

4

Tourism Marketing for Destinations with Negative Images

While some destinations enjoy a positive image and a constant influx of tourists, this is not always the case. Other places, particularly in developing countries, may suffer from repeated crises and are associated with negative stereotypes that keep tourists away. In the previous chapters we learned that tourist destinations in developing countries tend to suffer from negative stereotypes, generalizations and perceptions; that there are various factors that shape these negative images in the mass media; and that destination marketing practices can alter these images. The current chapter will explore four key issues: (a) the use of image restoration discourse to improve a destination's image; (b) the role of crisis communication in responding to sudden crises; (c) the multi-step model for altering the place's image, and its implication for destination marketing; and (d) the marketing tool of media strategies and the relevant strategies for marketing destinations that suffer from negative stereotypes and other undesirable images.

Image restoration

An image is a critical factor for tourism destinations as it affects a place's ability to attract tourists, visitors, investors and other resources (Anholt, 2005). In order to alter and improve a negative image, places can follow the theoretical constructs of image repair, image restoration and recovery marketing. According to the image repair discourse, an image is a critical variable for people, places and organizations (Coombs, 1995). When encountering image problems, organizations will take preventive and restorative measures to protect this vital asset. Such measures take the form of five major image repair strategies: denial, evasion of responsibility,

reducing offensiveness of events, corrective action and mortification (Benoit, 1997).

While the image repair theory might be highly effective for people and organizations, its applicability to destinations is far less effective (Insch and Avraham, 2014). When facing image problems, people and organizations can deny any link to the offensive act; can refuse to accept their responsibility for the problem, portraying the situation in a less-offensive light; can take a corrective action; or can simply apologize (Benoit and Henson, 2009). When a developing country suffers from a sudden crisis or an accumulated negative image, these repair strategies are not very practical. For example, one may consider a developing country that suffers from the common stereotypes of underdevelopment, lack of tourism infrastructure and low personal safety. Using the image repair discourse, the country cannot deny its problematic reality, shift the responsibility to other countries or apologize for its problems. Perhaps the country can do it, but this will not prove very effective in attracting tourists and visitors.

Another perspective offered by the image restoration discourse can take the form of communication response strategies. The basic communication response model includes three or four steps: expressing regret, acting to resolve the situation, ensuring that the situation will not recur and, if necessary, offering restitution to the injured parties (Stocker, 1997). Another approach to image restoration is offered by Coombs (1999), who suggests response strategies such as attacking the accuser, providing excuses or justifications, ingratiation and offering a full apology. As mentioned earlier, such strategies are more useful to people and organizations and less practical for places and destinations suffering from issues of long-term negative images. In the case of a tourist destination suffering from an epidemic, it is less likely for national stakeholders to accuse the virus or to provide excuses.

The image restoration discourse is of critical importance for people, governments, companies and non-profit organizations, offering them a practical tool to protect and cultivate their image (Benoit, 2014). However, in the case of tourism marketing for developing nations, the image restoration discourse can be applied with very limited success (Avraham, 2013). There are several reasons for this: firstly, some of the challenges faced by developing countries result from external factors that are beyond the reach of the place leaders, and they cannot take responsibility for the negative occurrences. Secondly, many of the problems faced by developing countries date back decades or even centuries, to the times when these countries were established or, in some cases, to

the days of colonialism (Sabar, 2010). As a result, it would be extremely complicated to mend the problematic situation and to act quickly and effectively. Thirdly, countries are neither people nor private entities; a mayor, a national tourism office manager or the Minister of Tourism cannot take the same course of action and implement response strategies such as ingratiation. Summing up these points, it is necessary to go beyond the discourse of image restoration and take a broader perspective that will allow cities, countries and tourist destinations to manage their image and protect it from crises. Two particular approaches to handle the image of destinations and overcome such difficult times are crisis communication management and the multi-step model for altering a place's image.

Crisis communication management

The 21st century is a period of rapid changes: global communication networks, global business ties and global tourism. In this era, having a crisis is not a question of "if" but "when?" and "how prepared will we be?". In recent years leading tourist destinations around the world have suffered from a variety of image crises; these include the 9/11 terror attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the 7 July bombing in London in 2005; the series of sexual assaults against female tourists in India; the sinking of the Italian cruise ship, *Costa Concordia*, in 2012 and the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines flight 370 in 2014; and the long months of demonstrations in Bangkok, Thailand's capital. Also, there was the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and Hurricane Katrina in 2005 in New Orleans; not to forget the outbreaks of the SARS epidemic in Hong Kong in 2002 and the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic in West Africa in 2014.

Crises are unpredictable events that have the potential to create negative or undesired outcomes (Coombs, 1999). In the context of tourist destinations, Glaesser (2006) suggests a more comprehensive definition for a crisis:

A crisis is an undesired, extraordinary, often unexpected and timely limited process with ambivalent development possibilities. It demands immediate decisions and countermeasures in order to influence the further development again positively for the organization/destination and to limit the negative consequences as much as possible. A crisis situation is determined by evaluating the seriousness of the occurring negative events, which threaten, weaken or destroy competitive advantages or important goals of the organization/destination. (p 14)

According to these definitions, crises are unpredicted and unexpected situations that, if not managed properly, could lead to undesired outcomes that may harm the destination's competitive advantages. In the tourism industry, according to Mansfeld and Pizam (2006), crises may result from five major types of negative events:

1. Terrorist attacks such as the bombing of public places or plane hijackings.
2. Crimes such as robbery, rape, murder or kidnapping.
3. Accident-related crises such as airplane crashes or the sinking of cruise ships.
4. Political unrest events such as violent demonstrations, uprisings or riots.
5. Natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, hurricanes or tsunamis.
6. Epidemics such as the outbreak of SARS, HIV or Ebola.

Although unpredictable by nature, crises can be modeled into fixed stages that form the crisis life cycle. According to Herrero and Pratt (1996), crises develop along four key stages: birth, growth, maturity and decline (as cited in Beirman and van Walbeek, 2011). This division corresponds with a biological model, describing the crisis life cycle as parallel to that of the living organism, which slowly develops and then fades away. The notion that crisis development can be expected and even controlled represents a proactive approach toward such events, known as crisis management. The term "crisis management" is composed of two words that at first glance contradict each other – how can something as unpredictable as a crisis be managed? However, modern scholars claim that crises can be prevented, limited, controlled, managed and affected (Lerbinger, 2012). According to Glaesser (2006), crisis management is composed of the strategies, processes and measures that are planned and put into force to prevent and cope with crisis. The crisis management process comprises four main stages:

1. *Precaution* – In this preliminary stage, destinations take preventive measures in order to reduce the probability of a crisis occurring. Sample actions may include taking general safety measures, properly maintaining infrastructure and tourism superstructure, and creating a positive and supportive work environment.
2. *Planning prevention* – The successful management of crises is carried out long before the first signs of the crisis. In the planning prevention stage, destinations conduct risk management analysis for possible

- crises, create an emergency response and action plan for every possible scenario, and establish a crisis management team that includes various professionals and stakeholders.
3. *Crisis coping* – Not every crisis can be prevented and the third stage is focused on managing, limiting, containing and controlling it. The main aim of this stage is to bring the crisis to an end with the least possible damage to tourists, residents, employees and infrastructure.
 4. *Post-crisis* – Once the smoke has cleared, it is time to recover the destination's infrastructure, revive tourism, learn lessons from the recent crisis and prepare to manage the next one.

In recent years organizations have put a growing emphasis on preparing for crises, and crisis management planning is becoming an integral part of the organization's regular strategic planning process (Crandall et al., 2013).

Communication management is a highly effective method that allows tourist destinations to act in times of sudden crisis and manage their image in the event of negative occurrences. Yet there are two major limitations for practicing crisis communication in developing countries. Firstly, communication practices apply only to sudden crises. For places suffering from long-standing image problems, the communication techniques do not work as the places are trapped in a long and continuous state of crisis-coping, without reaching the post-crisis stage. Secondly, the level of development and geo-political characteristics of many developing countries makes them more vulnerable to sudden crises. When such events are repeated over and over again, the effectiveness of crisis communication decreases, as the separate events join together to be perceived as one never-ending crisis. Because of these two limitations, developing countries cannot count only on crisis communication practices but should also employ media strategies for marketing places in times of crisis.

The multi-step model for altering place image

One model that offers a response to the lacunae of image restoration theories and to the limitations of crisis communication practices is the multi-step model for altering place images (Avraham and Ketter, 2008a). This is a destination marketing model aimed at accompanying tourism stakeholders in the process of planning, conducting and evaluating campaigns for altering place images and overcoming image crises. The model describes a five-stage process: preliminary analysis; setting goals

and timing; choosing media strategies for marketing places in crisis; implementing the strategies with marketing techniques and channels; and following up with evaluation and feedback. The model is presented in Figure 4.1.

In the first stage of the multi-step model for altering place images, destinations conduct a preliminary analysis in order to assess their current state. In the field of strategic marketing, a formative analysis is a common procedure aimed at assessing the characteristics of the organization, the target audience and the competitors (Smith, 2013). In the multi-step model for altering place image, the preliminary analysis should focus on three core dimensions: firstly, the characteristics of the place, which include its location, resources, power and status, regime and leadership as well as its position along the tourism area life cycle. Secondly, the characteristics of the target audience, which include the type and the size of the audience, knowledge and image of the place, the audience’s sources of information, geographic and cultural proximity and the socio-cultural characteristics of the audience. Thirdly, the characteristics of the crisis, which can focus on both an image crisis and a physical crisis. These include the type of the crisis, its stage and

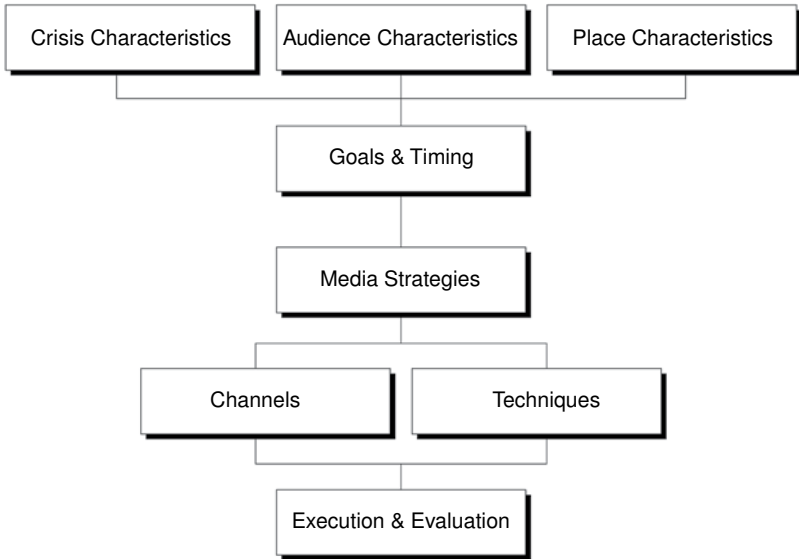


Figure 4.1 The multi-step model for altering place image (adapted from Avraham and Ketter, 2008a)

duration, geographical scale, number of casualties and their origin as well as damage caused to the infrastructure and tourism superstructure.

The second stage of the model is goal setting. Destination marketing goals might include altering a long-lasting negative image and initiating consumption; continuation of consumption during an ongoing crisis; continuation of consumption after the crisis is over; changing consumption characteristics; and maintaining and enhancing consumption. This variety of marketing goals allows different destinations with different needs to use the model, based on the place's specific requirements. The third stage of the multi-step model for altering place image is the choice of a media strategy. This is a marketing plan of action for creating a desired impact among a selected target audience. Media strategies for marketing places in crisis can be divided into three groups: media strategies to focus on the source of the message; strategies that focus on the message itself; and those that focus on the target audience. Within each group, there are different media strategies appropriate for different destinations with different characteristics, totaling over 30 strategies. The range of marketing goals and the three groups of media strategies are described in greater detail in the continuation of this chapter.

The fourth stage of the multi-step model for altering place image is choosing techniques and channels for implementation. In order to deliver the campaign messages to the target audience, there are five key marketing techniques that can be used: advertising, public relations, direct sales, sales promotion and online marketing (Boone and Kurtz, 2013). From the available techniques, a destination can choose to focus on one main technique or develop a promotion mix that integrates several of them. As for channels, each technique has a variety of channels to choose from. For example, in advertising one has to choose between the print media and the electronic media, and within the electronic media choose the specific website, radio station or television channel in which to advertise. Among other factors, the choice of techniques and channels is highly dependent on the availability of financial resources; a generous marketing budget might result in a diverse promotion mix, with advertising taking a significant portion of it. On the other hand, a limited marketing budget might result in a narrow promotion mix, focusing mainly on public relations and social media marketing.

The fifth and final stage of the model focuses on execution, evaluation and feedback. A famous quote by Winston Churchill suggests that: "However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results". Following this line of thought, the fifth stage focuses on evaluating the results of the destination marketing campaign. Evaluation

is carried out at three complementary levels: cognitive, emotional and behavioral (Smith, 2013). On the cognitive level, destinations examine whether their image has been altered and whether people from the target audience now hold an improved image of the destination. On the emotional level, destinations evaluate whether feelings, emotions and attitudes toward the destination have been affected by the campaign. On the behavioral level, destinations examine whether the target audience responded with a desired action, such as coming to visit the place. The most common tools for the evaluation process include surveys, focus groups, media coverage analysis and inbound tourism statistics (for more details see Chapter 3). Following this last stage, tourism decision-makers can return to the first stage, re-analyze the current state, choose a new goal and launch a new campaign to successfully realize it.

Destination marketing goals

Choosing the most appropriate marketing goal is a key step in the multi-step model for altering place images. The goals define the direction in which the organization wishes to develop, and guide decision-makers in setting objectives and formulating strategy (Kotler et al., 2014). A more specific view is offered by Smith (2013), who states that a goal is a simple statement, acknowledging the current state of the organization, outlines how to develop from it and what the organization would like to accomplish. In the field of tourism marketing, the choice of clear goals is important for strategic planning, execution, monitoring and evaluation (Cooper and Hall, 2008). Common tourism marketing goals may include cultivating the destination's image among key markets, enhancing the place's competitive advantage and boosting tourism numbers. However, these goals are more relevant to destinations that do not suffer from stereotypes, negative images or crises.

For destinations in developing countries that operate in a more challenging environment, there are other marketing goals to be considered. These goals take into account two key factors: one is that many destinations in developing countries suffer from prolonged negative images that can date back to decades or even centuries. And the other is that many destinations in developing countries are currently facing a turbulent reality that includes low rates of physical development, lack of adequate infrastructure, high crime rates, low levels of tourism development and other local problems (Avraham and Ketter, 2013). In this context, tourism marketing goals should relate to issues such as destinations with negative place images, some of which have recently recovered from

a crisis and others which are still facing an ongoing crisis. For the places that are facing these issues, marketing goals should be different and achieving the goals becomes much more complicated when compared to places that come from a “better neighborhood” (Anholt, 2009). To market destinations with a negative place image, there are five main goals to be kept in mind:

1. Altering a prolonged negative image, and initiating consumption.
2. Continuation of consumption during an ongoing crisis.
3. Continuation of consumption after the crisis is over.
4. Changing consumption characteristics.
5. Maintaining and enhancing consumption.

1. *Altering a prolonged negative image and initiating consumption* – The first destination marketing goal for developing destinations is to alter a prolonged negative image and initiate consumption. This goal is intended for destinations that suffer from a prolonged negative stereotype and are in the early tourism development stages of discovery and exploration (Butler, 1980). In this goal, the destination aims to take its first steps in the global tourism industry as it starts to cater to international visitors and tourists. To achieve this goal, the destination will have to overcome its prolonged problematic image and create some positive news to promote consumption. It should be noted that this goal is different from “regular places” that are just merely off the tourist map, as they have the opportunity to create a fresh image, without the burden of prolonged stereotypes.
2. *Continuation of consumption during an ongoing crisis* – The second marketing goal for developing destinations is the continuation of consumption during an ongoing crisis. This goal is aimed at places that are already consumed as tourist destinations but, in the background, there are issues that constantly maintain the place’s problematic image. This goal might be appropriate for tourist destinations that suffer from long-standing issues of political instability, terror attacks, crime against tourists or other negative occurrences. For such destinations, it is important to sustain the current flow of tourists, maintain their market position and minimize the damage to their image. In the context of the current goal, it should be pointed out that continuation of consumption during an ongoing crisis is not always advised and, in some cases, should be strongly discouraged. If the issues causing the problematic image are acute and tourists might get hurt, maintaining tourism could be an irresponsible act that will risk the

safety of tourists and visitors. If tourists get hurt, this will also result in a very negative media coverage that will exacerbate the image crisis and erode the destination's image for years to come (Beirman, 2006).

3. *Continuation of consumption after the crisis is over* – The third marketing goal for developing destinations is the continuation of consumption after the crisis is over. In this case, the smoke has cleared, the sun is shining again and it is now time to bring tourists back and boost inbound tourism numbers. Such destinations may be places that used to have some tourism in the past, but this has stopped as a result of political instability, a natural disaster, an epidemic or a violent conflict. As these tragic events ended, destinations following this goal now aspire to convince their audience that the place's reality is now different and better than it used to be. In other words, it is time to put the past behind and focus on the present. Media messages following this goal tend to correct misperceptions, show that businesses are operational, downplay the scale of a disaster or distance the destination from the affected area (Mair et al., 2014). The challenge in such cases is that the image crisis tends to last much longer than the physical crisis, and it could last many months before the new reality is recognized by the international media and key audiences (Glaesser, 2006). As a result, a major objective in this stage is to find media strategies that will communicate the change quickly and effectively, and will return the destination to the global tourism map.
4. *Changing consumption characteristics* – The fourth destination marketing goal for developing destinations is changing consumption characteristics. In this case, destinations are either consumed by one specific audience segment or consumed for one specific tourism product. For example, this could relate to a former French colony that is frequently visited by French tourists, or a country that is mainly consumed for sea and sun tourism. In both cases, these destinations would like to expand the way in which they are consumed, opening up to new source markets and offering a variety of tourism products. Following these goals, such destinations would have to expand their image, communicate their diversity and identify new market segments. Among other reasons, this marketing goal is common among developing destinations because places in the developing world are more likely to project a flat and one-sided image (Kunczik, 1997). As a result, such places need to act proactively in order to create a rich and positive image that will attract a variety of audiences for a variety of purposes.
5. *Maintaining and enhancing consumption* – The fifth and final destination marketing goal for developing destinations is maintaining and

enhancing consumption. This goal represents a positive state in which the place is already being consumed, and the influx of tourists and visitors that should be cultivated. While this particular goal is adopted only by some developing destinations, it is more common among developed destinations – places that are less likely to suffer from stereotypes and image crises. This goal is also referred to as “regular marketing” – the conventional marketing process that is not aimed at overcoming image challenges but is focused on sales growth, enhanced profitability, a better reputation and an increased share of the market (Kotler et al., 2014). As can be seen from the above goals, tourism marketing is not a “one-size-fits-all” process but rather a multi-faceted process in which different places take different goals and choose different routes to implement them.

Media strategies for marketing places in crisis

Following the stage of goal setting, the multi-step model for altering place’s image focuses on choosing a media strategy for marketing places in crisis. Delivering a media strategy is a communication process that can be divided into three basic components: the source of the message, the message itself and the target audience. Similarly, media strategies for marketing places in crisis can be divided into three groups: the strategies to focus on the source of the message; the strategies to focus on the message itself; and the strategies to focus on the target audience. The following section will introduce these three groups, and the main strategies that compose each group.

Media strategies to focus on the source of the message

As noted in earlier chapters, the mass media in general and the news media in particular are leading factors in shaping a destination’s image. Trying to alter their image, destinations can concentrate their efforts on the source of the message – mainly the media. This can be done in two ways: trying to influence the source of the unflattering message, focusing on journalists and editors in the news media, or trying to replace the global news media with an alternative source. Following the first manner – trying to affect the source of the message – there are a few media strategies available:

Media cooperation and media relations – One fundamental way to affect media coverage is by working together with the media, creating rapport and mutual understanding (Lahav et al., 2013). Taking this

path, destinations allocate resources for familiarization trips, press tours, press club meetings and other initiatives aimed to generate and foster media relations. In return, journalists, editors and bloggers are expected to provide better media coverage and enhanced media access for the destinations and their stakeholders.

Blocking media access – This media strategy follows the simple notion that what journalists don't see they cannot cover. In this approach, journalists are kept away from crisis areas and from seeing negative occurrences that might damage the destination's image. As this strategy limits the freedom of the press and the freedom of movement, it is more likely to be used by countries with a non-democratic regime and may evoke criticism.

Applying physical/economic threats – While the media strategy of media cooperation is based on a positive attitude, the strategy of physical/economic threats is based on a completely opposite approach. In this view, the media is considered to be an enemy and is treated with force so that journalists and editors are threatened with physical or economic consequences if they cover the place in a negative manner.

Following the second type of source strategies – trying to replace the source of the message – destinations can use the Internet as a substitute to the news media:

Using the Internet as an alternative source – One highly available source when trying to replace mass media messages is the Internet. The online world offers countless platforms that allow destinations to present themselves the way they want and communicate directly with the target audience, without the mediation of the traditional media (Wynee et al., 2002; Ketter and Avraham, 2012). Using online platforms such as a website, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and blogs, destinations can now create and deliver their own messages and cultivate their image in a relatively independent manner.

Media strategies to focus on the message itself

The second group of media strategies is composed of those that focus on the message itself. Strategies in this group try to alter the place's image by disregarding the image problems, acknowledging the negative image or taking measures to handle the destination's image. This is the biggest group of media strategies, and those in this group move along a continuum from moderate to extreme coping measures.

Ignoring the crisis – The easiest solution when facing a negative image is to ignore it, pretending as though nothing bad has happened. In this view, destinations choose to ignore the damage to their image after negative events as if there never was a crisis, in the hope that new events and the passing of time will erase the crisis from the memory of tourists, visitors or potential investors.

Acknowledging the negative image – At certain times, admitting the negative image directly is the most effective – even though not the most convenient – course of action. This strategy may prove useful during a crisis, or immediately after it has passed, to maintain or regain a trustworthy image. In this case, a marketing campaign will be delivered together with the message that the place is now different and better than it had been.

Limiting the crisis – An additional way to limit the crisis can be found in the strategy of acknowledging the negative image. Following this strategy, destinations acknowledge the existence of a crisis, yet limit it to a certain geographical region, trying to downplay the role of the negative events. This strategy is often taken by destinations that suffer from an image crisis they cannot ignore, and therefore try to limit it.

Reducing the scale of the crisis – Taking a similar approach to the “limiting the crisis” strategy, places can downplay the crisis by reducing its scale. In this media strategy, destinations acknowledge the existence of a problem but try to portray it as a minor issue, one of relatively little importance.

Tackling the crisis – Very often, the best way to restore a positive image is to change the reality that caused the problematic image. This is a direct approach taking the notion that images are based on reality and, by improving reality, destinations will improve their image. If, for example, a specific place is perceived as violent and unsafe, the strategy of “tackling the crisis” advises the place to combat its crime and violence in order to create an improved reality that will result in a more attractive public image.

Hosting spotlight events – The strategy of hosting spotlight events is simple and straightforward: destinations host major events to attract visitors, gain positive attention from the media and improve their image. Such events may include sports events, cultural “happenings” and festivals, economic or political summit meetings, and any other occurrence that will attract the media and the public.

Using films, TV series and books – In the past few decades, destination marketers have found that films, television series and books can

serve as powerful tourism marketing tools (Hudson and Ritchie, 2006). Hence, popular culture products can raise awareness of the destination, enhance its image, associate it with positive emotions and inspire potential tourists to book a visit. Taking this strategy, destinations will try to promote the production of popular culture products that take place at the destination and showcase its many virtues to the world.

Association to well-known brands and celebrities – Using celebrities and well-known brands is a familiar marketing strategy; it is based on the brands and the celebrities' ability to attract the audience's attention, engage customers and use their role as opinion leaders (Friedman, 2002). An additional reason to use celebrities is that people seek to imitate their favorite stars, and visiting the destination that the famous people visit is a great way to get one step closer to their role model. Destinations that follow the "engaging celebrities" strategy will present themselves through relevant famous personalities and will promote cooperation with them in order to raise their profile.

Delivering a counter-message – Many destinations that suffer from a negative image naturally prefer an image quite different from their current one. In this manner, destinations perceived as dangerous would like to be seen as safe, places perceived as boring would like to be considered interesting, and so on. With this straightforward reasoning, the strategy of delivering counter-messages aims to battle places' negative perceptions by simply contradicting them.

Spinning liabilities into assets – A common phrase suggests, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade". Adopting a similar view, the strategy of spinning liabilities into assets takes the key point of a previous strategy – acknowledging the negative image – one step farther, by recognizing a negative factor responsible for the image and spinning it into a positive trait. This strategy is based on the positive perception that in every bad thing there is also something good that can be used to promote tourism.

Ridicule the stereotype – At times, stereotypes of a destination can be exaggerated, prejudiced or simply out of proportion. To combat such perceptions, the media strategy of "ridiculing the stereotype" suggests that destinations acknowledge their negative stereotype by taking it to the extreme and then dispel it by showing how absurd it actually is.

Branding contrary to the stereotype – The strategy of "branding contrary to the stereotype" takes the previous strategy of "delivering a counter-message" one step farther by adopting an all-embracing

approach. Following this attitude, destinations choose and develop a brand that is the opposite of their problematic stereotype, trying to get far from it as possible. This strategy is also related to the strategy of “tackling the crisis” as destinations that follow this strategy are required to create an in-depth change in the place’s reality and completely abandon their problematic past.

Geographical association/disassociation – Geographical location is one of the destination’s most important characteristics. In addition to physical features such as climate, landscape and proximity to other places, geographic location is linked to a range of characteristics such as culture, language, history and heritage. For some places, their problematic image is caused not by the place’s characteristics but by their association with certain geographic areas that carry a negative image (Beirman, 2002; Mansfeld and Pizam, 2006). In that case, a good strategy might be to disassociate the place from the problematic region or to associate it with nearby regions that enjoy a more positive image.

Multi-facets and softening the “hard” image – When a destination is involved in prolonged violent conflict, for example, it acquires an undesirable, hard image that has to be softened. According to this strategy, the destination has to be given a human touch by associating itself with events, activities and visuals perceived as opposite to soldiers, terror victims, tanks and guns (Gilboa, 2006). In many cases, countries do acknowledge their negative facets and try to “soften” the effect by adding positive elements to their image.

Media strategies to focus on the target audience

The third and last group of media strategies presented in this book are those that focus on the target audience. For these strategies, the focus includes the characteristics, emotions and views of their selected audience, and the way in which these elements can be implemented to promote tourism. This last group includes three main strategies: feelings of similarity to the target audience, employing emotions of patriotism and personal heritage among the audience, and changing the target audience.

Similarity to the target audience – This strategy is based on the destination’s attempts to show the proximity and similarity that exists between it and specific target audience. When a campaign message tries to persuade us that, “We are similar, we have the same values, perceptions and beliefs”, it is actually saying: “There is no reason for you not to identify with us, love us and change your negative image of us, because we are alike”. Marketers who use this

strategy believe that once the audience recognizes this similarity, feelings of affection, sympathy and understanding will develop and stimulate the desire to visit that destination.

Patriotism and personal/national heritage – One particular link between the destination and the target audience includes feelings of patriotism and personal heritage. In the case of patriotic feelings, the tourism product becomes an abstract symbol of common beliefs, perceptions and social values and, by traveling to the destination, the tourists express their support for those values (Vatikay, 2000). In the case of personal heritage, the destination promotes personal history, legacy and traditions; and tourists who visit the destination can use their visit to identify with their heritage. In both cases, specific values of the target audience are emphasized in order to create an emotional link between the place and the tourist, and such links may stimulate travel behavior.

Changing the target audience – The image of a destination is not an objective entity but evolves subjectively through the eyes of different target audiences. As a result, while a destination might have a problematic image among some people, other audiences will view it in a more favorable light. Exploiting these differences of opinion, some places have learned that they can easily promote tourists' motivations by changing the target audience and, instead, focus on audiences that are more willing to visit the destination.

Chapter summary

The chapter covered a few key issues in regard to tourism marketing for destinations with negative images. It started with the theories of image restoration, aiming to repair a damaged image. As the image restoration discourse is less practical for destinations, the chapter continued by examining the notions of crisis management and communication management. The practice of crisis communication is highly appropriate for developing destinations, yet it is mainly suitable for a crisis event. To provide an image recovery solution for destinations with prolonged negative images, the chapter then focused on the multi-step model for altering a place image. The model offers a comprehensive process that accompanies destinations as they alter their image. The last part of the chapter concentrated on the three groups of media strategies for altering a place's image: media strategies to focus on the source of the message; strategies to focus on the message itself; and strategies to focus on the target audience. Using these techniques, places can effectively battle negative stereotypes, improve their image and successfully attract tourists and visitors.