is to serve as a focal point and an "umbrella" organization for the diverse range of organizations and individuals involved in tourism (Morrison, Bruen, Anderson, 1998). The CVB role is unique and invaluable to the community, particularly hotels, as the CVB has the ability to influence a visitor's decisions and sell products. For example, for the convention/meeting planner, the CVB can check hotel availability, distribute meeting specifications to hotels, solicit bid proposals, and conduct personalized site inspections (Barker, 1993). Obviously, hotels have to sell rooms to stay in business. Both groups are valuable to each other for communication and information as it relates to destination promotion.

According to Beldona and Morrison (n.d.), hotels and CVBs need to treat collaborative efforts as though they are investing in their own equity interests because the collection of hotel/bed taxes binds them together. Yet, CVBs and hotels have not yet established entirely

satisfactory alliances (Feiertag, 2001). According to Jones, Hesterly, and Borgatti (1997), for the DMO and hotel cooperative relationship to function cohesively towards a common purpose, the issues of trust, collaboration, power and control will play a critical role.

## **2.6 Factors that motivate people to visit destinations**

Destination image for a specific destination and travel motivation provide important information for understanding tourist behaviors and behavioral intentions (Philips and Jang, 2007). The term “images” is said to be “an abstract concept incorporating the influences of past promotion, reputation and peer evaluation of alternatives (Dann ,1996). Identifying destination images is especially important to destination marketing organizations (DMOs) because the image transposes representation of an area in the potential tourist’s mind, giving them a preview of the destination (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991).

Generally, a positive image supports the intention to visit and a negative image negatively influences visit intention (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991). Studies have shown that, depending on the type of image that a tourist has for a particular destination, tourist choices could be reasonably predicted (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Goodrich, 1978).

Visitor surveys commonly find that large percentages of destination visitors are either repeat visitors or a direct result of word-of-mouth recommendation of a previous visitor (Reid and Reid, 1993). Furthermore, it is also argued that repeat visitors tend to create positive word-of-mouth referrals, thereby creating positive destination images and encouraging first-time visitors (Petrick, 2004a, 2004b). Numerous studies have examined direct effects of customer satisfaction on intention to return and destination loyalty (Jang and Feng, 2007; Oppermann 2000; Yoon and Uysal, 2005). This research consistently finds a strong positive correlation between satisfaction and repeat visitation intentions (Hyun and Perdue, 2010). According to

Hyun and Perdue (2010) previous trip satisfaction positively impacts destination image and, subsequently, impacts revisit intentions (Oliver, 1997).

Other researchers suggest that motivation in the image formation influences visits (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Stabler, 1995). According to travel motivation theory, there are two types of motivations: push and pull (Dann, 1977). Push motivation is what instills a desire for people to want to travel, while pull factors are closely related to destination attributes that attract tourists (Iso-Ahola, 1982). Push factors are attached to the desires or necessities of travelers and include things such as escape, rest, relaxation and adventure. While pull factors, include things that draw people to a destination such as food, people, and attractions. It is important that an empirical examination of tourist motivations is undertaken since it helps identify the attributes that are to be promoted to match tourist motivations, or to identify markets in which destination features and resources match tourist motivations (Kozak, 2001).

There is evidence that shows that differences do exist in travel behaviors according to the region of where a traveler resides. Fisher and Price (1991) observed that there was a critical association between intercultural interaction and such travel motivations as meeting new people, education, escape, and kinship, which were related to the satisfaction of travelers. Pso, Mihalik, and Uysal (1989) found that US tourists indicated escaping and seeking kinship as the most important motives to travel. In contrast, Eastern travelers indicate different reasons for traveling. Mok and Armstrong (1995) studied Hong Kong and Taiwanese travelers' motivation of visiting Australia, and found that personal safety was perceived to be the highest motivation factor among respondents; the other important factors included scenic beauty, cultural interests, friendliness of local people, price of trip, services in hotels and restaurants, quality and variety of food, and shopping facilities and services. The result of the studies suggested that travelers'

perceptions toward a destination appear to be one of the forces driving potential travelers to a destination.

According to Lam and Hsu (2006) motivation for travel has been an important area of study in the tourism literature for decades. The study also state that understanding why people travel and what factors influence their behavioral intention of choosing a travel destination is beneficial to tourism planning and marketing. While their study agrees with the vast studies that indicate that the” push and pull” model are reasons for a traveler’s motivation, they propose that this area of study should be expanded to include research that will examine how the push and pull factors guide people’s attitudes and how these attitudes lead to behavioral intentions of choosing a travel destination. The study related the theory of planned behavior (TPB) to explain the process that travelers follow when choosing a destination.

The model, based on the three constructs of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control, was first introduced by Fishbien and Ajzen (1975) and was regarded as an extension of the theory of reasoned action (TRA) by taking the issues of volitional and subsequent related control elements into account in predicting human behavioral intention and actual behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1991,2001). The basic paradigms of TPB are that people are likely to carry out a particular type of behavior if they believe that such behavior will lead to a particular outcome that they value: that their important referents will value and approve of the behavior; and that they have the necessary resources, abilities, and opportunities to perform such behavior (Ajzen, 1985).

In the context of tourism, attitudes are predispositions or feelings toward a vacation destination or service, based on multiple perceived product attributes (Moutinho, 1987). Behavioral intention could be defined as an individual’s anticipated or planned future behavior

(Swan, 1981). In a study of potential travelers from mainland China to Hong Kong, Lam and Hsu (2004) found that attitude and perceived behavioral control were related to travel intention. Although TPB has been considered as a valid model for predicting behavioral intention, Quellette and Wood (1998) found that the variance in explaining behavioral intention increased when past behavior was added into the TPB model.

In a study conducted by Lam and Hsu (2004) they sampled Taiwanese travelers who passed through but did not enter Hong Kong on their way back to Taiwan at restricted areas of the Hong Kong International Airport. The respondents were given a questionnaire that was designed to collect information on the likelihood of choosing Hong Kong as a travel destination (behavioral intention); likely outcomes of choosing Hong Kong as a travel destination (attitude and BB's); groups or individuals whose views might influence respondents' selection of Hong Kong as a travel destination (subjective norm and NB's); factors that might facilitate or inhibit travel to Hong Kong (perceived behavioral control and CB's); and frequency or past visit to Hong Kong. The results of the study showed that as the number of previous visits to Hong Kong increases, Taiwanese travelers' intention of revisiting Hong Kong becomes stronger. Travelers who have had good experiences are more likely to re-patronize and help encourage potential tourists to Hong Kong through favorable word-of-mouth.

## **2.7 Destination marketing**

Conventions and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs) are the Destination Marketing Organizations of their cities. CVBs are the drivers of the revenue and taxes for their local economies as a result of their marketing knowledge. This marketing knowledge enables them to implement strategies to successfully promote an event destination and support the local economy.

Marketing is a managerial process involving several activities (Kotler,2003); establishing marketing goals and objectives, formulating marketing strategy, preparing and implementing plans (Soteriades and Avgeli, 2007). According to Tribe (1997, p. 13) ‘Strategy....[is] the planning of a desirable future and the design of suitable ways of bringing it about.’ Marketing strategy specifies the long-term goals and objectives of an organization, identifying opportunities and the scope of activities needed to realize them. To be successful in tourism markets, DMO’s must be able to interpret the needs of their visitors, identify appropriate ways of segmenting the markets in which they compete, develop and launch the appropriate products and effectively communicate with potential visitors (Soteriades and Avgeli 2007).

Currently, there is an increased demand for destination marketing, due to rising customer expectations and growing competition between destinations (Pike, 2004; Scott et al., 2000). Conversely, destinations are among the most difficult entities to manage and market (Buhalis, 2000). The tourism ‘product’ is an experience achieved through the combination of a diverse array of products and services (Heath and Wall, 1994). For visitors, the product is the total experience, covering the entire amalgam of all aspects and components of the product, including attitudes and expectations (Soteriades and Avgeli , 2007).

According to Middleton and Clarke (2001) the overall tourism product is a package, and may be defined in terms of five main components, namely: destination attractions; destination facilities and services; accessibility of the destination (including transport); images, brands and perceptions; price to the visitor. Although there is plenty of literature on destination planning and development of facilities (Inskip, 1991; Gunn, 1994), there are few textbooks examining destination marketing (Heath and Wall, 1992; Goodall and Ashworth, 1988) and even fewer illustrate destinations as an experience provider for tourists and locals (Ryan, 1997).

An important first step in planning one's marketing strategies is to conduct appropriate research. Research is assessing or analyzing marketing and evaluating marketing efforts (Masberg, 2012). Marketing research is used extensively by destination marketers to identify the types of customers that can be attracted (active demand), as well as the prospective visitors (suppressed demand) who do not visit for a variety of reasons (Athiyaman, 1997).

According to Anderson (1993) research is not seen as a priority by a majority of respondents, most bureaus do not have a research department, and research is a small budget item for the bureaus. In a study conducted by Masberg (2012) where one hundred fifty three questionnaires were collected from directors of bureaus in the United States to investigate their research efforts, the study found that while research was seen as important and essential to making the CVB more productive, the bureaus do not seem to be putting time and money into research and not enough is being completed. It was also found that total budgets for the bureaus averaged approximately \$10 million with the research budget ranging from \$5,000 to \$49,000. The study further concludes that as marketing becomes more sophisticated and competition becomes stronger, research becomes even more important.

Some literature suggests, that in order for a DMO to plan, design and implement effective marketing strategies for a destination, it would be useful for one to be equipped with the correct information. Destination Management Systems (DMS) is a useful instrument that is being utilized by some DMOs to guide them in this effort. The importance of monitoring and analyzing the tourism environment and its dynamics has been documented by several authors (Porter, 1995; Middleton & Clarke, 2001). In several cases, DMSs have been used to integrate the entire tourism supply at the destination (Soteriades, Avgeli).

According to Buhalis (1995), destination management systems combine the radically advanced and fast growing technology with new or better communications (telecommunication networks) with the aim of satisfying the needs of the growing tourist market.

Arguably, the greatest agent for change in destination marketing is technology, which increases the “intertextuality of contemporary destination marketing” by adding new media and means to represent the destination (Hannam 2004, p. 261). With customers’ increased use of the internet and demand for more experiences, products and services; DMOs have increased marketing efforts in the information technology medium. As a result of this demand, the availability of up-to-date, accurate, attractive and accessible information is crucial for a destination’s success (Beldona, Morrison, and Anderson, n.d.). The new consumer wants to be addressed in personalized ways and with customized messages that reflect individual preferences (Windham and Orton 2000).

The Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI) 2012 DMO Marketing Study identifies key marketing strategies of DMOs. The study reveals that DMOs are investing in digital media, spending more than \$39 million in websites and mobile app development in the last three years. Another finding is that half are marketing internationally and spending one third of their marketing budget outside of the U.S. with their international marketing targeting places in Canada, the United Kingdom and Germany. This marketing initiative has increased DMOs integration of social media and banner ads into their marketing plans. The study also found that DMOs are spending more on their websites and mobile websites. More than three-fourths use a Content Management System (CMS) and more than half have destination apps.

Many trends have emerged in technology as it relates to tourism today. Web 2.0 applications are of special importance to the travel and tourist industry due to the fact that future

tourist (travelers) nowadays use the Internet in all phases of journey planning and also in the course of the journey, enjoying benefits offered by new applications (Ruzic and Bilos, 2010). A 2009 PhocusWright study reported that 56 percent of U.S. travelers select their vacation destination online. This process begins on the Internet by a traveler first researching which destination they would like to travel to, reserving their accommodation, making travel arrangements and during and after their trip they are writing about their experiences. Some destinations are partnering with online companies such as Expedia to help them with their on line marketing. According to Expedia, “our campaigns have proven to grow bookings for our destination partners, extending their season and helping shift share from competing destinations. Online technology has evolved and includes an expansive variety of terms.” Ruzic & Bilos (2010) indicates some of the most relevant, popular ones listed below:

- Instant messaging
- Social Network Services (Facebook.com, Twitter)
- Social Guides (TripAdvisor.com)
- Weblogs, Blogs, Podcast
- Social Reputation Network (eBay.com)
- Location Based Services (Mobile phone and GPS related)
- Internet Telephony (VOIP; Skype.com)
- Internet Relay Chat (chat rooms)
- Internet Discussion Forums (bulletin boards)
- Social Bookmarking (Del.icio.us, Google notebook)
- Social Citations (Citeulike.org)
- Peer-to-peer Social Networks (file sharing)

- Virtual Presence (GoToMeeting.com)
- Virtual Worlds & Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMIGs; World of Warcraft, Second Life)
- Wikis & Collaborative Writing/Editing (Google Docs & Spreadsheets, Wikipedia)

Online travelers are relying on other consumer's recommendations and opinions about products and services more so than information driven by that particular business website. Hence, one of the most important techniques in technology today and marketing is eCRM development. This includes discussion groups and forums, blogs and social networks like MySpace and LinkedIn. According to Rubic et al. in today's conditions eCRM has to be a vital component of the tourist Internet marketing strategy. Similarly, RSS (Real Simple Syndication) feeds have becoming increasingly accepted for providing information as well.

Another familiar trend in tourism is the construction of mobile pages of a tourist destination. More than 25% of users of mobile phones and PDA devices access the Internet through their wireless devices (Ruzic and Bilos, 2010). According to a January 2010 report from Destination Analysts, 43.5 percent of consumer respondents said they had used some form of user generated content to plan leisure travel in the last 12 months, and 24 percent said they had used a mobile phone or PDA to access travel information-80 percent higher than the prior year.

While some DMOs are hesitant about using social media, many have embraced it and are finding success in marketing their destinations. Those who have achieved success have done so by developing online marketing strategies that concentrates on their destination's strengths by incorporating some of the current trends in technology into their plan.

Nevertheless, not all DMOs are using information technology as a marketing strategy. Some studies have demonstrated that DMOs have not fully incorporated technology in their operations and strategies (Gretzel, Fesenmaier, Formica and O’Leary, 2010). Other studies have suggested possible reasons for this delay which include limited resources, lack of communication, legal regulations and restrictions, and ownership issues were the important barriers to technology implementation and adoption (Gretzel, Yuan and Fesenmaier, 2009).

In a study conducted by Gretzel, Fesenmaier, Formica and O’Leary (2010), 22 destination marketing experts participated in a Forum on Technology and Change to discuss the strategic reorientation needed in destination marketing. The results of the study concluded that while websites are very effective in promoting destinations, it should not replace traditional marketing strategies. Websites have not replaced call centers; rather, Web presence often drives phone inquiries.

Furthermore, they recommended that instead of using technology as a substitute for the old way of doing things, that DMOs should consider how to maximize the use of technology to add new value so that it leads to a reconfigured experience for the consumer (Gretzel, et al., 2010). According to Contractor et al. (2000) true benefits of a technology lie in the ability to reconfigure organizational approaches and create new ways of doing things. Several DMOs have implemented this approach through a process known as “Napsterization”. This process involves partnering with other DMOs and sharing information through a peer-to-peer (P2P) database by blending knowledge to increase business for all DMOs in a particular area. For example, bureaus in Illinois joined forces and established an Illinois Sales Committee to target the meetings and conventions market. The committee recognized that the issue is not fighting

about which town will be picked but working together to get meetings and conventions into the state (Gretzel, et al., 2010).

According to Travel weekly.com, the Big XII Convention and Visitor Bureaus, a marketing alliance of CVBs, which is composed of the heads of the 12 CVBs in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas, has had success by forming their alliance. Liz Taylor, the chairman, stated that the alliance provides a marketing opportunity they would not otherwise have, the alliance has brought cities and universities closer together and, for the colleges, has opened up new meetings markets in addition to athletic and academic conferences and has increased the meetings leads they get at shows.

While a considerable portion of the bureau budget is spent on attracting the traveling public to a specific destination, only a minimal amount of the marketing budget is allocated to advertising within the community (Gretzel, et al., 2010). Some DMOs report that their roles have evolved from just marketing a destination to include broader management responsibilities. These responsibilities include becoming more active in the community to support the economic development.

To reflect this change, currently many organizations are referred to as Destinations Marketing and Management Organizations as opposed to Destination Marketing Organizations to include the new, found responsibilities of the role. Additionally, many DMOs are establishing board of directors and public relations positions in their communities. DMO boards of directors are often composed of hoteliers and representatives of the local restaurants and attractions, and community members who have traditionally worked with the bureau. Public relations are used to generate news stories, articles and publicity in order to develop the awareness of consumers and persuade them to purchase products. This approach has proven success, as one DMO noted:

“When we developed the PR position about 6 years ago, I think we were the only small-to-medium sized bureau around with such a position. Creating that position was the single smartest thing that our organization has done in the last years.”

Studies indicate that public relations are also critical for the development and updating of the right image (Morgan and Pritchard, 1998; Middleton, 1992).

Destination branding has evidence of being an effective strategy for promoting both smaller and larger event destinations. Ritchie and Ritchie (1998) define a “destination brand” as a name, symbol, logo, word mark, or other graphic that both differentiates the destination; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience. Bennett (1999) contends that having no brand image is like someone with no personality. Since establishing a brand image, Australia has one of the highest spends per visitor of any destination in the world (Bennett 1999). The 1998, Annual Travel and Tourism Research Association, reported a number of destination branding success stories that included; New York; Louisiana, Texas; Branson, Missouri and Fredericksburg, Texas (Blain, Levy, Ritchie).

Other strategies and communication channels for promoting destinations is by leading promotional campaigns. A campaign consists of using a broad range of promotional methods that include above and below the line promotional activity. Above the line promotional activity includes advertising on the television, radio, and press as well as poster campaigns (Buhalis 2000). While very expensive, above the line advertisement can assist the development of the destination brand as well as influence a large number of visitors to travel to the destination or to extend their visit (Bonham and Mak, 1996).

Below the line promotional activity includes participating in major annual tourism and travel fairs throughout the country and having the occasion to interact with key stake holders to promote your destination.

Past studies have focused on the role of DMOs, the impact of travel and tourism on destination marketing, the motivating factors that attract visitors to destinations, the relationship between DMOs, the city and hotels. There's room for a study pertaining to strategic marketing of destinations by DMOs.

## **2.8 Purpose and objectives**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the marketing strategies of destination marketing organizations (DMOs). The objectives of this study were:

1. To explore the incentives used by DMOs to attract clients to a destination.
2. To examine the differences in marketing strategies among DMOs.
3. To explore the importance of the following strategic marketing factors on a destination's desirability:
  - a. Accessibility
  - b. Attractions
  - c. Facilities/Services
  - d. Price
  - e. Image, Brand, Perception

## Chapter 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

This research constructs a case study method on the marketing strategies of DMOs for promoting event destinations, with a concentration on the objectives outlined in the previous chapter of this paper. The data were obtained by way of a survey and documentation. This method was selected because it allowed for researchers to have access to the target population and therefore enables comparison among targeted DMOs in the United States. This approach is advantageous as it allowed for the ease of gathering data-due to the constraints of distance, money and time. Using a case study as a research design, involves understanding the purpose, the guidelines and the application of the process.

Case study, together with biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography are five common qualitative traditions of inquiry (Creswell 1998). According to Oxford English Dictionary, the phrase of case study (or case-study) can be traced back to 1934 after the establishment of the concept of a case history in medicine. Its use for the creation of new theory as a research methodology in social science has been further developed by the sociologists Glaser and Strauss (1967).

The case study approach is not merely a data collection tactic or a mere research design feature, but a “comprehensive research strategy”, which can be seen to satisfy the three tenets of the qualitative method: describing, understanding, and explaining (Xiao and Smith 2005, Tellis 1997).

Yin (1993) suggests that the case study method is appropriate when investigators desire to: (1) define and study topics broadly, (2) examine contextual conditions and not just the phenomenon of study in isolation from its environment, and (3) need to rely on multiple sources.

This chapter describes the data analysis and data collection process that was used in this study as well as establishes the methodology with a literature review on case study methods that includes types of case studies, validity and triangulation in case studies, and case study design, which all train the researcher in effectively carrying out the case study of this research.

### **3.2 Types of case studies**

There are three approaches to case studies: exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive (Yin 1989). An exploratory case study (whether based on single or multiple cases) is designed to explore those situations - in which the intervention is evaluated without clear single set of outcomes aiming to defining the questions and hypotheses of a subsequent study, or to determining the feasibility of the desired research procedures (Yin 1993). An explanatory or causal case study presents data bearing on cause-effect relationships and explaining how causes produce effects in real life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies (Yin2003a). A descriptive case study presents a complete description of a phenomenon in real-life context in which an intervention has occurred (Yin 1993).

### **3.3 Validity and triangulation in case studies**

Construct validity and reliability are especially problematic in case study research, and have been a source of criticism because of potential investigator subjectivity (Tellis 1997). Some methodologists (Tellis 1997, Creswell 1994, Yin 1993) recommend a solution to the problem by implementing triangulation, first used in the context of case studies by Denzin in 1978 (Creswell 1994). In the case study context, triangulation is the process of interpreting the meaning of an observation with additional observations that provide grounds for affirming or revising that interpretation (Stake 1995). There are several protocols of triangulation, including data source triangulation (to see if the phenomenon or case remains the same at other times, in other spaces,

or as persons interact differently), investigator triangulation (to look at the same scene or phenomenon by other researchers), theory triangulation (to select co-observers, panelists, or reviews from alternative theoretical viewpoints to extend the extent of investigators' description and their agreements on the interpretation), and methodological triangulation, which is most recognized to increase confidence in the interpretation by following multiple method approaches (Denzin 1984, 1989, cited in Stake 1995).

Triangulation is an effective method to use to constrain biases in data collecting while also increasing the validity of the results. The concept of triangulation is based on the premise that one can be more assured about the results of a study when different views indicate the same results.

Reliability is used to demonstrate that the operations of a study - such as data collection can be repeated with the same result. Reliability can be achieved through the use of formal case study protocols and the development of a case study database (Yin 1993).

There was not enough data collected to do a reliability test for this study. However, the protocol of theory triangulation was applied for establishing the validity of the results obtained from the DMOs via questionnaire.

The results were confirmed on the DMOs organization's website by selecting random responses to compare the legitimacy of the responses to counteract biases. Also, the data from the instrument was developed to give a comprehensive view of the DMOs information and perceptions.

### **3.4 Case study design**

According to Yin (1993), Creswell (1994), and Borum (1991, cited in Yin 1993), the case study design involves the procedures of (1) identifying study site, (2) collecting

data, (3) establishing protocol, and (4) analyzing data. Thus, as Yin (1993) insists, the entire design of the case study as well as its potential significance is strongly influenced by the choice of the unit of analysis. Yin (2003b) notes that the units of analysis should be separated from the units of data collection: the latter may be individual people, while the former should be organizational. In addition, case study design can be either single or multiple (Tellis 1997).

### **3.5 Data collection**

Yin (2003a) suggests maximizing the benefits of the six generic sources of data collection by following three principles: (1) using multiple sources of evidence, (2) creating a case study database, and (3) maintaining a chain of evidence.

Stake (1995) and Yin (1989, 1994, 2003a) identify at least six sources of evidence in data collection, which includes sources from documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts. However, each of these six sources has both strengths and weaknesses, and no single source has a complete advantage over all the others (Yin, 2003a). In fact, “a variety of sources are highly complementary, and a good case study will therefore want to use as many as sources as possible” (Yin 2003a, p 85). Creating a database is the next principle in data collection. The purpose of this step is: (1) to ensure the researchers have a clear and orderly record of the data collected - what, where, when, and how, and (2) to enable other investigators to review the evidence directly and not be limited to the written reports (Yin 1989).

The final principle is to maintain a chain of evidence (Yin, 1989). The purpose of this principle is to make the researchers move from one portion of the case study to another with clear “cross-referencing to the methodological procedures and the

resulting evidence” (Yin 1989, p 103). When these principles are used in data collection they increase the reliability of data in a case study.

To implement a case study, a protocol is essentially being more than a questionnaire or instrument (Yin 2003a). It is a major way of increasing the reliability of case study research, and is intended to guide the investigators in carrying out the data collection from research (Yin 2003a). A case study protocol should include the following information (Yin 2003a, p 69):

- An overview of the case study project (project objectives and auspices, case study issues, and relevant reading about the topic being investigated)
- Field procedures (presentation of credentials, access to the study site, general information, and procedural reminders)
- Case study questions (the specific question that the case study investigator must keep in mind in collecting data, “table shell” for specific arrays of data, and the potential sources of information for answering each question)
- A guide for the case study report (outline, format for the data, use and presentation of other documentation, and bibliographical information)

For this study, the case study protocol will not include field procedures as the research is being conducted by an online questionnaire.

The data for this study were obtained by way of a survey and documentation. The target population for this study was DMOs in the United States of America and the unit of analysis was each individual DMO. According to DMAI, every U.S. state and almost every larger city and county has its own CVB. Due to the large number of DMOs in the United States, the sample used in this research was obtained from the membership list of DMAI (Destination Marketing

Association International). DMAI is the world's largest and most reliable resource for official Destination Marketing Organizations and represents over 658 destination marketing organizations in more than 25 countries. The sample selection acquired from the DMAI membership list for this study was a convenience sample consisting of 142 DMOs. DMAI would not provide the email addresses needed for outreach to each member as it was against their confidentiality policy. Therefore, all email addresses had to be collected via each member's DMO website. The DMO's were selected based on geography, to ensure there was representation from all 4 corners of the United States included in the sample. The sample limitation for this study was destinations with populations less than 300,000.

The instrument for this study was designed based on a review of literature from prior studies (Middleton and Clarke, 2001; Holloway, 1988; Gartrell, 1998). The instrument was tested for validity and reliability. The validity of the instrument was evaluated and considered effective for this study by a focus group of five industry experts which consisted of DMO directors, a DMO operations manager and professors. A questionnaire was used as the main data-gathering instrument for this study. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. Part 1 of the instrument contained 10 questions regarding the participant's DMO demographic information such as the number of people on staff, number of hotel rooms available in that city and the operating and marketing budgets.

Part 2 of the instrument consisted of 41 questions consisting of the perceptions of participants' on their destination's characteristics in regards to things such as accessibility, transportation, price, image and brand perception, facilities and services, and relationship with local hotels. The questions were designed using the Likert scale format. In this survey type, six choices are provided for every statement. The choices represent the degree of agreement each

respondent has on a given statement with 1 representing strongly disagree, 5 representing strongly agree. Part 3 of the instrument consisted of 13 questions regarding the current marketing strategies of the DMO and the city's landmarks.

Data collection was based on a web-based survey method. Qualtrics (similar to SurveyMonkey.com) was used to design and administer the web-based survey. An email was sent to the DMAI members titled as executive directors and directors. Prior to participants beginning the web-based survey, an implied consent letter was sent to the sample via email. The letter advised the participant about the research being conducted and their right to participate or not participate in the study. Those who chose to participate responded to the questionnaire in the time frame allotted to complete the questionnaire.

### **3.6 Data analysis**

Descriptive statistics (Mean, Percentage, and Frequencies) were used to analyze the data collected for this study. This method was opted to obtain first-hand knowledge from the respondents who are responsible for managing the DMO for their destination, as the main objective of this study was to examine DMOs.

The data were collected from November to December 2012. The original emailing produced ten responses at the one week time limit. A follow up email was sent to the sample again to request the non-respondents to take part in the questionnaire. The second emailed produced an extra nine in responses. The response rate was 12.68. Thirteen of the nineteen responses collected were usable.

## Chapter 4 Results and Discussion

This chapter reports on the findings of the collected data for this case study as defined in the objectives. Table 1 illustrates the demographics of DMOs in the United States. The data reveal differences about each DMO in terms of population, position titles, staff size, operation and marketing budgets. The data also shows that regardless of a DMOs destination's population and staff size, most DMOs have large operating budgets and are spending a considerable amount of their operating budgets on marketing their destination annually. DMOs recognize that their main job responsibility is to promote destinations and the majority is using large percentages of their operating budgets on marketing each year to attract groups to their destinations. However, some destinations are achieving more group success than others. For the purpose of this study group success is defined as groups with 500 or more visitors annually.

Interestingly enough, the percentage of the operating budgets allotted to marketing by destinations is not found to be based on population or staff size. In fact, the data shows that some destinations with smaller populations and staff sizes have just as much annual operating budgets as destinations with larger populations. However, a key similarity between all the destinations is that each destination is using at least 25 percent of its operating budgets on marketing.

For example, Destination A has a population of 75,102, staff size of 6, an annual operating budget of \$2.1 million, allocates 27% (\$567,000) of that operating budget to marketing, and its largest group size is 400,000. While Destination E has a population of 269,776, staff size of 7, an annual operating budget of \$2.7 million, allocates 40% (\$1.8 million) of that operating budget to marketing, and its largest group size is 3000.

Another interesting finding is that the destinations with populations less than 20,000 are spending the highest percentage of their operating budgets on marketing; with marketing percentages ranging from 56-95% (more than half of their operating budgets). While destinations with populations greater than 20,000 are spending at least half or less of their operating budgets on marketing; with marketing percentages ranging from 25-50%.

The data also reveals that the average marketing percentage is 43%, demonstrating a huge disparity in percentages of marketing dollars being spent among destinations. The findings suggest that group success may not be contingent upon the amount of money being spent on marketing.

The first objective of this study was to explore the incentives used by DMOs to attract groups to a destination. Respondents were asked to list the top 5 incentives used to attract groups to their destination. Table 2 shows the list and the total number of incentives presented to groups by DMOs in this case study. The table lists the incentives used by DMOs who achieved less group success versus those who achieved more group success. The data indicates that the more incentives DMOs offer to groups, the more groups that will be attracted to a destination. Destinations that offered fewer incentives attracted fewer groups.

**Table 1. DMO Demographics**

<b>Destination City</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Staff Size</b>	<b>Operating Budget</b>	<b>Percent of Budget Allotted to Marketing</b>
Mean	86,690			<i>\$1.8 Million</i>	43%
A	75,102	Executive Director	6	\$2.1 Million	27%
B	10,063	CEO	7	\$1.2 Million	56%
C	145,151	President	13	\$1.8 Million	40%

D	22,712	Director	8	\$900,000	33%
E	269,776	Director	7	\$2.7 Million	40%
F	67,947	President/CEO	6	\$850,000	33%
G	48,444	Director	13	\$3.6 Million	33%
H	175,561	Vice President of Marketing	18	\$3 Million	50%
I	227,511	Asst. Director of Marketing	99		
J	57,605	Executive Director	4	\$540,000	25%
K	36,295	President	9	\$1.3 Million	40%
L	57,539	Convention Sales Manager	4	\$771,500	25%
M	14,444	Campaign Manager		\$3.5 Million	95%
N	5,515	President	6	\$1.1 Million	60%

A major key difference observed in the study, shows that destinations that added more value to their incentives, achieved greater group success than destinations with less valued incentives. Destinations C and H have over 100,000 people in their population, with marketing budgets of \$744,557.60 and \$1,500,000.00 respectively. Even though destination H spent more money on marketing, destination C, which offered more value added incentives to groups to visit their destinations achieved more group success.

**Table 2. Destination Incentives and Group Success**

# of Incentives	Less Group Success	More Group Success
1	Free Services e.g. shuttle	Room rental charges

2	Value added items e.g., lunch	Service and planning
3	Festivals	Complimentary Rental
4	Low relative hotel, food, and other costs	Incentive Funding
5	Underwriting conference costs for qualified groups	Transportation from hotel to meeting venue
6	Personal attention and service	Scheduling
7	Only International Bluegrass music museum	Complimentary Shuttle from contracted hotels
8	Festivals - over 20 unique festivals each year	Designing marketing pieces for group-save the dates, promo sheet
9	Unique Attractions	Flat contribution
10		Step-on guide service
11		Free parking
12		Welcome table & information at convention
13		Free Wi-Fi
14		Goody bag items for attendees
15		Underwriting conference costs for qualified groups

For instance, Destination H offered the following incentives (1) underwriting conference costs for qualified groups, (2) Personal attention and service, (3) low relative hotel, food, and other costs and (4) fresh southern experiences to groups to entice them to visit their destination. In contrast, destination C offered (1) shuttling, (2) bid fee, (3) rebate to cover venue rental and (4) hosted function during event to groups to entice them to visit their destination. Thus, Destination C achieved significantly more group success in comparison to Destination H. These findings suggest that groups may need more motivation from DMOs to visit their destination, because destinations that attracted more groups, not only offered more incentives, but also

integrated incentives with more value. Nevertheless, destinations that attracted the most groups offered incentives with added value and achieved more group success than destinations that offered incentives with less value. So, groups who are choosing destinations prefer to be offered incentives with added values.

The second objective of this study was to examine the differences in marketing strategies among DMOs. Tables 3 list the marketing strategies used by DMOs to promote their destinations. Of the thirteen DMO respondents, all are unanimously using websites, Facebook, twitter and word of mouth more than any other marketing strategy to promote their destinations. The marketing strategies used least by the respondents are television, purchased mail lists, advertising radio, and third party websites.

In contrast, the rating of the effectiveness of each marketing strategy by the respondents as shown in Table 4 reveals a different perspective. Table 4 shows the effectiveness of the marketing strategies used by DMOs to promote their destinations. For the purpose of this case study, effectiveness is defined in terms of group success, and group success is determined by destinations with group sizes of 500 or more annually. The most effective marketing strategies suggested by the data are word of mouth, trade shows, and third party websites. The least effective strategies suggested by the data are advertising radio, websites, and purchased mailing lists. In effect, destinations that included word of mouth, trade shows and third party websites as part of their marketing strategies attained significantly more group success than those destinations that didn't. For instance, Destinations A,C, D, E, G, H, and K all used at least two or more of the three most effective marketing strategies to promote their destinations (e.g. word of mouth, tradeshows and third party websites) and all accomplished group success. This could be perhaps because it's more impactful for groups and meeting professionals to have personal

interaction with DMOs and other people for information and recommendations when choosing destinations. While the marketing strategies rated least effective (e.g. advertising radio, websites and purchased mailing lists) may also serve as good marketing strategies for promoting destinations. These strategies could possibly be limited in their ability to influence a visitor to a destination by utilizing them only, as they don't provide the visitor with an opportunity to interact with a knowledgeable person who can communicate information to them. Though, these strategies might be useful for promoting a destination when combined with more effective marketing strategies. Since, DMOs that use effective marketing strategies, such as word of mouth, tradeshows and third party websites, to promote their destination have more group success than DMOs who don't use these effective marketing strategies to promote their destination.

**Table 3. Marketing Strategies of DMOs**

Destination	Web Sites	Expedia, Traveloka, Facebook	Twitter	Advertising	Printing	Radio	Mailing	Shows (Exhibitions)	Television	Direct Marketing	Brochures	Word of Mouth	Email newsletters	Other
A	X		X	X	X			X			X	X		
B	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	
C	X		X	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	
D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
E	X	X	X	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	
F	X	X	X	X	X					X	X	X	X	
G	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
H	X	X	X	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	UTube

I	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
J														
K	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	
L	X		X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X		
M	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X	X	
N	X		X	X	X		X	X			X	X	X	

**Table 4. Means of Value of Marketing Strategies Effectiveness**

<b>Marketing Strategies</b>	<b>Mean Value of Effectiveness</b>
Word of Mouth	4.64
Trade Shows (Exhibitions)	4.27
Third Party Websites (Expedia, Travelocity, Priceline)	4.23
Direct Marketing	4.22
Facebook	4.07
Twitter	4.07
Brochures	3.83
Television	3.8
Email Newsletters	3.73
Advertising Print	3.70
Purchased Mailing Lists	3.67
Websites	3.63
Advertising Radio	3.25

The final objective of this study was to explore the importance of the strategic marketing features of a destination such as accessibility (e.g. public transportation, roads); cost of living; attractions, facilities and services (e.g. hotels); and image, brand and perception (e.g. logos) on destination desirability. Respondents were asked to rank their perceptions of their destination's accessibility, cost of living, attractions, facilities and services and image, brand and perception. The data indicated that the better the accessibility; cost of living; attractions, facilities and services; and image, brand and perception on destination desirability of a destination the more desirable the destination will be to groups. Table 5 shows the mean values of destination accessibility between cities with more group success and cities with less group success. The results of this multiple case study show that the better the destination accessibility the more success of attracting greater number of groups to a destination.

The destinations with more accessibility here refer to DMOs that indicated strong agreement with the presence of the following in their cities: (1) active international airport (M=4.00), (2) good flow of traffic in and out of the city (M=4.50), and (3) the presence of good roads and bridges infrastructure (M=4.67). Those with active international airports probably have more group success because international airports allow for more volumes of people to enter and exit a destination. Also, destinations that have good roads, bridges and transportation systems are more appealing to visitors because they assist visitors in getting around in a city with ease.

**Table 5. Destination Accessibility**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Cities with Less Group Success (Mean)</b>	<b>Cities with More Group Success (Mean)</b>
Active International Airports Around	1.67	4.00

Active Local Airports Around	4.00	3.25
Good Flow of Traffic In and Out of the City	3.25	4.50
Good Public Transportation System	2.33	3.75
Good Roads and Bridges Infrastructure	3.50	4.67

Table 6 shows the mean values of destination cost of living assessment between cities with more group success and cities with less group success. Similar, the results of this multiple case study show that the better the cost of living the more success of attracting greater number of groups to a destination. The destinations with better cost of living here refer to DMOs that indicated strong agreement with the following in their cities: (1) affordable foodservice and quality (M=5.00), (2) competitively priced retail centers (M=4.00), and (3) competitively priced transportation (M=3.67). Those with affordable foodservice and quality probably have more group success because affordable foodservice and quality provide great opportunity for culinary tourism and experience in those destinations. In addition, destinations with competitively priced retail centers and transportation makes shopping more appealing to visitors.

**Table 6. Destination Cost of Living**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Cities with Less Group Success (Mean)</b>	<b>Cities with More Group Success (Mean)</b>
Affordable Food Service and Quality	4.50	5.00
Competitively Priced Retail Centers	3.00	4.00
Competitively Priced Transportation	1.67	3.67

Table 7 shows the mean values of destination attractions, facilities and services between cities with more group success and cities with less group success. The results of this multiple case study show that the better the destinations' attractions, facilities and services the more success of attracting greater number of groups to the destinations in this study.

**Table 7. Destination Attractions, Facilities and Services**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Cities with Less Group Success (Mean)</b>	<b>Cities with More Group Success (Mean)</b>
Locally Recognized Landmarks	4.75	5.00
Nationally Recognized Landmarks	4.00	4.75
Efficient Shuttle and Taxi Services	2.50	3.50
Efficient Suppliers	3.75	4.25
Facilities and Services to Visitors	4.25	5.00
Great Night Life Experience	2.25	4.50
Nationally Recognized Hotel Brands	3.75	5.00

The destinations with better attractions, facilities and services here refer to DMOs that indicated strong agreement with the presence of the following in their cities: (1) locally recognized landmarks (M=5.00), (2) nationally recognized landmarks (M=4.75), (3) efficient shuttle and taxi services (M=3.50), (4) efficient suppliers (M=4.25), (5) facilities and services to visitors (M=5.00), (6) great night life experience (M=4.50), and (7) nationally recognized hotel brands (M=5.00). Those with better ranking on attractions, facilities and services probably have more group success because better attractions, facilities and services contributes to visitors splendid experience in the concerns destinations. Also, destinations that have nationally

recognized hotel brands are more appealing to visitors because that makes it easier for visitors to make reservation in the establishments that they are familiar with their products and/or services.

Table 8 shows the mean values of destination image, brand, and Perception between cities with more group success and cities with less group success. The results of this multiple case study show that the better the destination image, brand, and Perception the more success of attracting greater number of groups to the destinations in this study.

**Table 8. Destination Image, Brand, Perception**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Cities with Less Group Success (Mean)</b>	<b>Cities with More Group Success (Mean)</b>
<b>Image, Brand, Perception</b>		
Positive Recognition	4.50	4.75
Safe and Secure City	4.50	4.75
Strong Symbol Recognition	3.75	5.00
Suitable Climate	3.75	4.25

The destinations with better image, brand, and Perception here refer to DMOs that indicated strong agreement with the following in their cities: (1) positive recognition (M=4.75), safe and secure city (M=4.75), strong symbol recognition (M=5.00), and suitable climate (M=4.25). Destinations with a good image, brand and perception also attract more groups. For instance, groups who are searching for a meeting venue with warm temperatures want to guarantee that the destination chosen can provide the climate desired for their group.

The findings of this study indicated that the amount of marketing dollars allocated to marketing efforts by DMOs does not increase a destination’s opportunity of achieving group

success. Also the findings showed that incentives are significant tools for influencing groups to visit destinations and groups prefer to be offered incentives with added values. The results demonstrated that despite the population of destinations and today's influx of social media; that word of mouth is still the most effective marketing strategy for promoting destinations. Lastly, the findings established that the strategic features of a destination, such as accessibility, cost of living, facilities and services, and brand, image and perception are critical features for a destination to possess to attract and satisfy groups.

Therefore, more attention needed to be focused on DMOs including incentives, the most effective marketing strategies and enhancing and promoting their destination's strategic features when developing their marketing plans to promote their destination to visitors.

## Chapter 5 Conclusion/Implications/Limitations

The results of this study indicated that regardless of a DMO's staff size, destination population or marketing budget, effective strategic marketing strategies are essential for attracting groups to a destination. Findings showed the importance of when DMOs are developing the marketing strategies for promoting their destination, there are some key elements that should be involved in their planning for success in attracting groups, (1) incorporating valued incentives, (2) using the most effective marketing strategies such as word-of-mouth and (3) enhancing and promoting the features of their destination.

Based on the findings of this study, a number of significant implications can be drawn. DMOs focus should be less concentrated on the dollars dedicated to marketing efforts and more concentrated on the actual marketing strategy planning. DMOs should consider applicable strategies that are focused more on word- of -mouth communication when developing their marketing plans. It is vital that a DMO position itself in the path of potential visitors who are seeking information about destinations. This effort could involve participating in industry tradeshow to interact with meeting planners to promote their destination. As well, ensuring that when visitors do visit their destination that they provide great service and gather information from visitors by way of survey to access how visitors select destinations and understand their needs and behaviors. Word-of-mouth also is also effective for attracting even more visitors to a destination, as satisfied visitors, will share their experiences with family and friends, which could motivate them to visit the destination as well.

When developing a marketing strategy for a destination, it would be advantageous for DMOs to consider and offer appropriate incentives to prospective visitors to make a destination more appealing. This could be accomplished by listening to and probing the prospective visitor

to assess their needs and understand what may motivate them to choose their destination. This could be accomplished by, partnering with the local community (i.e. hotels, restaurants) to provide discounts or free services to groups when they visit their destination. This partnership will satisfy the visitor, assist the DMO in selling the destination, and also benefit the community partner with the promotion of their business as well as increased sales.

Lastly, DMOs should ensure that the features of a destination are competitive and in good condition. It would also be helpful for them to highlight the key strategic features of their destination on all promotional materials and in discussions with potential visitors. In addition to, guaranteeing that groups are satisfied with the features when they arrive, so that they want to return to the destination and recommend the destination to others. Since the features of accessibility; cost of living; attractions, facilities and services; and image, brand and perception are critical to and influence a group's decision to choose a destination.

By implementing these marketing strategies, DMOs could save money on their marketing efforts and reallocate the savings back into the destination's features for enhancements or additions to attract visitors for increased group success. As this case study is in agreement with the study of Holloway (1998) that destinations success in attracting tourists will depend upon the quality of the three essential factors: (1) adequate attractions, (2) amenities or facilities, and (3) accessibilities for tourists.

Future studies may include examining the relationship among the main stakeholders for destination marketing, the destination marketing triad, which are the DMOs, city and hotels. How can these groups better partner? Also, future studies may explore if past behavior and trip satisfaction influences behavioral intention in choosing a destination. For the purpose of this study, group success was measured as destinations achieving groups with 500 or more people

annually. However, is there a better metrics that can be used to measure group success (i.e. number of days a group stays in a location, should you measure by visitors or groups)?

There were a couple of limitations to this study. First, the sample size for this study was small due to the time constraint for completing this research. Next, due to the small sample size and not enough participants completing the questionnaire in its entirety, there was not enough data to do a reliability test.

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## **APPENDIX**

## APPENDIX 1

### Implied Consent Form Successful Marketing Strategies for Promoting Event Destinations Study

Hello,

My name is Evease Tucker. I am a master's student with an emphasis in Hospitality Management at the University of Arkansas. As part of my master's thesis, I am conducting a study to investigate the marketing strategies of Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs). I will sincerely appreciate a few minutes of your time to participate in this study.

**Risks and Benefits:** There are no anticipated risks to participating in the study. Currently no data exists that clearly indicate the strategic approach to destination marketing. This project is the first part of series of studies intended to provide the most efficient concept for strategic approach to destination marketing.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in the research is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate and complete the enclosed questionnaires, you may leave any items blank that you do not want to answer. It should take you about 15-20 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

**Confidentiality:** All responses will be anonymous. Only members of the research team and associated support staff will see completed questionnaires. All data will be combined and only group summaries will be included in the survey reports. No data will be reported in a manner that would allow a reader to associate any responses to individual respondents. Results from the research will be reported as aggregate data.

**Right to Withdraw:** You are free to refuse to participate in the research and to withdraw from this study at any time. Your decision to withdraw will bring no negative consequences — no penalty to you.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study you may contact my advisor Dr. Godwin-Charles Ogbeide through any of the means below. For questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Ro Windwalker, the University's Compliance Coordinator, at (479) 575-2208 or by e-mail at [irb@uark.edu](mailto:irb@uark.edu).

**Godwin-Charles Ogbeide, M.B.A., Ph.D.**

Phone: 479-575-2579

Email: [gogbeide@uark.edu](mailto:gogbeide@uark.edu)

Fax: 479.575.7171

By filling out and submitting the survey you are consenting to participate. You acknowledge that you read the description, including the purpose of the study, the procedures to be used, the potential risks and/or side effects, the anonymity of all responses, as well as the option to withdraw from the study at any time.

Please respond immediately, Click **below to access the survey now:**

**Successful Marketing Strategies for Promoting Event Destinations Study**  
<http://uark.qualtrics.com>

Thank you in advance for taking the time to help with this important project.

This e-mail has been generated in accordance with the UARK E-Mail Policy.

**Appendix 2**

**Strategic Destination Marketing Instrument**

**Part 1:**

- 1. What is your position within your organization? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. How many people are on staff in your DMO? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. In the past fiscal year:
  - a. What is the average size of your smallest group? (e.g. group tours, meetings)  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. What is the average size of your largest group? (e.g. group tours, meetings)  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What is the total number of available hotel rooms in your city?  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. What is your hotel occupancy/transient (bed taxes) tax rate?  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. How is your DMO funded? \_\_\_\_\_

7. What is your operating budget? \_\_\_\_\_

8. What percentage of your operating budget is allocated to marketing?

9. List the incentives you use to attract groups to your destination?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. What attractions or activities do you offer? Please list all or the top 5 in your city?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Part 2:** Listed below are destination characteristics, indicate your perception about your destination by using the key below.

**Key:** 1=Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neither Agree nor Disagree 4=Agree  
5=Strongly Agree 6= Not Applicable

1. We have a strong symbol recognition (e.g. logo)
2. Our symbol (logo) is included in all marketing tools
3. Our city has positive recognition
4. The climate of our city is suitable for visitors to come year round
5. The people of our city are friendly and hospitable
6. Our city is safe and secure
7. Our destination image and brand perception are good for our destination marketing
8. We have nationally recognized landmarks
9. We have locally recognized landmarks
10. We offer efficient shuttle and taxi services
11. We have efficient suppliers
12. We have nationally recognized hotel brands
13. We have a great nightlife experience
14. Our destination offers a variety of facilities and services to our visitors
15. We have an active local airport
16. We have an active regional airport
17. We have an active international airport
18. We have a good public transportation system
19. We have good roads and bridges infrastructure
20. We have a good flow of traffic in and out of our city
21. Visiting hours of our tourist sites are important to our destination marketing
22. Our destination has adequate accessibility for our visitors
23. We have affordable foodservice and quality
24. We have competitively priced transportation
25. We have variety and reliable service contractors (suppliers)
26. We have competitively priced retail shopping centers
27. We have unique shops and artisan distinctive to our region
28. We have a reasonable hotel tax rate
29. The cost of a day's stay in my destination is competitive
30. We provide incentives to attract groups to our destination
31. We use a variety of communication channels
32. We involve our sponsors in destination marketing
33. We have community alliances
34. Qualified staff in tourism increases the number of tourists to the tourism sites
35. We use a great promotional and communication mix in our promotions and advertising
36. We have an effective relationship with our local hotels
37. We partner with our local hotels in promoting our destination
38. Our local hotels are involved in promoting our destination
39. We share information about our potential visitors with our local hotels
40. We have a good flow of information exchange with our local hotels in promoting our destination
41. Our destination has a cooperative relationship with our local hotels

**Part 3:** Choose the answer that represents the most appropriate response for your destination in the following statements.

1. Is your organization considered as one of the below classifications, check which applies to your organization.
  - a. DMO \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. CVB \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Both DMO and CVB \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Below are various meetings, events, expositions, and convention associations, check all of the associations that you belong to?
  - a. Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI) \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Meetings Professional International (MPI) \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Worldwide Exhibition for Incentive, Travel, Meetings and Events (IMEX) \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. American Hotel and Motel Association (AHMA) \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. International Association of Exposition Management (IAEM) \_\_\_\_\_
  - g. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Do you have state park(s) in your city?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
4. Do you have beach(es) in your city?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
5. Do you have lake(s) in your city?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
6. Do you have theme park(s) in your city?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
7. Do you have museum(s) in your city?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
8. Do you have (or Town Center, City Center, Civic Center, etc.) in your city?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
9. What is the capacity of your convention center (or Town Center, City Center, Civic Center, etc.)?

10. List 3-5 hotels/casino hotels/resorts in your community with the most number of rooms, in order of number of rooms available.

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11. Please rate the following months according to how busy your destination is within a year, using 1 through 5, with 1 being “not busy at all” and 5 being “extremely busy”.

- January \_\_\_\_\_
- February \_\_\_\_\_
- March \_\_\_\_\_
- April \_\_\_\_\_
- May \_\_\_\_\_
- June \_\_\_\_\_
- July \_\_\_\_\_
- August \_\_\_\_\_
- September \_\_\_\_\_
- October \_\_\_\_\_
- November \_\_\_\_\_
- December \_\_\_\_\_

12. Check all of the following that are used in the sales and marketing of your destination.

- Web sites (organization website)
- Third party websites (Expedia, Travelocity, Priceline, etc.)
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Advertising Print
- Advertising Radio
- Purchased mailing list(s)
- Trade show (Exhibition)
- Television
- Direct Marketing
- Brochures
- Word of Mouth
- Email newsletter
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

13. Please rate the effectiveness of the following sales and marketing tools for your destination using 1 through 5, with 1 being “not effective at all” and 5 being “extremely effective”. If you haven’t used any of the tools please put “NA” for “not applicable”.

- Web sites (organization website)
- Third party websites (Expedia, Travelocity, Priceline, etc.)

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Advertising Print
- Advertising Radio
- Purchased mailing list(s)
- Trade show (Exhibition)
- Television
- Direct Marketing
- Brochures
- Word of Mouth
- Email newsletter
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 3**  
**IRB Approval Letter**

November 15, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: Evease Tucker  
Godwin-Charles Ogbeide

FROM: Ro Windwalker  
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 12-11-237

Protocol Title: *Marketing Strategies for Promoting Event Destinations*

Review Type:  EXEMPT  EXPEDITED  FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 11/15/2012 Expiration Date: 11/14/2013

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Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (<http://vpred.uark.edu/210.php>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

**This protocol has been approved for 200 participants.** If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 210 Administration Building, 5-2208, or [irb@uark.edu](mailto:irb@uark.edu)