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A Comparison of Canadian and Chinese University Students’ Travel Motivations

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ABSTRACT
Youth and student travel is becoming an important global phenomenon. Unfortunately, relatively few studies have focused specifically on this area. As well, the cross-cultural perspective is inadequate. This study explores Canadian and Chinese university students’ travel motivations using the Recreation Experience Preference (REP) scales and Iso-Ahola’s (1982) social psychological model. It employs a quantitative survey method. The results show that similarities and differences in travel motivations exist in both cultural groups, and between males and females. These results have both theoretical and practical implications and contribute to a cross-cultural understanding of university students’ travel motivations.

KEYWORDS: University students, Travel motivations, Recreation experience preference scales

INTRODUCTION
Tourism is a strong and competitive industry for both China and Canada. Beyond its economic contribution, the psychological and social aspect is also important. This study focuses on a social psychological perspective on travel motivations. From a psychological perspective, a desire for experience motivates people to travel; from a social perspective, travel motivations may vary across groups, including age groups, cultural groups, and so on.

Youth and student travel is becoming an important global phenomenon. The youth travel market is worth around 18% of worldwide international tourism expenditure with global volume growth of 3-5% a year and spending increasing by 8% a year (World Tourism Organization, 2008). Only a few studies (e.g., Kak-Yom & Jogaratnan, 2002; Richards & Wilson, 2003) have examined students’ travel motivations across culture and those that have done so seldom provide underlying explanations for their findings.

Therefore, this study explores differences and similarities in travel motivations between Chinese and Canadian university students and provides explanations for these
differences and similarities. This study will help tourism professionals provide better products to student tourists.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

For university students, tourism is often an educational component of university experiences through spontaneous trips (e.g., independent trips), organized trips (e.g., field trips), or both. University students’ motivations for travel may not only reflect some aspects of the broader travel market but also their own particular needs. Arnett (2000) identifies three distinctive features of Western young people aged 18-25, who are mainly university students: self-sufficiency, identity exploration, and risk-taking. Furthermore, Nelson, Badger, and Wu (2004) pointed out that culture affects these features. Specifically, they found similar attributes between Western and Chinese university students: independence, self-reliance, and identity and beliefs exploration. They also noticed that in addition to accepting responsibility for themselves, Chinese university students tended to take responsibility for their families. Since Chinese people were cautious rather than adventurous, university students were more likely to conform to and obey social norms.

Three main theoretical frameworks for travel motivation have been discussed in the literature: push and pull factors (Crompton, 1979; Klenosky, 2002; Rubenstein, 1980; Uysal & Hagan, 1993), Iso-Ahola’s (1982) seeking and escaping model, and Recreation Experience Preference (REP) scales (Driver, 1983). Compared with the push and pull factors and seeking and escaping model, the REP scales are the most comprehensive.

Based on the previous literature review, three research questions were proposed: (1) Are there similarities and differences in Chinese and Canadian university students’ travel motivations? (2) Are “escaping” motives more important than “seeking” motives in university students’ travel experiences (based on Iso-Ahola’s social psychological model of tourism motivation)? And (3) do gender, culture, or both affect motivations?

METHODOLOGY

This study explored Canadian and Chinese students’ travel during their holidays. It employed a quantitative survey method. The survey questionnaire included the following sections: introduction, respondents’ travel characteristics, selected REP scales, and respondents’ background information. The researcher used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” to measure each of the REP items. An “NA” category allowed respondents to indicate when an item was not applicable. This study used double translation (i.e., translation-back translation), where the researcher translated the English version into Chinese and then hired a professional translator to translate it back to English. The researcher made minor changes after comparing the two versions of the questionnaire. A convenience sample used students from a Canadian university in Edmonton and a Chinese university in Beijing. The researcher conducted surveying at diverse times and places. From a total of 806 cases, 295 Canadians (those who identified themselves as Canadians only) and 352 Chinese qualified for the study. Before conducting data analyses, face validity, construct validity, and reliability were tested through interviews, exploratory factor analysis, and Cronbach coefficient alphas. In addition,
several issues were addressed: accuracy, missing data, assumptions, outliers, correlations among variables, and screening people for inclusion. By doing these, multivariate analysis of variance and univariate analysis of variance can be applied.

FINDINGS

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) showed that overall travel motivations were significantly different between the two cultural groups (Wilks Lambda $\lambda=.66$, $F(7, 639) = 47.10$, $\eta^2=.34$, $p=.000$). Among the seven REP scales, similar people and family togetherness motivations were not significantly different. However, significant differences on the learning, escape, achievement, being different and new, and risk-taking motivations existed between Canadian and Chinese students (Table 1). Differences on the risk-taking motivations showed a medium effect size ($\eta^2=.19$) while the remaining motivations showed small effect sizes ($\eta^2$ ranging from .01 to .05). Specifically, Chinese students were more supportive than the Canadians in terms of the learning, and escape travel motivations; Canadian students were more supportive than the Chinese in terms of the achievement, being different and new, and risk-taking motivations. The interaction of cultural groups and gender did not have a significant effect on the seven travel motivations (Wilks Lambda $\lambda=.99$, $F(2, 642) = 4.26$, $\eta^2 = .01$, $p=.014$). In general, gender had no significant effect on the escape motivation, but did on the remaining motivations (Table 1). Females were more supportive of the learning, similar people, family togetherness, achievement, and being different and new motivations, while males were more supportive of the risk-taking motivation.

Table 1. Multivariate and Univariate Analysis of Variance for the Seven Motivations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Multivariate</th>
<th>Univariate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d.f</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural groups (C)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>48.61*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (G)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.31**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C x G</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $F$ ratios are Wilks’s approximation of $F$s. *Multivariate df= 7, 637. Univariate df= 1, 643. **p< .001. ***p< .01. *p< .05.
In terms of Iso-Ahola’s (1982) social psychological model, significant differences existed on the escape and seeking motivations with the two cultural groups (Table 2) exhibiting a small effect size ($\eta^2 = .03$). Chinese students were more supportive of the escape motivation, while Canadian students were more supportive of the seeking motivation. Additionally, the interaction between cultural groups and gender did not influence the escape and seeking motivations (Table 2); however, females were significantly higher than males on the seeking motivation, although this effect size was small ($\eta^2 = .01$).

**Table 2. Multivariate and Univariate Analysis of Variance for Seeking and Escape Motivations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Multivariate</th>
<th>Univariate</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>df</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural groups (C)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.76***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (G)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.26*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C x G</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: F ratios are Wilks’s approximation of $F$'s. *Multivariate df= 2, 642. Univariate df= 1, 643. ***p<.001. **p<.01. *p<.05.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Chinese people have loved nature and attached their feelings to it for generations. A Chinese philosophy of 天人合一 (tian ren he yi), which is a harmony between human beings and nature, may explain why “nature and beauty” is the top reason for Chinese students. On the other hand, “having things to do” is the top reason for Canadian students, with the major activities being sports and outdoor activities. This is supported by The Travel Activities and Motivation Survey which showed that 82.8% of the Canadian pleasure travelers participated in outdoor activities on their trips over the past two years, and they were more likely to be younger and better educated (TAMS 2006: Canadian outdoor activities while on trips: An overview, 2008).

The similarities and differences in travel motivations reflect some features of the emerging adulthood (e.g., self-sufficiency, risk-taking, Arnett, 2000), individualism-collectivism (Ting-Toomey, 1988), gender role stereotypes (McCintock, 1996) and traditional Confucianism (Yang, Zheng, & Li, 2006). The results support that students from two cultural groups had similar travel motivations, but they valued them differently.

Future research recommendations are: (1) follow-up studies looking at needs satisfaction during and/or after travel; (2) cross-cultural tests on REP scales not in this study; (3) examination of motivational items other than the REP scales (e.g., interest, enjoyment, fun); (4) validation of study results with a random sample; and (5) examination of a broader population (e.g., ethnic groups of Canadian students and Chinese students from rural areas).
This study has both theoretical and practical implications. As to theoretical implications, first, it provides a systematic approach to motivations in a tourism context. It also confirms the existence of the two dimensions of Iso-Ahola’s (1982) seeking and escaping model for travel motivations. Finally it examines the REP scales in a cross-cultural context. Its practical implications lie in tourism marketing in terms of segmenting tourists and positioning tourism and recreation experience. Several recommendations derived from this study may be worth considering for tourism practitioners (e.g., travel agencies, marketing branches, government agencies): tourism products for university students should focus on learning and discovery of nature, places, new and different things (e.g., skills), making new friends, and hanging out with their friends. Furthermore, emphases on sports and outdoor activity participation for Canadian students and on beautiful sightseeing for Chinese students may help to draw interest from these two markets. Considering gender differences, tourism products targeting female students should emphasize safety and a lack of risk.

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Perceived Climate Change Risks: Ontario Snowmobile Tourism

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ABSTRACT
Winter tourism in many parts of the world has been identified to be susceptible to global climate change. Previous studies of winter tourism have focused assessments of potential impacts in the alpine ski industry. Snowmobile tourism in the Province of Ontario, a strong economic generator, is at risk to climate variability and long-term climate change. The reliability of snowfalls and declining season lengths are supply-side challenges faced by the snowmobile industry. Perceptions of environmental risks are often factors of real risk, risk target, optimistic bias, and gender and will influence the responses of snowmobile trail managers/operators, responsible for the development and maintenance of snowmobile trail systems in Ontario, to climate change. Possible responses to climate change include operational strategies maximizing available snowfalls, diversification of operations to include other seasonal activities, and efforts to influence institutional policies affecting snowmobile tourism.

KEYWORDS: Climate change, Responses, Risks, Snowmobile tourism.

INTRODUCTION
Snowmobile tourism in the Province of Ontario generally occurs annually from December to March and contributes an estimated $1.2 billion in annual economic impact and $112 million in tax revenues (Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC), 2007), is at risk to weather variability and a changing climate. Ontario’s nature and outdoors is the primary attraction for Canadian and American tourists to the province (Ontario Ministry of Tourism (OMT), 2006). Weather and climate influence nature-based tourism worldwide, directly by limiting season lengths, the quality of the experience, and influencing participation and indirectly by affecting the dependent environmental resources (e.g. snow cover and ice thickness) (Scott, McBoyle, & Swartzentruber, 2004). The reliability of snowfalls and length of the snowmobile season are important challenges for the sustainability of the activity.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
Climate change is a long-term phenomenon that may provide challenges and opportunities for winter tourism. Recent studies conducted pertaining to snowmobile tourism in Ontario include Scott, Jones, Lemieux, McBoyle, Mills, Svenson, and Wall (2002) and McBoyle, Scott, and Jones (2007). Each study explored the potential loss of snow cover and reduced season lengths related to projected changes in climate.

This study enhances the previous two studies by: (1) using climate thresholds identified by senior Ontario snowmobile trail managers/operators to model snowmobile seasons, (2) examining all seventeen OFSC snowmobile districts to identify where spatial changes of the Ontario snow-pack may occur and how the snowmobile industry may
evolve, and (3) identifying the potential response options of snowmobile trail managers/operators to projected snowmobile season lengths.

The goal of this research is to explore potential supply side responses to projected climate change scenarios in each OFSC snowmobile district. To achieve this goal, three objectives will guide the research:

1. to discover how past climate variability has influenced snowmobile trail operations,
2. using climate thresholds identified by senior Ontario snowmobile trail managers/operators to examine the influence of climate change upon Ontario’s snowpack and snowmobile operations in the periods 2010 to 2039 and 2040 to 2069, and
3. to discover the possible responses that senior Ontario snowmobile trail managers/operators to climate variability and will consider in the future to climate change.

RELEVANT LITERATURE

O’Connor, Bord, and Fisher (1999) conceptualize risk perception as the perceived likelihood of negative consequences to oneself and society. Perceptions of risks are often linked to whether the risk is new-old, of dread consequences, and the number of people exposed (Sjoberg, 2000). Women may have higher levels of dread and may feel more personally threatened than men (Savage, 1993). Real risk, in which people may have some direct or indirect experience, is a primary determinant of perceived risk (Sjoberg, 2000). The target of risk; personal, family or society is another contributing factor of risk perception. People often perceive that they are less vulnerable than others to future events. Optimistic bias occurs when events are: (1) a level desirability, (2) perceived probability, (3) personal experience, (4) perceived controllability, and (5) stereotype salience (Weinstein, 1980). An event when perceived overly optimistically people may ignore an appropriate level of caution.

The lay public is often more concerned with low-probability high-consequence risks (e.g. hazardous waste sites, sewage, radiation) while experts are concerned with risks with global consequences (e.g. population growth, habitat loss, global warming) (Slimak & Dietz, 2006). Global climate change risks are perceived by lay people, more so than experts, as having greater impact, more controllable or avoidable, less acceptable, and more understandable (Lazo, Kinnell, & Fisher, 2000). The loss of outdoor recreation, travel and tourism are perceived by both groups as the most acceptable among 25 risks to ecosystems induced by climate change.

Gender may influence the perception of environmental risks. Women may have stronger bonds with natural phenomena than men as they have become socialized to be more compassionate, nurturing and protective (Steger & Witt, 1989). Males are socialized to be more independent and competitive (Gilligan, 1982). Moral dilemmas are often personalized by women while men perceive moral dilemmas in terms of rules and justice (Gilligan, 1982). Women are often more involved with environmental issues at the local
level than men and thus may be more supportive of climate change policies (Greenberg & Schneider, 1995).

Risk denotes the possibility that adverse effects may occur as a result of natural events (e.g. warming temperatures) or human activities (Renn, 1992). The assessment of risks is an analysis phase; while risk management is an implementation phase. Risk analysis is a process of assessing the probability that an adverse event will occur and the consequences of the adverse event. Jones (2001) considers climate change an environmental risk as the environment is directly exposed to the risks of climate change and human activities may be threatened by environmental changes resulting from changes in climate. Critical biophysical (e.g. days of snow cover for recreation, winter temperatures, species extinction), and behavioural thresholds of climate change are used to assess the severity of perceived impacts (Jones, 2001).

Assessments of winter tourism influenced by climate change have primarily focused on alpine skiing projecting negative consequences including: reduced season lengths, upward elevation shifts of the snowline in mountain areas, and inter-annual variability in snowfalls (Elsasser, & Burki, 2002; Fukushima, Kureha, Ozaki, Fujimori, & Harasawa, 2002; Moen, & Fredman, 2007; Scott, McBoyle, & Mills, 2003; Scott, McBoyle, Minogue, & Mills, 2006). Outdoor activities for example, festivals, alpine skiing/snowboarding, Nordic skiing, ice fishing, ice skating, and snowmobiling are sensitive to changes in the global climate, in particular warmer temperatures (McBoyle, et al., 2007; Scott, Jones, & Khaled, 2005; Scott, et al., 2002). Snowmobile tourism in Ontario relies on natural features and suitable climatic conditions, including freezing temperatures and natural snowfalls.

Three types of responses to the risks associated with climate change upon natural and anthropogenic systems include mitigation, adaptation, and maladaptation. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2007a) considers mitigation as the implementation of policies for the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the enhancement of natural sinks. Adaptation to climate change is considered as an adjustment to actual or anticipated climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities (IPCC, 2007b). Adaptive responses may be anticipatory or reactive and may seek to minimize present impacts, reduce sensitivity and exposure, and increase resiliency (Lemmen, Warren, Lacroix, & Bush, 2008). These responses may be planned or autonomous. Maladaptation includes responses of avoidant reactions and responses that may actually increase the risks, although unintentional (Grothmann & Patt, 2005). Often these maladaptation responses are not driven by climate but rather short-term human goals (Smithers & Smit, 1997).

Adaptation to present climate variability and long-term climate change occurs among individuals, groups, organizations, and governments. Potential risks of climate change to developing countries and society are ranked higher than risks to individuals (Lorenzoni & Pidgeon, 2006). Effective climate change adaptation strategies are dependent upon the public acceptability amongst institutional, economic and social
constraints (Adger, 2003; Smithers & Smit, 1997). Bottom-up approaches to adaptive strategies may shift the perception of climate change from a global to local issue.

PROPOSED RESEARCH METHODS

The study will use a three-phase, mixed methods approach to assess the suitability of the Ontario snow-pack for snowmobile tourism during the periods 2010 to 2039 and 2040 to 2069. Phase One will use qualitative methods to examine suitable climatic parameters for snowmobiling and the influence of climate variability upon snowmobile trail operations, through open-ended semi-structured telephone interviews with senior Ontario snowmobile trail managers/operators. Phase Two of the study will use a quantitative approach to construct a historical climate data set for each of the 17 regional climate stations selected, representing one climate station for each OFSC snowmobile district. Climate parameters identified in phase one will be used to calibrate a snow operations model and snowmobile seasons will be simulated for the 1961 to 1990 baseline period. These historic climate data will be used to parameterize a stochastic weather generator (LARS-WG) and then using climate variables from general circulation models develop snow condition scenarios for the periods 2010 to 2039 and 2040 to 2069. Phase Three will consist of open-ended semi-structured interviews with the senior snowmobile trail managers/operators to determine their potential responses to the climate change scenarios developed in Phase Two.

EXPECTED RESULTS

The following results are expected from the study:

1. a limited level of trust may prevail in the scientific projections of climate change due in part to temporal scales (e.g. observed short-term conditions vs. long-term projections), and relevance of the projections to each snowmobile district,

2. perceptions of climate change risks may be uncertain (e.g. probability and severity),

3. an optimistic bias may prevail for technological (e.g. advances in trail maintenance equipment, advances in snowmaking and cloud seeding) and institutional solutions (e.g. infrastructure grants, insurance subsidies, land use policies) to the affects of climate change,

4. strengthen the snowmobile association (e.g. OFSC, CCSO-CCOM, and ISMA) public education and political lobbying efforts combating negative perceptions of snowmobiling and climate change,

5. adaptive capacity may vary amongst snowmobile districts due in part to strategic alliances among stakeholders,

6. adjust pre-season and in-season trail maintenance operations to maximize the available snowfall (e.g. smoothing of terrain, retention/planting of vegetative cover) and snowmobile season length,
7. snowmobile trail operations may be consolidated onto land from water and into areas that have reliable snowfalls,

8. diversify snowmobile trail operations to include other trail user groups (e.g. all terrain vehicles, cycling, hiking, horseback riding) offsetting financial burden of trail operations, and

9. consider weather insurance and derivatives to offset financial losses due to climate change.

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Impact of Message Character and Message Framing on Attitude: The Moderating Role of Involvement

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study is to understand how individuals actively utilize certain features of information in temporally different situations. The study proposes to identify significant features of information: message character and message framing; and to test the effectiveness of features in changing attitude. Thus, the moderating roles of involvement, specifically related to temporal distance of a trip event, will be investigated. The study findings will support the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM; Petty & Cacioppo 1981) and the theory of constructive consumer choice process (Bettman, Luce, & Payne 1998) that individuals use different information search and processing strategies by situation (e.g., involvement, temporal distance).

KEYWORDS: Involvement, Message character, Message framing, Elaboration likelihood model (ELM)

INTRODUCTION
Imagine the following situation: One of your friends has just returned from Italy. After you heard about how wonderful Italy is from your friend, you become curious and begin to surf various travel web sites to find out more about the country. The beautiful pictures of charming towns in the Tuscan countryside, rolling hills covered in olive groves, vineyards and fields of sunflowers, and smiling people at rustic restaurants made you feel happy. It makes you want to visit Italy some day. Imagine another situation: You are planning a family vacation that will happen in the near future. This time you seek detailed information such as flight schedules, accommodation options, and safety and security issues. However, you read some negative reviews about your destination from some travel virtual communities. You tend to place more trust in these postings rather than relying on the destination advertising which tends to give you only positive information.

The two situations show that individuals somehow know what features of information to use in different situations depending on what they are trying to achieve. The different information processing behaviors can be explained by temporal distance theory inspired by the involvement theory, Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM; Petty & Cacioppo 1981). Temporal distance theory suggests that an individual’s responses to a
certain feature of information vary by the temporal distance of an event (Liberman & Trope 1998; Trope & Liberman 2000, 2003; Zhao, Hoeffler, & Zauberman 2007). For example, when an individual processes information for events in the distant future, he/she focuses on the abstract and affective features of the information because of the low elaboration likelihood in information processing; however, when he/she considers events in the near future, he/she focuses on concrete and cognitive features of the information because of the high elaboration likelihood (Petty & Cacioppo 1981, 1984; Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann 1983; Petty, Schumann, Richman, & Strathman 1993; Trope & Liberman 2000, 2003; Zhao, Hoeffler, & Zauberman 2007).

Tourism researchers have examined factors that correlate with information search and processing behaviors. Most studies focus on tourist profiles (e.g., socioeconomic characteristics) and trip features (e.g., trip duration, party size) (Fodness & Murray 1999; Weber & Roehl 1999; Woodside & Lysonski 1989). However, these studies are mainly descriptive and limited to predicting travel information search and decision-making behaviors because they examine correlations instead of a causal relationship (Fesenmaier et al. 2003; Jun, Vogt, & MacKay 2007; Sirakaya & Woodside 2005). A few researchers have found that the type of information sources selected, the amount of information searched for, and the type of information used for decision-making vary by stage (i.e. pre-, during- and post-trip) (Jun & Gibson 2007; Jun, Vogt, & MacKay 2007; Stewart & Vogt 1999). These studies describe different phenomena by stage, but they are still limited in their ability to explain which attributes cause the differences. The authors suggest future study should focus on identifying factors, such as information attributes, which can predict information search and decision making behaviors and demonstrate a consistent causal relationship.

The purpose of this study is to understand how individuals actively utilize certain features of information in temporally different situations. The main objective of the study is to identify significant features of information and to test the effectiveness of features in changing attitude. Thus, the moderating roles of involvement, specifically related to temporal distance of a trip event, will be investigated. We propose that the different information features are more or less effective depending on an individual’s involvement levels.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

According to the theory of the constructive consumer choice process (Bettman, Luce, & Payne 1998) and goal implementation theory (Gollwitzer & Brandstatter 1997), individuals have limited working memory and computational capabilities in information processing. To manage these limitations and make time- or effort-effective decisions, they instinctively develop and modify various information search and processing strategies to utilize in different situations. The information processing behaviors include seeking certain characters of information (i.e., message character) and focus more on certain characters (i.e., message framing) (Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy 1990; Vogt & Fesenmaier 1998).

Message Character: Researchers have found that individuals use travel information not only for planning a trip (i.e., utilitarian need), but also for entertaining
themselves, sharing with others, or simply satisfying their curiosity (i.e., hedonic need) (Cho, Wang, & Fesenmaier 2002; Jun & Gibson 2007; Vogt & Fesenmaier 1998; Vogt, Fesenmaier, & MacKay 1993; Wang & Fesenmaier 2004). Travel information has evolved to represent both utilitarian and hedonic message characters to fulfill both of these purposes. Utilitarian focused messages generate thinking or cognitive processing which has a tendency towards rationality and logic. The messages are mainly sought for decision-making or to reduce associated risks (Hirschman 1986; Novak, Hoffman, & Duhachek 2003; Vogt & Fesenmaier 1998). Therefore, utilitarian focused messages can be distinguished as concrete and detailed, and the messages demand a great amount of effort in processing (i.e., high elaboration likelihood in processing) (Petty & Cacioppo 1981; Trope & Liberman 2003). On the other hand, hedonic focused messages induce feeling or affective processing and are engaged in for enjoyment, amusement, arousal, fun and sensory stimulation (Holbrook & Hirschman 1982; Vogt & Fesenmaier 1998). Hedonic focused messages can be characterized as more abstract and general, and the messages demand little effort in processing (i.e., low elaboration likelihood) (Petty & Cacioppo 1981; Trope & Liberman 2003).

Message Framing: The classical economic theory of consumer suggests that each alternative in judgment has a utility or subjective value, and individuals select the alternative with the highest value (Simonson & Tversky 1992). However, some researchers have argued that consumer choice is often influenced by the context, defined by the set of alternatives under consideration (Payne, Bettman, & Johnson 1992; Simonson & Tversky 1992; Tversky & Kahneman 1991). Consumer choice by context is explained with two theories: tradeoff contrast and extremeness aversion (Simonson & Tversky 1992). The tradeoff contrast indicates that contrast effects influence consumer’s perception and judgment. For example, the same circle appears large when surrounded by small circles and small when surrounded by large ones. Extremeness aversion theory indicates that losses (disadvantages) are weighted more heavily than gains (advantages) in consumer choice. For example, individuals make more effort in risky choices (e.g., lose or not) than in choices with risk-less choices (e.g., gain or not) (Simonson & Tversky 1992; Tversky & Kahneman 1991). In consumer choice studies, message framing has been operationalized either by focusing on positive product attributes or focusing on negative product attributes (Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy 1990). Travel information has been treated as positive messages because there is no reason for marketers to distribute negative messages. However, the Internet facilitates the ability to share negative messages (e.g., messages from unsatisfied travelers). Based on Simonson and Tversky’s (1992) study, we assume that a negative consumer review (i.e., negative focal message) next to the travel advertisement (i.e., positive background message) should have a greater impact on persuasion because the combination of the negative focal message and the positive background message increases contrast effects and the judgment is related to the risky choice situation.

Involvement: High involvement situations have greater personal relevance and consequences or elicit more personal connections than low involvement situations (Engel & Blackwell 1982; Krugman 1965; Petty & Cacioppo 1979; Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann 1983; Sherif & Hovland 1961). When the personal relevance is high, individuals pay more
attention to information and put more effort into information processing (i.e., high elaboration likelihood) than low involvement situations (i.e., low elaboration likelihood) (Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy 1990; Petty & Cacioppo 1981). A significant finding regarding involvement is its moderating role on persuasion. Researchers have studied how different variables affect persuasion under high and low involvement conditions. The quality of the argument (i.e., strong vs. weak) contained in an advertisement has a greater impact on persuasion under conditions of high rather than low involvement (Petty & Cacioppo 1979; Petty, Cacioppo, & Heesacker 1981; Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann 1983). Strong arguments focus on functional characters of a product (e.g., concrete and detailed) and weak arguments focus on hedonic characters of a product (e.g., abstract and general). Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy (1990) further found that, under the high involvement conditions, not only detailed messages but also negatively framed messages are more persuasive than under low involvement conditions.

The study identifies two significant factors that affect attitude changes: message character and message framing. We assume involvement will moderate the effects of these two factors. In relation to the message character, we hypothesize that utilitarian focused messages, such as concrete and detailed messages, are more effective on persuasion under high involvement conditions than low involvement conditions (Figure 1). Related to the message framing, the negatively framed message will have a greater impact on persuasion under high involvement condition than low involvement conditions.

**Figure 1. Expected Impact of Message Character and Message Framing**

**METHODOLOGY**

A factorial 2 (involvement: high vs. low) x 2 (message characters: utilitarian focused vs. hedonic focused) x 2 (message framing: positive vs. negative) between-subject experiment design will be used for the study. Undergraduate students at a major university in Southeastern U.S. will be invited to a behavioral lab and randomly assigned to one of the eight conditions. Involvement will be operationalized with an information processing situation for an event in the near future (i.e., high involvement) or an event in the distant future (i.e., low involvement). Pretests will be conducted to get verification of hedonic or
utilitarian focused message characters. Based on the results of pretests, message character will be manipulated. Message framing will be manipulated with a positive or negative consumer review provided from a travel virtual community. As a dependent variable, attitude toward a travel product will be measured with a 7-point semantic differential scale modified from Sönmez and Sirakaya’s (2002) study. Three-way ANOVA will be performed to test interaction and main effects of three factors on the dependent variable.

EXPECTED RESULTS

This study attempts to develop a theory that explains what attributes of travel information cause the attitudinal changes. Testing a direct causal relationship through experimental design brings more powerful results in theory development as the experiment design eliminates possible confounding effects between the cause-and-effect relationships. We expect the study results will support our hypotheses: message character and message framing affect attitude change; and involvement moderates the effects of message character and message framing. These findings will support the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM; Petty & Cacioppo 1981) and the theory of constructive consumer choice process (Bettman, Luce, & Payne 1998) that individuals use different information search and processing strategies by situation (e.g., involvement level, temporal distance).

The expected results will have marketing implications. We propose the utilitarian focused messages will be more persuasive under high involvement situations. This finding can be applied to the targeted Internet marketing. On the first page of a website, marketers can ask what the purpose of visiting the website is. Based on the answer, hedonic or utilitarian focused messages can be provided. Thus, providing customized information by message character to targeted customers in different temporal stage will be necessary in the near future for use with marketing through mobile devices. Marketing on mobile communication devices (e.g., PDFs, cell phones) will be a little different as such devices are limited with the amount of space they have for displaying information whereas brochures and the Internet have sufficient space to display all types of information.

We also propose that the negatively framed messages will have a greater impact under high involvement conditions. Travelers share their positive or negative experiences through the Internet. This finding indicates marketers should pay more attention to the negative reviews. The negative reviews provide valuable insights to what consumers want and why they are not satisfied. Monitoring negative consumer reviews and improving services based on the reviews will reduce marketing costs.

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Transformations in Mountain Tourism Communities: Amenity Migration and the Quality of Life in Fernie, B.C.

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ABSTRACT

Human mobility in a globalized world is changing the economic, political, and environmental characteristics of rural communities. More people are leaving cities and deciding to locate their businesses and/or family in rural areas with better perceived natural and cultural amenities. The trend is apparent in many mountain tourism communities in BC, where permanent residents are being displaced by amenity migrants and second home owners. This research explores the implications of this transformation on the environment, political structure, economy, and social fabric of mountain destinations. Specifically, a case study of Fernie will explore the relationship between indicators of quality of life and perceptions of residents and new migrants.

KEYWORDS: Mountain tourism, Amenity migration, Quality of life, Resort economy, Sustainable planning,

INTRODUCTION

Tourism communities in BC and around the world are changing. Innovations in technology, communications, and transportation, along with increases in discretionary time and wealth allow tourists to stay longer in destinations, and give employees options for working and retiring in more desirable locations (Moss, 2006; Williams & Gill, 2006). These shifts in mobility may be termed amenity migrations and occur in areas rich in natural (e.g. mountains, lakes, rivers, etc.) and cultural (e.g. lifestyle, culture, etc.) amenities (Moss, 2006).

Temporary and permanent migration to amenity rich areas brings entrepreneurship, capital, knowledge (Williams & Gill, 2006; Pringle & Owen, 2006), and potential for economic diversification (Chipeniuk, 2004; Glorioso & Ross, 2007). In some cases these migrations place unanticipated pressures for economic growth and development; and a new resort economy, tied to recreational property development is emerging in mountain resort communities (Pringle & Owen, 2006; Lloyd Levy Consulting, 2004; NWCCOG, 2006; Venturoni, 2003; Venturoni, Long, & Perdue, 2005). Its implications are largely unknown, but environmental, social, and economic impacts affecting the quality of life of community residents are surfacing. However, proactive policy and planning responses designed to manage these effects at community and regional levels are only beginning to emerge. In response to these trends, this research:

1. Explores the emergent conceptualization of amenity migration and its relation to tourism
2. Examines how the new forms of mobility are impacting the quality of life in mountain tourism communities, specifically in Fernie
3. Proposes policy and planning options for leveraging benefits and mitigating negative impacts of new mobility
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Human beings have always migrated in search of better living conditions. Migrations have typically been concerned with the quest for better food sources and climatic conditions, protection from hostile neighbours, and employment (Travis, 2007). Increasingly, migration patterns are driven by the natural and cultural amenities of locations (e.g. recreation, lifestyle, scenery, etc.) rather than employment or economic motivations. These shifts in location may be termed amenity migrations, and occur in many naturally and culturally rich places around the globe, including some mountain regions of British Columbia. Amenities which attract tourists increasingly attract amenity migrants. Studies on the movement of people to mountain regions have generally focused only on tourism. New forms of mobility, including amenity migration have received little academic attention and are less well known (Moss, 2006).

Amenity Migration: Amenity migration (AM) is defined as “the movement of people to places, permanently or part time, principally because of the actual or perceived higher environmental quality and/or cultural differentiation of the destination” (Glorioso & Ross 2007, p.1). Amenity migration is driven by an increased appreciation for and desire to be near natural resources, an aging, wealthy population, and the proliferation of technologies that facilitate the spread and penetration of migrants into once rural areas (Williams and Hall, 2000). Moss (2003) divides amenity migrants (AMs) into permanent, seasonal, and intermittent segments. Permanent amenity migrants live in the community year round (as with any permanent residents), seasonal migrants live seasonally in the community (e.g. ski season or summer season), and intermittent migrants (e.g. second home owners) visit less frequently. Intermittent AMs have also been termed ‘residential tourists’ (Datza-Masip & Julia-Eggert, 2008) or ‘second home tourists’ (Matteucci, Lund-Durlacher, & Beyer, 2008). Each segment stays in the community for a differing length of time and thus has unique impacts on the environment and socio-economic structure of communities.

A wide array of AM impacts are apparent in mountain destinations and noted in the literature. Permanent migrations bring entrepreneurship, capital, and knowledge and create new business opportunities (Williams & Gill, 2006; Pringle & Owen, 2006) in the community. Ski resorts rely heavily on seasonal migrants to fill jobs in the tourism service sector (Williams & Hall, 2000). Consumption and spending by second home owners (Intermittent AMs), and construction of second homes, account for a large portion of economic activity in many ski resort destinations (Lloyd Levy Consulting, 2004; Venturoni, 2003; Venturoni, Long, & Perdue, 2005). Home purchases by AMs provide tax revenues for local governments, which can be used to improve and develop municipal services.

Negative impacts from this increased migration are also apparent. Communities are experiencing:

• Housing crises due to a lack of affordable and attainable housing.
• Biophysical stresses from increased land development, pollution, and demand for water and energy resources,
• Stress on municipal infrastructure and services, and
• Social value changes such as a loss of sense of community and diminishing quality of life (Glorioso & Ross, 2007; Moore, Williams, & Gill, 2006; Moss, 2006; Williams & Gill, 2006; Thompson, 2006; Bush, 2006)
Ironically, migrants initially attracted by desirable natural and cultural amenities may be the source of their degradation (Korber & Rasker, 2001; Beck, 1995). Further understanding the relationships between the three segments of AMs and corresponding impacts and benefits is one of the goals of this research.

Tourism and Amenity Migration: Intermittent AMs, sometimes described as residential or second home ‘tourists’, exist in the grey area between tourism and migration (Williams and Hall, 2000). While a link exists between tourism and amenity migration, the connection has not been well conceptualized in academic literature (Moss, 2006). Tourism and migration are both considered forms of mobility (Williams & Hall, 2000), and numerous authors note that tourism inevitably leads to migration (Williams and Gill, 2006; Buckley, 2005; Thompson 2006). Tourism-led amenity migration occurs when, upon finding a desirable holiday destination, tourists decide to purchase property and live there permanently or temporarily (Buckley, 2005; Stewart, 2000). Counter to this, some studies suggest that AM may be more linked to regional economic and demographic trends (Kuentzel & Ramaswamy, 2005). Amenity migrations are also notable in many rural areas not frequented by tourists (Chipeniuk, 2004).

One way to characterize tourists within the amenity migration context is to think of both as ‘amenity seekers’. Amenity seekers are those that come for the natural and cultural amenities of a place. These seekers exist on a spectrum from short term tourist to permanent amenity migrant, and may include: long stay tourists (cottage renters), time share owners, second home owners, and seasonal migrants (Based on Stewart, 2000 & Williams and Gill, 2006). It seems the spectrum may or may not signify a progression from tourist to permanent migrant (tourism-led migration) The similarity of each segment of AM is in the attraction to the natural and cultural amenities of place. Induced by tourism or not, migrations may facilitate the transformation from tourism and service based economies to resort-based economies (Buckley 2003; Glorioso & Moss, 2007; Stewart, 2000; Lloyd Levy Consulting, 2004; NWCCOG, 2006; Venturoni, Long, & Perdue, 2005).

The Resort Economy: An economic transformation appears to be occurring in many mountain communities in BC. Once based almost entirely on resource extraction, economies have, in the last 20 years or so, diversified and become more reliant on tourism and services. There is evidence now that the tourism service economy is transforming into a resort-based economy (Buckley 2005; Glorioso & Moss, 2007; Stewart, 2000; Verutoni, Long, Perdue 2005). Resort economies are prevalent in some mountain communities in Colorado and rely primarily on the consumption and spending of recreational property owners; jobs are tied to: construction, renovation, security, maintenance, and home care (Pringle & Owen, 2006; Lloyd Levy Consulting, 2004; NWCCOG, 2006; Venturoni, 2003; Venturoni, Long, & Perdue, 2005). The social, economic, and environmental impacts of this transformation are not well understood. Benefits arise in the form of: property tax
revenues for the municipality, employment opportunities through the construction and renovation industries and a potential social value shift from resource extraction to resource conservation (Buckley, 2005; Pringle & Owen, 2006; Thompson, 2006; Williams & Gill, 2006). Negative impacts however, particularly on the quality of life of residents in resort communities are unknown.

Quality of Life: Quality of life (QoL) refers to the social, economic, and environmental aspects that contribute to the health of communities and individuals (Brown, Bowling & Flynn, 2004). QoL attracts amenity migrants to destinations, and amenity migrants can potentially detract from the QoL of a destination (Moss, 2006). Residents of Fernie have identified ‘quality of life’ as being one of the most important assets the community has to offer. This commitment is expressed in Fernie’s vision “[t]o work towards a sustainable population who will enjoy a quality of life that is planned and managed in a manner compatible with the surrounding natural environment (City of Fernie, 2003, p.7)”. An annual report will track Fernie QoL and produce a community liveability report that will guide future planning and policy decisions (City of Fernie, 2003).

Amenity Migration and the Quality of Life in Fernie: Some of the impacts of amenity migration and the resort economy are apparent in Fernie. New business and people are migrating permanently or temporarily to Fernie. Migrants bring entrepreneurship, capital, and knowledge to the town, but implications on housing affordability, property ownership, and population retention are emerging. Demand for housing has inflated real estate prices. The median home sale price increased 69% between 1995 and 2000, while incomes increased only 2.9%. Median income in BC was up 11% over the same period. 29% of the homes in Fernie are now occupied by non-residents (Statistics Canada, 2007a), primarily from Alberta (Pringle & Owen, 2006).

Despite active housing development in Fernie, the permanent population is declining. Census data (1986 -2006) shows that Fernie’s population has decreased 19%. The decrease is likely attributable to second home owners displacing the permanent population. Recent development in Fernie has focused largely on the creation of resort and recreational housing properties, making home ownership and rental options unattainable to a large portion of the population (City Spaces Consulting, 2007). As this trend is expected to continue for some time (City Spaces Consulting, 2007; Pringle & Owen, 2006), Fernie needs proactive planning and policies to ensure that growth and development do not detract from the character and values that make the community vibrant and liveable.

METHODOLOGY
A triangulated method will be used for this research, consisting of: literature review, key informant interviews, and a community quality of life survey. Literature pertaining to: amenity migration, quality of life, and planning in mountain communities will be critically analyzed to further conceptualize tourism and amenity migration in mountain regions. Key informant interviews with elected officials, non-government organizations, large local employers, and other community stakeholders will work to narrow the scope of the research, based on perceived local issues. A quality of life survey and liveability report is
being produced by the city of Fernie. The researcher is working with the Fernie QoL committee to add amenity migration related questions to the survey, such as:

- Are you a permanent, part time, or seasonal resident in Fernie?
- Do you rent or own your place of residence?
- What factors were important in your decision to move to Fernie? (e.g. family, recreation, economic, tourist, climate, scenery, culture, etc.)
- If you are a part-time or seasonal resident how many days per year do you live in Fernie?
- If you are a part-time or seasonal resident, do you anticipate that you will become a full-time permanent resident in the future?
- If you are a part-time or seasonal resident, how often do you make your home available to other people (e.g. visitors or renters)?

Coupling the above questions with the social, environmental, and economic aspects of Fernie’s QoL will allow for correlation to be drawn between segments of AMs and perceptions of environmental and socio-economic QoL.

Specific questions to be further explored and answered in the final paper include:

- What is the nature, scale, and scope of amenity migration in Fernie?
- Which community indicators can best be used to track QoL impacts of amenity migration?
- What is the nature of the resort economy in Fernie? How will this new economy evolve?
- How do linkages between segments of AMs and quality of life relate to policy and planning options for Fernie?

EXPECTED RESULTS

This research fills an important gap in understanding how resort economies, driven by amenity migration, can be tracked in the context of quality of life. As Chipeniuk (2004) demonstrated, most communities in B.C.’s interior are unaware of the phenomenon of amenity migration and lacked both a vision and the resources required to deal with its problems. Further understanding the magnitude of AM will allow mountain communities to leverage benefits and mitigate undesirable impacts. Linking AM with changes in quality of life will allow Fernie, and other mountain communities, to develop policy and planning objectives that promote healthy, sustainable growth.

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Tourism Destination Branding: A Competitive Marketing Strategy - Does it really matter? A Case Study of Kremnica, Slovakia

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ABSTRACT
The competitiveness of tourism destinations as a multi-faceted concept has been discussed in several models (Porter, Brent & Ritchie, Poon, Dwyer, Bordas, Gilbert, Hassan, Heath, etc.) and relies on a “broad paradigmatic umbrella” (Echtner & Jamal, 1997). Three associated components, consisting of comparative advantage, strategic management, and historical and cultural perspective, shape the major features of destination competitiveness and emphasize the use of different approaches and indicators. One of the most effective marketing strategies, used for the strengthening of tourism destination competitiveness, is branding. This study seeks to refine and enhance the definitions of destination branding, summarizes the impact of branding and innovations on destinations, and sheds light on the importance of creation of partnerships in destinations by envisioning new concepts of co-operation in tourism destinations with a goal to create a positive image of a destination. We searched how the three associated components of comparative advantage (strategic management – creation of partnerships, historical and cultural perspective) have been used in the historical and cultural tourism destination Kremnica, Slovakia and if branding has been utilized in its marketing strategy. Partnerships and co-operation are not part of branding process; however, as a result of cohesive approach to the destination marketing and branding, destinations have better chance to perform more successfully.

KEYWORDS: Branding, Positioning, Case study, Slovakia, Marketing strategy

INTRODUCTION
The growing number of new tourism destinations and the changing preferences of visitors are forcing tourism destinations to enhance their management and marketing strategies. Co-operative marketing and management strategy in destinations improves the competitiveness potential. Competing destinations, in order to become successful, have not only use their existing comparative advantage, but implement competitive advantage as well: “to achieve competitive advantage for its tourism industry, any destination must ensure that its overall “appeal”, and the tourist experience offered, must be superior to that of the alternative destinations open to potential visitors” (Dwyer & Kim, 2003).

As Brent and Ritchie explain in their model of competitiveness of tourism destinations, the comparative advantage relies on the implementation of the endowment sources, such as natural resources, climate, flora and fauna, while the competitive advantage depends on the quality of superstructure, infrastructure, and the implementation of new strategies, as for instance, a marketing strategy with value-added effect, and branding is one of the most powerful marketing strategies. The conceptualization of destination branding for tourism destinations is based on the principles of branding in
tourism destinations, which differ from branding of products in industry or agriculture. Lack of published literature on tourism destination branding and a fact that “the future of marketing will be a battle of brands” (Pike, 2005) highlight the difficulties of this topic. Branding will be essential for destination market growth, but as yet, there is inadequate research on the topic, and still exist different opinions about best approaches.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Branding has actually been in use for many years: “centuries ago, branding evolved as a concept of ownership and identification. For example, owners of livestock branded (i.e. burned) their marks onto livestock in order to identify their own livestock and to differentiate it from others’ livestock (Interband Group, 1992; Blichtfeld, 2003). The contemporary principles of branding in manufacturing were implemented after World War II, such as system of control and ownership of the product. Scholars started to be more interested in branding of tourism destinations approximately ten years ago, and the first publications in journals appeared in the 1990s. The first academic literature on branding of tourism destinations was published in 2002, in comparison, first publications on product branding appeared in 1955.

Tourism destinations are becoming among the largest brands, and their complexity means a challenge for marketers and planners. A tourism destination can be a country, region, city, or town. UNWTO defines a tourism destination as “a physical space in which a visitor spends at least one overnight. It includes tourism products such as support services, and attractions, and tourism resources within one day’s return travel time. It has physical and administrative boundaries defining its management, and images and perceptions defining its market competitiveness. Local destinations incorporate various stakeholders often including a host community, and can nest and network to form larger destinations “(WTO, 2002; Fyall, 2006). Destinations comprise a variety of stakeholders, tourism and non-tourism entrepreneurs. Thus, the co-operation and synergy of a variety of entities, with different types of ownership (public and private), require effective leadership. Buhalis (2000) stated that destinations “consist… of a bundle of different components, including accommodation, attractions, infrastructure, arts, entertainment and the natural and political environment.” The existence of competition inside destinations, but especially external competition among destinations forces, tourism destinations to enhance their marketing strategies and implement the creation of image, positioning, and differentiation.

General marketing and branding theoretical sources (e.g., Aaker, 1991; Berthon et al., p. 199) and destination branding concepts (e.g., Ritchie and Ritchie; Hankinson, 2004) define branding of destinations as the set of marketing activities that (1) support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that readily identifies and differentiates a destination; that (2) consistently convey the expectation of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; that (3) serve to consolidate and reinforce the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination; and that (4) reduce consumer search costs and perceived risk. Collectively, these activities serve to create a destination image that positively influences consumer destination choice (Blain et al., 2005, p. 331).
The concepts of tourism destination image have been extensively studied by different authors, e.g., Baloglu (1999), Brinberg (1997), Driscoll (1994), Echtner and Ritchie (1993), Gartner (1989), Goodrich (1978), Hunt (1975), Leisen (2001) etc. Hence, tourism destination and image creation is a concept known only recently. Some authors are still skeptical about the applicability of the concept of image creation, used in marketing of products, to tourism marketing destination strategies. For example, Blichtfeld (2003) argues that “it is (too) simplistic to apply traditional branding and brand management theory and/or practice to tourism destination image”. The author’s skeptical approach opposes especially the role of destination marketers and their ability to manage a brand because a destination is so complicated entity. Henderson (2006) states that “image is a critical factor in promotion strategies, and all places have images… the concept of image is multidimensional with cognitive and affective spheres, and has been defined as an amalgam of the knowledge, feelings, beliefs, opinions, ideas, expectation and impressions that people have about a named location.” The image of a destination is crucial for the development of a relationship between tourists (demand side) and tourism stakeholders (supply side). The success of destination marketing and branding relies on selling destination by heart, not just by the brain: “Image formation is not brand”… however, “image building is one step closer, but there still remains a critical missing link: the brand identity” (Cai, 2002). An image can be changed over time, even slogans, names, or logos and the means of communication can be renewed after a period of time; however, brand identity must be constant.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In concept of branding, competitive advantage is based on the effective positioning strategy. Kotler (1996, p. 261) defines three steps of successful positioning strategies: “identifying a set of possible competitive advantages upon which to build a position, selecting the right competitive advantages, and effectively communicating and delivering the chosen position to a carefully selected target market”. This statement has been taken into consideration during the preparation of the research strategy in Kremnica. However also the statement of Goeldner (2000) played important role in the creation of the conceptual framework of research that cited “that history may be one of the most interesting dimensions of a tourist destination and is a rich instrument which allows creating a unique tourist experience.” History, culture, and natural resources are strong components, on which is based also differentiation and positioning. The model of tourist destination branding model accepting these factors of differentiation is enclosed in the Scheme 1.

METHODOLOGY

The concepts of branding and tourism partnerships were developed in the case study from Europe, an example of Slovakian historical town Kremnica known in the past as gold mining icon of Austrian-Hungarian Empire. We tried to use the concepts discussed above about the influence of the unique history, culture, and natural resources on the competitiveness, and especially creation of the specific image. Additionally, this case study tried to highlight some concepts and especially obstacles of creation of partnerships in Kremnica and implementation of principles of marketing and branding. We applied the
combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in the primary and secondary data collection. Primary data collection has been implemented during the interviews from July 12th to July 31st in the form of focused groups created from city representatives (mayor and public sector employees) and entrepreneurs in tourism (owners of hotels, restaurants, entertainment facilities etc.). In-depth interviews have been performed with the focused group of entrepreneurs, especially semi-structured interviews and individual discussions. Secondary data have been collected during the period of years 2005 – 2008, especially statistical data, government documents, published articles, internet materials, and local documents offered by the authorities. A case study as the mixed method tool has been also used for better understanding the tourism potential of Kremnica and the attitude of government, municipality representatives, and entrepreneurs to the tourism development in the town.

FINDINGS

The potential of Kremnica to become an icon of tourism in Slovakia has not been recently fully implemented due to lack of attention from government and municipal authorities. Positioning and differentiation of this town fulfills attributes given by the theoretical framework, e.g. history, culture, and natural resources. Kremnica became in the 16th century a symbolic “Centre of Europe” and was called “Golden Kremnica” due to the famous gold mining industry. The town and region, its architecture, mining technology (technical works, water-conduit, underground electric power station), mint production, and culture have become an inseparable part of the European culture.

Despite of the existence of two components of comparative advantage, e.g. historical and cultural perspective, our interest was focused on the implementation of strategic management as the third component of the comparative advantage. We were also interested if town representatives and tourism entrepreneurs utilize branding in their marketing strategy and if there exists effective communication, co-operation, and partnerships among the municipal representatives and entrepreneurs in tourism. Our findings highlighted the following problems:

1. lack of interest from the public sector (financing, conceptual approach) and private sector (financing, co-operation);
2. image of Kremnica is based on gold mining and mint industry from previous period; however contemporary trends to revive gold mining brought up many environmental problems which also influenced the reputation of town as the tourism resort;
3. the existing potential of the town has not been fully implemented in the marketing strategy despite successful tourism product offer (theatre festival, mining market, summer organ concerts, museum of mining, excursions into mining galleries, mining drainage equipment etc.) and representatives of the municipality and entrepreneurs did not fully implement the branding principles in their product offer of the destination;
4. unique positioning of Kremnica among the other competitive towns in the triangle of three historical mining town in Slovakia has not been fully utilized; for this reason Banska Stiavnica (former silver mining icon and historical town recognized
as the distinct town by UNESCO) and Banska Bystrica (former copper mining city and regional historical town) are competitors, which complicates the financing of the tourism attractions;
5. the local entrepreneurs and municipal representatives developed an interesting project called “Return of the Heart – Project for Europe” which had to help the town and region, but due to the lack of interest and rejection of some partners the project failed;
6. the implementation of the strategic management method could improve the access to the financial resources, improve the infrastructure; however the approach of municipal representatives and partners complicates the co-operation and decreases the ability of town to compete with the other historical mining towns in Slovakia.
7. Communication of brand identity of Kremnica is undeveloped despite the potential, the destination lacked clear vision and synergy of partners in tourism.
Communication strategy of Kremnica did not clearly define the core values of the city.

CONCLUSION

Branding focuses on the creation and communication of brand vision, forming of partnerships, and measuring of the results of branding. It could be understood as “the glue that holds the broad range of marketing functions together” (Reis and Reis, 1998). We searched in Kremnica how the three components of comparative advantage (strategic management – creation of partnerships, historical and cultural conditions) have been used for the improvement of tourism competitiveness. Despite the existing potential and competitive advantage tourism representatives seem not to be able to implement branding principles into their marketing strategies and to create functional partnerships in tourism.
Marketing strategy of Kremnica lacks the use of branding principles based on the creation of image, definition of brand identity, positioning, and differentiation, which is wasting of the enormous cultural and historical potential of the town. As Morgan, Pritchard and Pigot (2003) mentioned, “the battle for customers in tomorrow’s destination market place will be fought over hearts and minds”, for this reason branding might be an effective tool of success in tourism competition. Destination brand winners appear as those places that are rich in emotional meaning that have great conversational value and hold high anticipation for potential tourists (Morgan et al, 2002).

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