



Aspects of Tourism

TOURISM MARKETING

A Collaborative Approach



Alan Fyall and Brian Garrod

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Preface

The tourism industry is notoriously interdependent and dynamic, and tourism products are widely acknowledged to be inherently complex to co-ordinate and difficult to manage. The authors therefore find it surprising that there remains such a paucity of literature that explores the dynamics, relationships and outcomes of collaborative strategies within the tourism industry. This paucity is particularly apparent with respect to the domain of tourism marketing. While there is a large number of books that have contributed to our understanding of marketing principles and practice in the tourism and hospitality industries, these books largely fail to acknowledge that collaboration, in its various guises, is now an integral component of tourism marketing strategy.

Indeed, the authors note that the growing number of academic books covering tourism marketing that have been published to date continue to adopt the traditional, competitive marketing paradigm, presumably considering this to be the approach most suitable for the teaching of the subject. While this might be considered understandable in some of the earlier publications, the strength of forces in the external environment is such that alternative approaches to the study of the subject are now required. The fundamental premise on which this book is written is that tourism marketing needs, with some urgency, to embrace the collaborative marketing paradigm. This, indeed, is increasingly the trend in many other applications of marketing. The reason is simple: the collaborative paradigm represents by far the more versatile, penetrating and realistic conceptual basis on which to study (and, for that matter, practice) tourism marketing.

This situation is not, of course, unique to the study and practice of tourism marketing. When analysing competing publications in the area of strategy, for example, de Wit and Meyer (1998) found that almost all of the textbooks available shared four basic characteristics:

- The presentation of a *limited number of perspectives and theories* as accepted knowledge, from which prescriptions can easily be derived.

- The use of a simple *step-by-step strategic planning approach* as the book's basic structure.
- The reworking of original material into the textbook author's own words to create *consistent and easily digestible pieces of text*.
- The choice of perspectives, theories, examples and cases that are heavily biased towards the textbook author's own *national context*.

Although perhaps not evident to the same extent in the field of tourism marketing, there apparently remains a nervous reluctance to escape from the safe confines of the competitive marketing paradigm and enter the rather less familiar territory of collaborative marketing. There is no doubt that the majority of tourism marketing books currently in existence do have considerable strengths and are familiar to scholars of tourism marketing throughout the English-speaking world. In fact, many of the ideas existing within this body of marketing knowledge have been catalytic foci for much of the theoretical work that underpins this book, especially Chapters 3 and 4. However, rather than present yet another extension of the product range, so to speak, this book offers an alternative 'collaborative' way forward for students, academics and practitioners of tourism marketing. It is not strictly the intention of this book to propagate new thoughts and ideas, theories or solutions to age-old problems. In marketing, and in tourism marketing especially, very little can really be classified as new. Indeed, a large number of marketing 'innovations' in travel and tourism, although certainly not all, have been transferred from elsewhere. This is mainly because, unlike travel and tourism, other industries have had far greater exposure to the competitive dynamics of buyers' markets: markets that require customer-driven strategies.

The adoption of a market orientation and the implementation of effective marketing strategies are now almost universally considered to be prerequisites for success in the tourism industry. Although perhaps not carrying the same weight in the corridors of power as tourism policy, or for that matter issues pertaining to the environment and sustainability, the elevation of tourism marketing in the academic literature in recent years is testament to the increasingly competitive arena that is tourism. Tourism academics and professionals are increasingly recognising that there is a need to break away from the perceived superficiality and 'secondary' importance that is so often attached to tourism marketing when compared to tourism marketing's more illustrious and 'holistic' parent body of knowledge, tourism planning. Maybe this is even true of sustainability and sustainable tourism. However, it can be argued that recent additions to the literature have done little to advance the tourism marketing debate, with many authors choosing to adopt the 'tried-and-tested' approach to tourism marketing by merely importing standard marketing theory and practice to the tourism industry context. Although

useful to a degree, a shortcoming of these texts is that they fail to acknowledge the fundamental importance of collaboration, both currently and in prospect, and its impact on all tourism marketing activity, albeit to varying degrees. Hence, there is a need to move outside existing boundaries of marketing theory and practice and enter a new collaborative paradigm, a subset perhaps of the emerging bodies of knowledge surrounding relationship marketing, network marketing, stakeholder theory and inter-organisational collaboration.

The growing body of literature on inter-organisational collaboration in many ways represents the innovative core of this book. Inter-organisational collaboration is not a new area of academic research. What is new, however, is its emergence as a potential paradigm upon which to structure marketing thinking and practice in the tourism industry. Much has been written about inter-organisational collaboration, in a variety of contexts – as will become apparent throughout this book. There is, however, a very real dearth of applications of inter-organisational collaboration theory to past and existing tourism contexts of a marketing nature. The text *Tourism Collaboration and Partnerships: Politics, Practice and Sustainability*, edited by Bramwell and Lane (2000), and the text *Quality Management in Urban Tourism*, edited by Murphy (1997), are two of the very few published works that explore the role of collaboration in the effective management of tourism resources. Although there is rather more evidence of academic papers in refereed journals on the subject of collaboration, only recently have journal editors deemed it to be of sufficient importance to warrant the allocation of special issues to the subject. Recent volumes of the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* (7 (3)) and the *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration* (1 (1)) have done much to raise the profile of collaboration in tourism.

In the words of Huxham (1996: 1–2) collaboration is ‘happening’, ‘valuable’ and ‘difficult’. It is happening in a variety of forms and is finding a place in the lexicon of management where collaborative terms such as ‘strategic alliance’, ‘joint venture’ and ‘partnership’ are used on a daily basis. Its value comes in the form of economies of scale, the sharing of resources and enabling organisations to establish a foothold in new markets: all benefits that can be acquired through working with others. At the same time, collaboration should not be seen as a magic elixir or curer of all ills. The fact is that many collaborative arrangements are considered to have failed by the participants within a relatively short space of time. This high failure rate is testament to the fact that inter-organisational collaboration is never easy and offers no simple recipe for the achievement of competitive or collaborative advantage. Collaboration does, however, represent an alternative approach to solving problems: problems that are frequently considered outside the scope of resolution by individual organisations acting alone.

The aim of this book is, therefore, to provide the reader with a thorough and detailed understanding of tourism marketing principles and practice within the context of inter-organisational collaboration. The book will:

- provide an overview of existing strategic tourism marketing theory and practice;
- introduce the concepts, theories and issues central to inter-organisational collaboration; and
- include detailed sector-based chapters with contemporary tourism marketing case study material that sets out to explore the myriad of collaborative marketing strategies undertaken by tourism and hospitality organisations across the world.

Particular attention will be accorded to providing the reader with a critical understanding of the above, with a focus throughout on inter-organisational collaborative marketing strategies. Issues for discussion include: the benefits and drawbacks of collaborative marketing strategy; the internal processes, resource implications and external impacts of collaborative marketing action; issues relating to managerial power and resource imbalance; and the challenge of managing parallel competitive and collaborative tourism marketing strategies.

The book aims to offer readers an alternative 'collaborative' perspective on tourism marketing, as well as to provide an insight into the dynamics of collaborative marketing and the considerable challenges it faces. In short, this book attempts to redress the paucity of literature that investigates the difficulties posed by collaboration activity in the extant marketing and tourism marketing literature.

The book is arranged in five parts. Part 1, which comprises Chapters 1 and 2, sets the contextual background for the book with an explanation of the rationale for increasing levels of collaboration in the tourism industry. This is supported in Chapter 1 by an analysis of the factors that drive collaboration in the tourism industry and the anticipated future impacts of such forces. Chapter 2 then presents a detailed discussion on the corpus of theory which underpins collaborative or 'symbiotic' marketing behaviour (Robson & Dunk, 1999) across the tourism and hospitality industries. The chapter introduces the origins of market orientation, discusses the migration to a relational orientation perspective, and provides an overview of the existing 'standardised' approach to the study of tourism marketing adopted by the majority of authors of tourism marketing texts. In so doing, the book will sow the seeds for an alternative 'collaborative' way forward for tourism marketing. Chapter 2 will also introduce the underlying drivers of marketing change and explain the rationale behind the emerging influence of collaboration on contemporary tourism marketing thinking and practice.

Part 2 of the book, which comprises Chapters 3 and 4, begins with a critical overview of the existing standardised approach to tourism marketing strategy. Rather than investigate the nature of each individual impact of collaboration on the existing models of tourism marketing strategy in depth, this chapter will discuss the fundamental nature of the impacts of collaboration on tourism marketing strategy and identify issues for discussion in the sector-based chapters that follow in Part 3 of the book. This discussion is intended to serve as a catalyst for change for practitioners, academics and students of tourism marketing in considering the future adoption of collaborative marketing strategies in tourism.

Similar in style to the previous chapter, Chapter 4 will examine the potential impact of collaboration on the more specific elements of the marketing mix when brought together under collaborative tourism marketing programmes. As in Chapter 3, discussion is intended to serve as the catalyst for practitioners, academics and students of tourism marketing in considering the future implementation of collaborative tourism marketing programmes. This chapter will demonstrate to readers the inappropriateness of much of the current tourism marketing literature in explaining the tourism marketing domain.

Part 3 of the book, which comprises Chapters 5 to 7 and which we believe represents the innovative core of the book, includes detailed discussion on inter-organisational exchange theory. Chapter 5 will introduce readers to the theories, concepts, issues and perspectives of inter-organisational collaboration and highlight the advantages and disadvantages of collaborative activity. A number of seminal studies will be used to provide the reader with the necessary theoretical underpinning to the area of inter-organisational collaboration.

Chapter 6 will introduce readers to the variety of collaborative forms in existence, with particular reference to tourism marketing forms of inter-organisational collaboration. Seminal work by Palmer and Bejou (1995), Selin (1993) and Selin and Chavez (1995), will be utilised to provide the necessary theoretical underpinning.

Chapter 7 will conclude Part 3 of the book with a detailed discussion of the organisational and governance criteria necessary for the effective management of inter-organisational forms. Work by a variety of authors, including ground-breaking studies by Bucklin and Sengupta (1993), Palmer (1998b) and Waddock and Bannister (1991), will be used to underpin discussion of the organisational forms and governance structures in this chapter.

Part 4 of the book, which comprises Chapters 8 to 10, will critically discuss the application of many of the theoretical perspectives outlined in Chapters 2 to 7 to the specific collaborative tourism marketing challenges in three of the principal sectors of the tourism industry. Various examples will be used throughout, with discussion points and issues

for future research highlighted at the end of each chapter. First, Chapter 8 focuses on transportation, undertaking an examination of the dynamics of marketing collaboration in global airline alliances. Chapter 9 follows with an investigation into the application of collaborative marketing strategies in the accommodation sector, namely hotel consortia. Thereafter, Chapter 10 investigates the innovative use of inter-destination collaboration initiatives among tourist destinations.

Part 5, which comprises Chapter 11, concludes the book as a whole by bringing together the key issues raised in the book and presenting the reader with a strategic marketing framework suitable for use in inter-organisational collaborative marketing situations in the tourism industry. Part 5 will close with an examination of the appropriateness of the existing marketing paradigm in an industry where in 'so few situations does one company or organisation control all the components, or all the stages in the decision-making processes in the creation and delivery of the tourism product' (Bramwell & Lane, 2000: 1).

Upon reading this book, it is our hope that the reader feels challenged and provoked to consider the wider rationale, dynamics and implications of collaborative marketing strategies in tourism. Strategies of collaboration are now widespread across all sectors of the tourism industry. Many are, however, still in their early stages of development, with a large number – airline alliances included – still as yet to prove their robustness as strategies able to accommodate the enormous pressures and environmental changes apparent in the highly dynamic and turbulent market conditions of today. It is hoped that this book will play a small part in offering a critique of the developments that have taken place, and are continuing to take place, in the domain of tourism marketing. It is also our aspiration that this book will serve as a catalyst for questioning the suitability of an alternative collaborative 'relational' orientation for the application of marketing in what is now being called the world's largest industry.

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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AMB	Alliance Management Board
AMTA	Agency for Coordinating Mekong Tourism Activities
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASP	application service provider
ATC	Australian Tourist Commission
BA	British Airways
BCG	Boston Consulting Group
bmi	British Midland International
B2B	business-to-business
B2C	business-to-consumer
CRO	central reservation office
CRS	computerised reservation system
DMO	destination marketing organisation
ECA	European Cooperation Agreement
EEA	European Economic Area
ETB	English Tourist Board
EU	European Union
EWEC	East-West Economic Corridor
FFP	frequent-flier programme
GCCC	Gold Coast City Council
GCITC	Gold Coast International Tourism Committee
GCTB	Gold Coast Tourism Bureau
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDS	global distribution system
GE	General Electric
GMS	Greater Mekong Subregion
GNP	Gross National Product
GSP	Gross State Product
ICT	information and communication technology
LGA	local government authority
MGC	Museums and Galleries Commission

MICE	meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions
MNC	multinational company
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NTO	national tourism organisation
OLS	ordinary least squares
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PATA	Pacific Area Tourism Association
P3	public-private partnership
RAS	Redemption Availability and Sell
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SBU	strategic business unit
SIS	Stockholm Information Service
SLH	Small Luxury Hotels (of the World)
STO	state tourism organisation
SWOT	strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
TAT	Tourism Authority of Thailand
TDAP	Tourism Development Action Plan
TSC	Tourism Sunshine Coast
TWG	Tourism Working Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VCB	Visitor and Convention Bureau
WTO	World Tourism Organization

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