

# Promoting an Emerging Tourism Destination

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**Abstract-** Emerging tourist destinations have unique characteristics, which differentiate them from matured destinations or destination at their decline stage. Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) have the responsibility of creating, attracting, and retaining valued customers, in this case, tourists to the destinations. One way of achieving these functions is through effective promotional strategies of destinations. This study attempts to highlight the relevance of promotional strategy to tourism development, tourism enterprise planning. The major crux of the paper is the conceptualization of a model for the development of promotional strategies for emerging tourism destination.

**Key words-** Emerging tourism destination, promotional strategy, marketing, destination marketing organization, attractions, and festivals.

## I INTRODUCTION

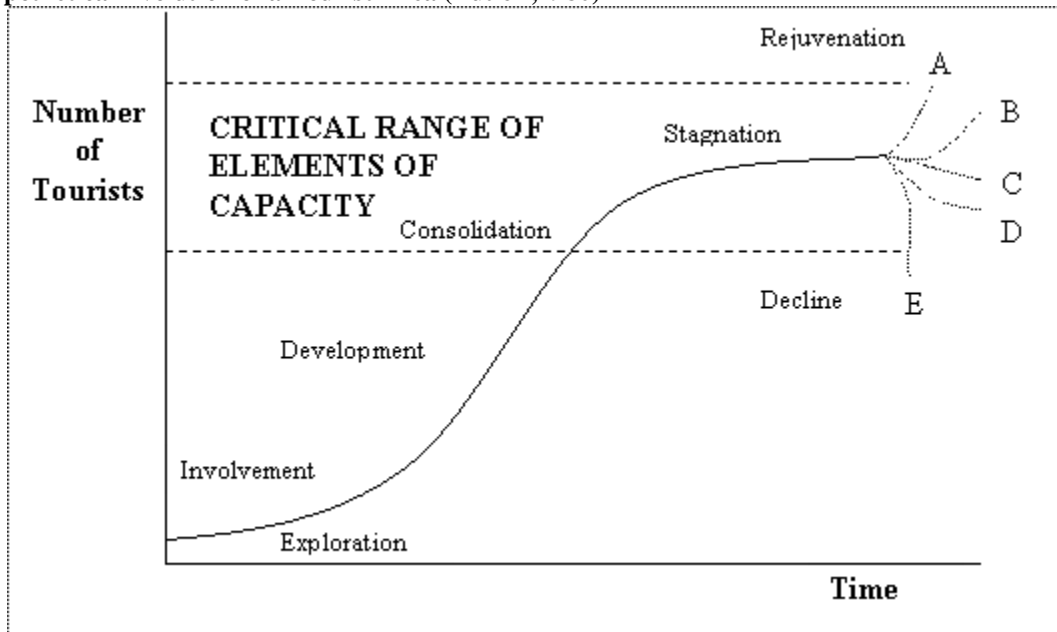
Tourism and hospitality sector is the fastest growing sector of global economic. This claim is supported by statistical data from regional, national, and international studies (WTO, 2000; WWTC, 2005). Globalization of the tourism market has made tourism business environment more complex. This is because tourists whether inbound or out bound are in search of places and attractions that will optimally satisfy their touristic desires. The global choice of destination according to Henderson (2007) is growing and certain of these destinations have similar characteristics. This gives rise to a situation where one can be replaced by another as the notion of destination choice set implies. Destination is commonly referred to as place in tourism parlance. Tourism destinations are places with tourists' attractions. Attraction can be manmade, natural, or cultural. The attraction and the benefit it offers are sometimes the reasons for visiting a destination.

An emerging tourism destination is conceptualised as a geo-political area where tourism has just been accepted as a major socio-economic development tool and where the community has expressed willingness to leverage the tourism potentials to enhance their socio-economic well-being. Every destination has a cycle with unique stages and characteristics. Examples of destinations that have entered the maturity stage are United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (USA), South Africa (SA), Kenya, etc. A good example of an emerging tourism destination is Nigeria. Nigeria has just begun taking tourism seriously. The past nine years has witness a conscious effort by some of the States (e.g. Cross River, Kebbi, Osun, etc.). Two common models on destination life cycle are Butler's Destination Area Cycle Model (Butler, 1980) and Doxey Irredex (Doxey, 1975). Butler's model gives us an elaborate understanding of what a destination goes through from the time the community decides to take tourism as a serious economic development tool. The Butler's model is linked to the business/marketing concept of product life cycle. It is theoretically underpinned on the product life cycle. The product life cycle is a theory in which sales of a new product are seen to slowly grow and then experience rapid growth, before stabilizing and subsequently declining (Esu, 2005). When applied to tourism destinations, it suggests that destinations develop and change over time. Butler Destination Area Cycle Model is made up of a number of linked stages: exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation, and decline (post-stagnation).

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**Figure 1 Hypothetical Evolution of a Tourist Area (Butler ,1980)**

Inferring from Butler's Model, some basic assumptions can be made about an emerging destination. An emerging tourism destination is characterized on the supply side by acceptance of tourism by government and the community as being strategic to the economic importance of the state; the introduction of strategies to actualize these visions (product design and development), the euphoria that accompanies the idea of having an identity as a tourism destination. On the demand side, there may be little or no awareness of destination by the market, lack of specific unique product to attract tourist, low visitor arrival, low tourists receipts, etc.

Theoretically, destinations are promoted by the use of one or combination of promotional tools (advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, publicity, public relations and internet.). These activities undertaken by individuals or organizations want its voice to be heard in the market place. The peculiarities that characterise an emerging tourism destination account for the need to advocate for specific strategies for the promotion of emerging tourists' destinations. Because of these peculiarities and the complexities in understanding tourists' behavior, it does appear that the traditional promotional tools are inadequate to generate appropriate consumer response especially in emerging tourism destination without a broad strategic approach. In this paper, we shall identify the importance of destination promotion, responsibility of Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) in destination promotion and propose a conceptual model for developing promotional strategies for emerging tourist destinations. Attempt shall also be made to capture some strategies commonly used by successful emerging destinations. It is expected that this paper will give some impetus to the frame-work for the rebranding of Nigeria which has just been launched by the President, Alhaji Musa Y'adua.

## II IMPORTANCE OF PROMOTION TO DESTINATION MARKETING

Destination promotion has the potentials of producing the following benefits:

- i. Build awareness and interest in the destination and the attractions or products
- ii. Differentiate the destination and its offering from competing destinations
- iii. Communicate the physical and psychological benefits of products offered by the destination to the market
- iv. Build and maintain the overall image and reputation of the destination
- v. Persuade tourists to visit the destination and increase length of stay in destination
- vi. Promotion can assist the destination management in leveling out peaks and valleys resulting from seasonality of demand

## III RESPONSIBILITY FOR DESTINATION PROMOTION

Destination promotional function is primarily the responsibility of the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO). DMOs are organizations that have been established to promote specific destinations to potential travelers (Gartrell, 1994). Regional Tourist Boards may be regarded as marketed, agencies. Their role is to promote place. That is, attract visitors to destinations in these areas (Pattinson, 1990). Destination marketing is a collective effort that requires various organizations and businesses in a geographically limited area to harmoniously work together to achieve a common goal (Gransjo, 2003). Following the understanding that 'place' can be marketed, tourism planners and marketers have made attempts to apply marketing principles to place or destination. One of such

principles is 'promotion'. There is copious literature on place or destination promotion. One of such early works was that of Pattison (1990).

Specifically, DMOs perform the following responsibilities:

- i. They are non-profit organizations aim at generating tourist visitations for a given destination at a given period.
- ii. Responsible for developing a unique image of the destination.
- iii. Co-ordinating private and public tourist industry constituency.
- iv. Providing information to visitors.
- v. Leading the overall tourism industry at a destination.

#### IV CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR DEVELOPING PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES OF EMERGING TOURISM DESTINATION

Promotion refers to the communicative activity of marketing. It fills the perceptual and informational gaps that exist between suppliers of tourism (industry) and the tourists (market). Promotion involves the creation and dissimulation of information that the tourist need to take a purchase and consumption decision.

Promotional strategy is a controlled integrated programme of communication methods and materials designed to present an organization and its products to prospective customers; to communicate need satisfying attributes of product to facilitate sales and thus contribute to long-run profit performance (Engel, Warshaw and Kinneary; 1991). Promotional activities must be consistent with the needs of the tourists and integrated with the other elements of the marketing mix. Information is used to position, market and sell destinations (Tunnard and Haines, 1995). The promotional strategies will serve as connect between the customers and the experience they are seeking. Since tourists have expectations, it has become necessary that these requirements form the bases of the promotional strategies of tourism destination.

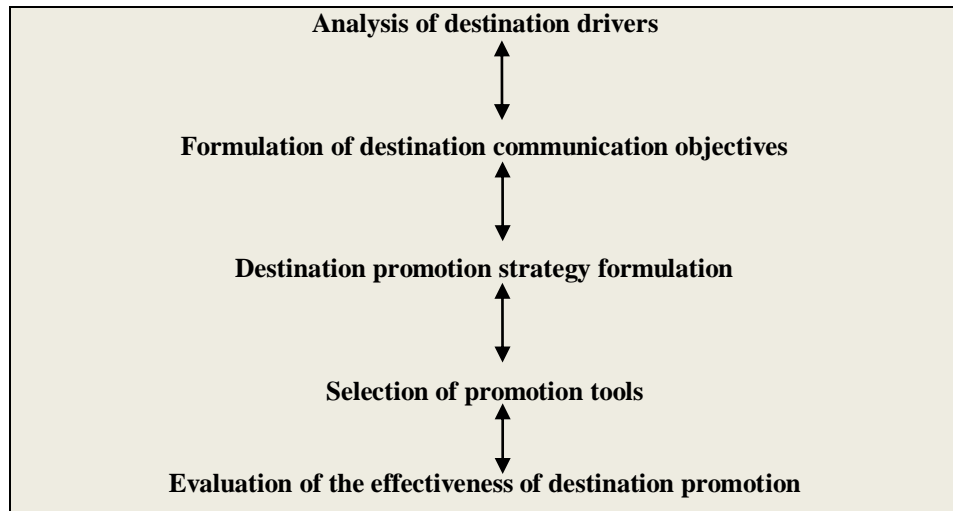
The development of effective promotional strategies demands more than just being aware of the tools of promotion. The peculiarities of emerging tourism destination make it imperative for a special model that will cater for these complexities. Tourist demand is influence by tourist needs and motivations. These two currents form the theoretical underpinning of tourism product consumption. The model has four components.

- i. Analysis of destination drivers
- ii. Formulation of destination communication objectives
- iii. Strategy formulation
- iv. Selection of promotional tools
- v. Evaluation of the effectiveness of destination promotion

#### A. Analysis Of Destination Drivers

Destination drivers are those attributes of the destination that can be associated with the destination and that correspond with the values and actual needs of prospective tourists and have the likelihood of evoking an image that will stimulate tourist's interest to visit such a destination. The destination attributes usually form a destination's attractiveness (Babu & George, 2008; Czech tourism, 2004). In real life we are aware of such generally shared associations; Mercedes=prestige, Volvo=safety, Kenya=safari, Porsche =wild driver, etc. The tasks at this stage is to determine the destination attributes the will build strong associations. A simple methodology proposed by Esu and Mdaze-Arrey (April 2009) in their paper on "Branding of Cultural Festivals as Destination Attraction..." could be used to determine the destination attractions that will serve as a connect with the destination. The method begins with the generation of destination attribute, selection of significant attributes using two statistical techniques: importance-performance analysis matrix and discriminant analysis to test significant associations with market segments. This is necessary because the attributes must agree with the tourist's value, needs, and motivations. A need is a state of disequilibrium that requires satisfaction. Motivation is the drive to satisfy the identified need. The concepts of push and pull factors are often used to explain the concept of need and motivation (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981). Push factors are the socio-psychological needs that will encourage a person to travel, while the pull factors is one in which the person is motivated, or arouse by the destination. The push factors are logical and temporary antecedents to pull factors. The destination must possess attributes that matches the tourist's needs before the tourist would respond positively to the promotional strategy. The attributes that show significant relationship with market segment are those ones that are conceptualise as destination drivers. Czechtourism (2004) suggest that a Destination Marketing Organisation should produce one strong association with which tourists can connect the destination. This idea is supported by the following assumptions: "perception is more important than reality" and "that success is not in the product, but in the minds of clients." The destination's significant associations are personified to give the destination's brand personality.

Figure 2: Conceptual framework for promotional strategy of emerging tourism destination



### B. Formulation Of Destination Communication Objectives

Before the strategy is formulated, the destination promotion objectives should be established. For a comprehensive articulation of the destination promotion objectives, a knowledge of the VICE Model is necessary (Tourism Recreation research and Education Centre, 2004). VICE (visitor, industry, communities and environment) is an acronym for an international model that specifies the stakeholders' expectation in a tourist destination. The destination communication is usually aim at achieving the following stakeholders' objectives: Visitor (welcome, involve and satisfy visitors), Industry (achieve a profitable and prosperous industry), Communities (engage and benefit host communities), Environment (protect and enhance the locals).

### C. Strategy Formulation

After determining the destination drivers and the formulation of the destination promotion objectives it seeks to achieve, the destination managers could then formulate activities that will attract the identified customer segments. This idea is in view of the fact that integrated marketing communication expert's belief that every contact a customer makes with the brand or organization is "saying something". In this vein it is conceptualise that there are specific activities that can arouse the interest of tourist to visit the destination, thereby achieving destination promotional objectives. These activities form the bases of the promotion strategies of the destination. Strategy formulation entails the design and development of unique destination's associations and brand personality that jointly give the destination an image.

It is generally known in marketing that a successful, product or service means nothing unless the benefit of such a service

can be communicated clearly to the target market. The message to be communicated links the tourist needs, motivation, and the destination. The strategy spells out what to say about the destination in order to achieve the destination promotion objectives.

### D. Selection Of Promotion Tools

Promotion tools are devices, activities, or methods used by marketing managers to convey the desired message to the market in order to achieve any desired promotion objectives. There are five traditional promotional tools.

#### i. Advertising

Is any paid form of non-personal communication about an organization, product, service, or idea by an identified sponsor (Alexander, 1965). The issues in advertising are the development message, design of the message and the choice of media. The first one is the creative strategy (it involves finding effective, memorable ways to operate on consumer's minds). The second is how the message will be said and the third how it be heard by the consumer (it involves media selection and buying of space).

A quote by Steuart Britt in Esu (2003) buttresses the importance of advertising to a tourism business. The quote says: "Doing business without advertising is like winking at a girl in the dark. You know what you are doing. But nobody else does." Advertising informs, persuades, educates, and reminds prospective or actual tourists about attraction and destination. According to Middleton (1988), the following media types are available to the tourist destination manager: TV, radio, newspaper, cinema advertising, consumer magazine, trade magazine, outdoor advertising, tourist board brochures and guides, commercial consumer guides, directive and yellow pages, exhibitions, in home magazines, direct mail, and door-to-door distribution.

## ii. Public Relations

Public Relations (PR) also has communication function. The British Institute of Public Relations defines Public Relations as “the deliberate planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and the public”. It is a management function, which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or organization with the public interest, and executes a programme of action to earn public understanding and acceptance (Moore and canfield, 1977). PR is implemented from corporate, rather than from marketing funds. At the tactical level, PR may be used to create and exploit opportunities to communicate selected messages to the general public or target groups. Example of PR techniques includes press release, press launches, receptions, personality appearances and staged events, facility tour and participation in community activities.

## iii. Sales Promotion

Another promotional technique is sales promotion. Belch & Belch (2001:21) define sales promotion as “those marketing activities that provide extra value or incentives to the sales force, distributors, or the ultimate consumer and can stimulate short-term sales.” The part of sales promotion that takes place at point of sales is called merchandising. Merchandising is the sum total of effort to move goods and services at the point of sale. Advertising and PR take place away from the point of sales, while sales promotion takes place at the point of sales. Middleton (1988: 165) defines point of sale “as any location at which a purchase transaction takes place”. Sales promotion techniques used by tourism marketing include: price cuts/sales offers, coupons, extra product, additional services, gift, passport schemes, extra commission, prize draws, parties/reception, and business and travel incentives, etc. The marketing objectives attainable by sales promotion are: leveling of demand, reward regular customers, Increase market share, secure dealer support and recommendation, achieve brochure display, improve dealer awareness of products, improve volume of sales through incentives, and improve display in distribution outlets.

## iv. Personal Selling

Personal selling refers to person-to-person communication in which a seller attempts to assist and/or persuade prospective buyers to purchase the company’s product, service or idea (Belch & Belch, 2001). Selling of tourism products and services falls into three types: (a) external point of sales (retail travel agency, ticket/booking desks), (b) internal- in –house point of sales (reception desk in the hotel and attraction sites) and (c) Reservation system via customer’s home (booking and responding via direct mail, TV, radio and telephone calls).

## v. Publicity

Publicity refers to nonpersonal communications regarding an organization, product, service, or idea not directly paid for or run under identified sponsorship for making a sales (Belch & Belch, 2001). It is in the form of a news story, editorial, announcement about the organization and/or its product and services. The special techniques used for publicity include news release, feature articles, photographs, films, and videotapes.

## vi. Interactive/Internet Marketing

This promo tool is driven by the growth in information technology. Included in this group are the internet, CD-ROM, and interactive televisions. Interactive media enable buyers and sellers to interact (Crevens and Piercy, 2006).

The task at this stage is the selection of an optimal mix of tools that will carry the message about the destination. Cravens and Piercy (2006) asserts that early in the process of developing the promotion strategy, it is useful to set guidelines as to the expected contribution for each. A mix of tools is prescribe because of the synergy derive from the combination. Each promotional tool has its strengths and weaknesses. A combination of tools will provide a trade-off thereby leading to increase effectiveness and impact on overall destination objectives.

### *E. Evaluation Of Effectiveness Of Promotional Strategy*

The evaluation of the effectiveness of a promotional strategy is in two parts. The first is the impact of the message content on the destination promotion objectives. The second part is the effectiveness of the promotional mix. In this paper, our focus is on the former. The effect of a destination promotion is expected to impact on two areas: (1) The effect on the perception of tourists at the generating areas and (2) the effect at the receiving areas {on the number of visitor arrivals (visitor), tourist receipts (industry), community benefit (community), and environmental sustainability (environment)}.

At the tourist generating area, the Anholt Nation Brands Index (ANBI) model could be used to assess the effect of the destination promotion campaign on the perception of prospective tourist (Mari, 2008). ANBI is an analytical framework of brand index which is based on six destination attributes: tourism, export, governance, investment and immigration, culture and heritage, and people.

Tourism: Assess the level of interest by prospective tourist in visiting a country or destination because of a draw of natural and fabricated tourist attractions.

### *F. Export*

Assess the public’s image of products from each country and the extent to which consumers proactively seek or avoid products from the destination.

### G. Governance

The public opinion regarding the level of national government competency and fairness. It includes individuals' beliefs about the destination as well as perceives commitment to global issues, such as democracy, justice, poverty, and environment.

**Investment and Immigration:** It measures the destination's power to attract people to live, work or study in it (perception of the economic and social situation).

**Culture and heritage:** Measures the perception of the destination's heritage and tourists' appreciation of her cultural (including film, music, art, sport, literature, etc.).

**People:** Determines the perception tourist hold about a destination's population. This is in terms of reputation, competence, education, openness, friendliness, etc.

#### V SPECIFIC PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR EMERGING TOURIST DESTINATION

- i. The following strategies are commonly used by successful emerging tourism destinations.
- ii. promote destination through small businesses
- iii. promote destination through ensuring a positive community attitude
- iv. promote destination through events /festivals
- v. promote destination through destination marketing system
- vi. Collective and collaborative destination marketing
- vii. Promoting destination through film production

##### A. Promote Through Small Businesses

The role of small business in destination image is supported by Moutinho (1990). According to him, small businesses, like the large ones are part of the product offered by destinations. This is because overall experience is composed of numerous small encounters with a variety of tourism service providers. The promotion of quality and international best practices in service delivery in an emerging tourism destination has the potential of enhancing the destination's image and increase tourists traffic to the destination. The implication is that, (1) tourist enterprises will operate profitably in the destination, (2) tourists visiting the area will receive higher quality service, which can be leveraged for destination positioning, and (3) small businesses operating profitably will breed new services and broaden target market.

##### B. Promote Destination Through Ensuring A Positive Community Attitude

Destination managers should ensure that the locals are positively committed to tourism development (Inbakaran and Jackson (2005). This should be done through an inclusive approach that respects and involves the locals in all tourism promotional endeavors. It is difficult to garner the unlimited goodwill of the local communities in

promoting the destination without a cooperative marketing approach.

##### C. Promote Destination Through Destination Marketing System

Information is used to position markets and sell destinations. One of such ways of creating and making information available to target markets is with destination marketing system (DMS). DMS is a destination database (Tunnard and Haines (1995). The challenge confronting DMS is to ensure that they have a product database that is capable of strong multi-media data; that is amenable to text, photographic, sound, and video clips.

The trend in the organization and operation of DMS is the involvement of the private sector in the management. The various options according to Tunnard and Haines (1995) are: (1) a handover to private sector after the information stage, if there is an existing information call centre and wishes to continue operating it, (2) a joint venture operation with the private sector and (3) a cooperative venture owned by partners such as associations, and private sector players. This in essence means getting destination marketing out of the government ministries and putting the responsibility into the hands of autonomous and independent tourist boards. DMS has made it unnecessary for tourist boards to be positioned in the main street of the capital city in order to secure visibility or need to be in the originating market place (Bennett, 1999). According to Bennett (1999:53) "any tourist destination which is not working on some form of DMS is losing the plot".

##### D. Promote Destination Through Events /Festivals

The major role of staging event and festivals in a destination is to act as catalysts for attracting visitors, thereby increasing the tourist spending and length of stay in the destination. Events and festival also acts as image-makers for the destination. It creates a profile for the destination, which helps in target marketing and positioning (Getz, 1997). All these give the destination a competitive edge.

##### E. Promote destination through governance

According to ANHOLT Nation Brand Index, governance is one critical area of a destination's attractiveness (Mari, 2008). Corruption, conflict, war, and human rights violation are some of the factors that can damage the image of a country and destination. Damage to a country's image shows that its citizens do not have realistic view of their own country and cannot get together to do something positive. These factors are regarded as brand 'erodes'. This is a common feature in most of the Less Developed Countries (LDC). The government should enshrine good and democratic principles in governance. The destination managers should launch a campaign that will rebrand the country or destination to give it a positive image in the international community.

#### F. *Collective and collaborative destination marketing*

Promoting a destination requires a collective and collaborative effort of all stakeholders in the destination. Collaborative process refers to a process of shared decision making among all key stakeholders of a destination (Gray, 1985, 1989).

#### G. *Promoting destination through film production*

Emerging destinations could enjoy competitive advantage with film tourism. Hudson and Ritchie (2006) suggest that DMOs would be more successful if they were first proactive in promoting the film in their locations and then proactive in promoting the film location after release of the film in generating areas.

### VI CONCLUSION

Emerging destinations have unique characteristics, which differentiate them from destinations in the maturity stage. Destination managers and marketers require this understanding in the marketing and promotion of such destinations. Since emerging destinations are theoretically in the first and second stages of the Butler's destination cycle model, DMOs should adopt promotional strategies that are product-oriented. By this, we mean that the physical, social, cultural, and psychological components of the destination should form the bases of destination strategy formulation. The set of promotional strategies suggested in this paper are derived from extensive review of literature about successful tourism destinations.

The scientific community holds the concept of cause-effect relationship as sacrosanct. It is based on a truth that the authors argued for seamless means of communicating an emerging destination to the generating areas. These strategies would create niche markets for the destinations. It will also differentiate the emerging destinations distinctively from the mature destinations.

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