



# 'NEUROMARKETING' MODEL FOR TOURISM PROMOTION

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## Abstract

*Awareness of tourism as a money-spinner has caught the imagination of many a destination. Destinations are vying for a share in the global tourism market. Many a strategy is in place for attracting the target market and in each of the cases, the competition is not left behind. With destinations increasingly searching for strategies to differentiate, concepts such as Unique Selling Proposition (USP) have emerged with the assumption that there is a single point in the brain meant for a particular benefit and whichever brand occupied it first would stand to gain forever. With millions of neural connections transmitting messages to the brain and constructs such as previous experience of the brand, feelings of an individual and thoughts about the product in terms of brand name, price, colour, or any other the other characteristics makes the concept of USP redundant. Also, with multiple parameters of a brand available to the consumer for decision, the concept of Multiple Selling Propositions (MSP) of the brand as well as a multiple media vehicle model for communication such a concept is required. For tourism, such a concept is appropriate considering heterogeneous nature of the product and this paper seeks to analysis the application of the concept of MSP for tourism promotion.*

**Keywords:** Marketing, Brain, MSP, Tourism Promotion

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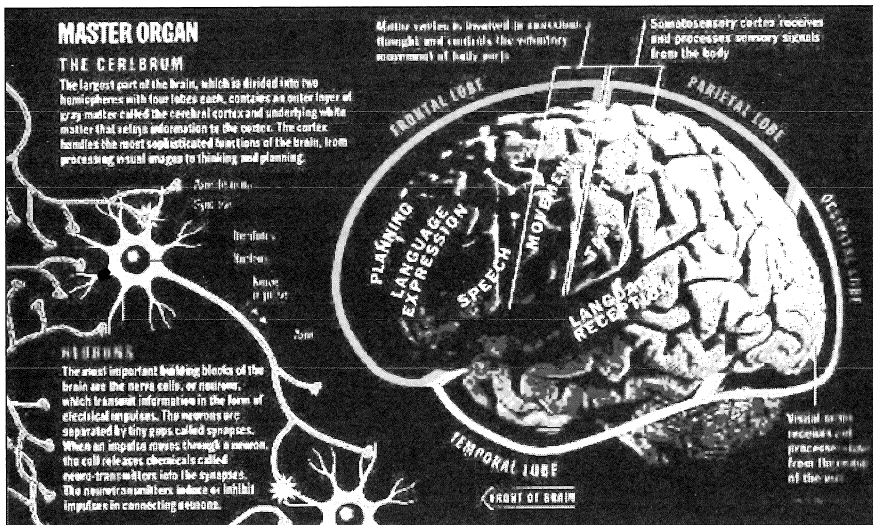
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# Introduction

Marketers face the challenge of getting through a “clutter” to get attention of the consumer. Innumerable messages are directed towards the customers. Competitiveness of a product is reflected in its relative positioning against the competition. Promotional initiatives are expected to influence positioning. Successful initiatives are the ones which persuade minds to take action. The destination responsible for taking such action is the brain.

## Human Brain

Brain is an important organ, an array of neural networks, responsible for multiplicity of functions associated with the human body. The brain may be divided into two hemispheres with four lobes each - Frontal Lobe reflecting the functions of planning, language, expression, speech and movement; Parietal Lobe reflecting sensory signals such as taste and touch; Occipital Lobe representing visual functions and Temporal Lobe representing language reception. With only 17% of the neural networks in place during birth, the growth in human brain is a result of genetics and experience. Development of the wiring of the brain is a continuous process; the periods of development may be cited as “windows of opportunity.”

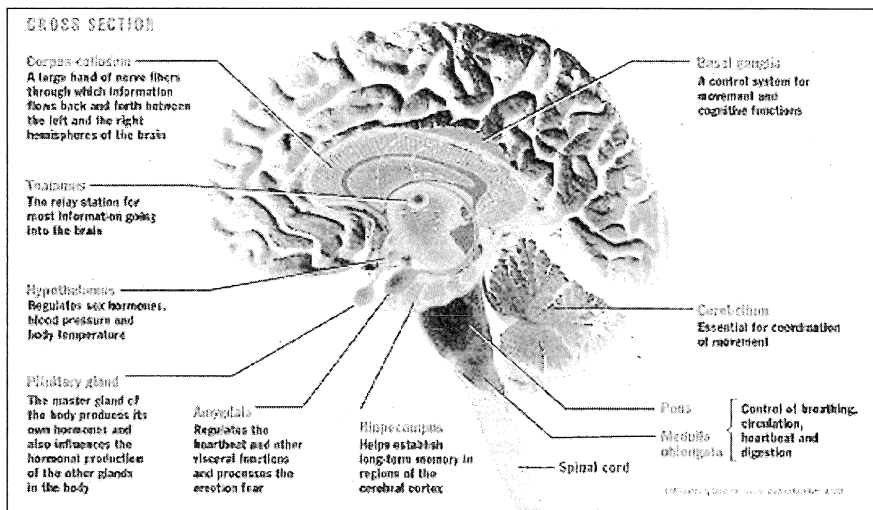


(Source: Time Magazine, 1996)

“The windows of opportunity open for emotional and social attachment at birth and close around age two. The window of opportunity for acquiring a second language opens around birth and closes between the ages of 8 and 10. The window of opportunity for vocabulary opens around the age of 2 and closes around the age of 6. The window of opportunity for math and logic opens around the age of three and closes around age 6...”

(Source: Time Magazine, 1996)

Three main brain systems include the brainstem, the limbic system and the cortex. Physiological functions necessary for survival such as temperature regulation and heart rate are governed by the brainstem. Limbic brain is the seat of emotions and the cortex governs brain functions such as language, pattern recognition and reasoning (Walsh and Gentile 2004). Various associated parts are listed below:

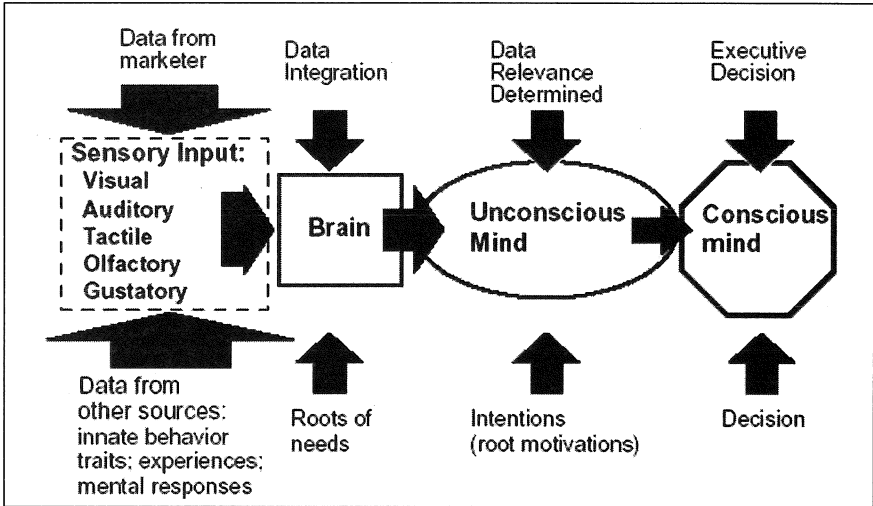


(Source: Time Magazine, 1996)

## Information Pathway

Messages in the form of packets of discreet information - visual (shape, colour, size, etc.), auditory (tone, volume, sound, frequency, etc.) and so on, are passed onto the brain through senses. Readings of the sensory organs are converted into internal representations by the brain. The images are compared with the existing information developed as a result of prior experiences, a conscious

process for decision making. Existence of a need coupled with information provided by the marketer activates motivations to stimulate satisfaction of the need. The process happens unconsciously and information on satisfaction of the need is fed to the conscious mind for a decision.



(Source: Wolfe, 1996)

“Emotions play critical roles in how the mind works. Emotion focuses attention, influences memory, shapes attitudes, motivates and drives behavior. Most of the brain’s processing happens outside of awareness. As a result, one can be influenced by factors that are outside conscious attention. The most effective influence occurs when the person being influenced is unaware he is being influenced. The resources of critical judgment are not activated because no alarm system is alerted. Marketing and advertising industries target emotion and mental shortcuts because these techniques are most effective in influencing behavior”.

(Walsh and Gentile, 2004)

## Emotions and Marketing

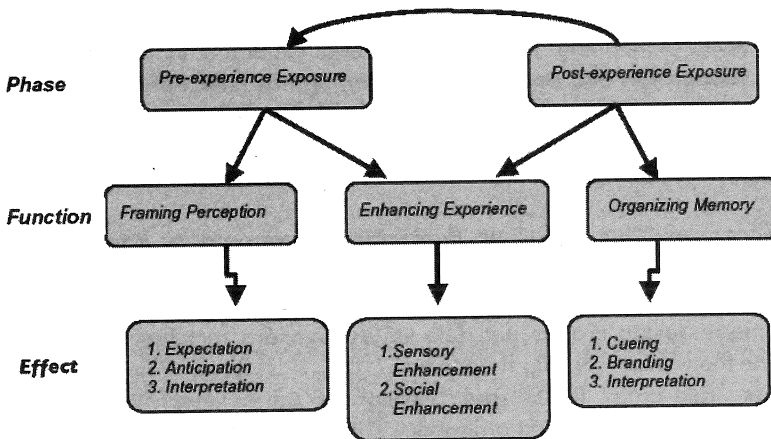
Emotions indicate how a customer feels about a product. Research undertaken by Priesmeyer, Axiomakaros and Murray (2003), describes emotions and discusses responses to products and marketing messages. Key marketing implications of emotions are indicated in the table below:

Emotion	Consumer Sensations
Happiness	Supports consumer's desires
Interest	Draws and holds attention
Surprise	Readies for the unexpected
Disgust	Sense of distaste
Contempt	Blame for bad feelings
Anger	Propensity to fight
Fear	Sense of a specific threat
Anxiety	Sense of an unknown threat
Shame	Sense that self is faulty
Distress	Help is needed
Sadness	Sense of personal loss

(Source: Priesmeyer, Axiomakaros and Murray, 2003)

## Perception / Experience / Memory Model for Advertising Effectiveness

Advertising is described to have four goals: Building brand awareness/recognition; building brand preference; obtaining product purchase / use and building brand loyalty. Hall (2001) has proposed a model for looking at consumer's response to an advertising. The response is based on three key elements perception,



(Source: Hall, 2001)

experience and memory. Emotions, feelings, affect and experience are seen to be available at each of the stages.

There are two phases to outline the model - pre-experience and post-experience exposure. The primary objective of advertising is to frame perception with three resultant effects of framing expectations out of the brand, create anticipation and interpret brand in terms of an objective reason to buy. In addition to enhancement of sensory experience, advertising is also required to provide social experience. Further, organizing memory relates to post-experience exposure, in terms of recall of brand through verbal, visual and aural cues. The advertisement also influences the customer to feel whether the sensory or social experience was a good one.

## Drawing Attention

Branding is a phenomenon for drawing attention.

"A brand is not a name. A brand is not a positioning statement. It is not a marketing message. It is a promise made by a company to its customers and supported by that company...I may have intelligent agents that can go out and assemble pages of reports on every camcorder on the market, but I don't have time to read them. I'll buy Sony".

(Sterne in Rowley, 2004)

A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, design, or combination of these which is used to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors (Kotler et al. 2002). Brands have multiple levels of meaning. The basic function of the brand, in terms of a brand mark, is recognition and association. Further, brands reflect product attributes such as "organized", "durable", "reliable" and "pleasurable" and may also say about buyer's values, personality, etc. Therefore, a brand reflects total experience associated with the product.

The concept of "Unique Selling Proposition", proposed by Rosser Reeves, promoted one key feature and benefit of a brand. However, with multiple levels of meaning, there cannot be a 'Unique Buying Reason' and hence, there cannot be a Unique Selling Proposition. The various reasons for choice of a brand constitute the Multiple Selling Proposition (MSP). If USP says, "Pick One", then MSP says, "Run both." If USP says, "Repeat one ad six times" then MSP says, "Run six ads in rotation" (Burkhardagency 2005). Brain with billions of neurons, there is parallel processing of information and the positioning of a particular brand has to be constantly created for an identity.

# Modeling Brands

Elements constituting a brand are reflected in some of the models suggested below:

Authors	Tangible and visual elements	Intangible elements
Aaker (1992)	Symbols and slogans	Identity, corporate brand, integrated communications, customer relationships
Bailey and Schechter (1994)	Name, logo, colours, brand-mark, plus advertising slogan	
Biggar and Selame (1992)	Name, trademark	Positioning, brand communications
DMB & B (1993)	Product delivery	User identification; opportunity to share a dream
de Chernatony (1993a and 1993b) (atomic model)	Functional capabilities, name, legal protection	Symbolic value, service, sign of ownership, shorthand notation
de Chernatony and McWilliam (1989)	Functionality	Representationality
Dyson <i>et al.</i> (1996) (Millward-Brown)	Presence and performance	Relevance, advantage, bond
Grossman (1994)	Distinctive name, logotype, graphics and physical design	
Kapferer (1992)	Physique	Personality, relationship, culture, reflection, self-image
O'Malley (1991)	Functional values	Social and personal values
Young and Rubicam (1994)	Differentiation	Relevance, esteem and familiarity

(Source: de Chernatony and Riley, 1998)

In a study conducted by de Chernatony and Riley (1998), on what elements would constitute a brand, the elements relating to

- Functional capabilities such as product functions, product performance, place in market, physical characteristics, design, product usage, etc.;
- Symbolic features such as personality of a brand, emotional values attached, intangibles associated with the brand, images of the product, occasion and user, etc.; and
- A sign of ownership such as company behind the brand, ethics, identity and vision, figure prominently.

Therefore, elements of a brand reflect the position of the product as well as the company behind the brand. Therefore, there is 'Unique Organisational Value Proposition', attached with each of the brand, based on processes and values associated with the company and the representing industry. Further, with brand conceptualized as an ownership by an individual rather than of the manufacturer or a retailer, MSP may be further interpreted as 'Me Selling Proposition'

## The Case of Tourism

Tourism is the world's largest industry accounting for over 10% of the World GDP and more significantly, tourism is the biggest generator of jobs. Tourism results in more number of jobs than any of the other industries. With such of the benefits, destinations are increasingly targeting tourism and related sectors for economic benefits. Tourism is about selling experiences (Prentice, Witt and Hamer, 1998) and "...tourists, even if they all look the same, experience their vacations ... in different ways (Lengkeek in Ooi, 2003). Experiences are based on 'focused mental engagement' on a particular item at a time. With intense competition, there is scarcity of attention on a single product and the destinations compete for drawing attention. Important aspects of attention include visual sights (Urry, 1990), stimulation of bodily senses (Moscardo, 1996), promoting sense of nostalgia (Rojek, 1997), interpretation some may view dirty streets as offensive which some other may view dangerous places as locations for adventure tourism. To summarize, holding attention is an important aspect for destination promotion.

Destinations are an amalgam of tourism products. Components of a destination may be related in terms of A's of tourism (Buhalis, 2000):

- Attractions: natural, man-made, artificial, purpose built, heritage, special events;
- Accessibility: entire transportation system comprising of routes, terminals and vehicles;
- Amenities: accommodation and catering facilities, retailing, other tourist services;
- Available packages: pre-arranged packages by intermediaries and principals;
- Activities: all activities available at the destination and what consumers will do during their visit;



- Ancillary services: services used by tourists such as banks, telecommunications, post, newsagents, hospitals, etc.

## Crafting Experiences

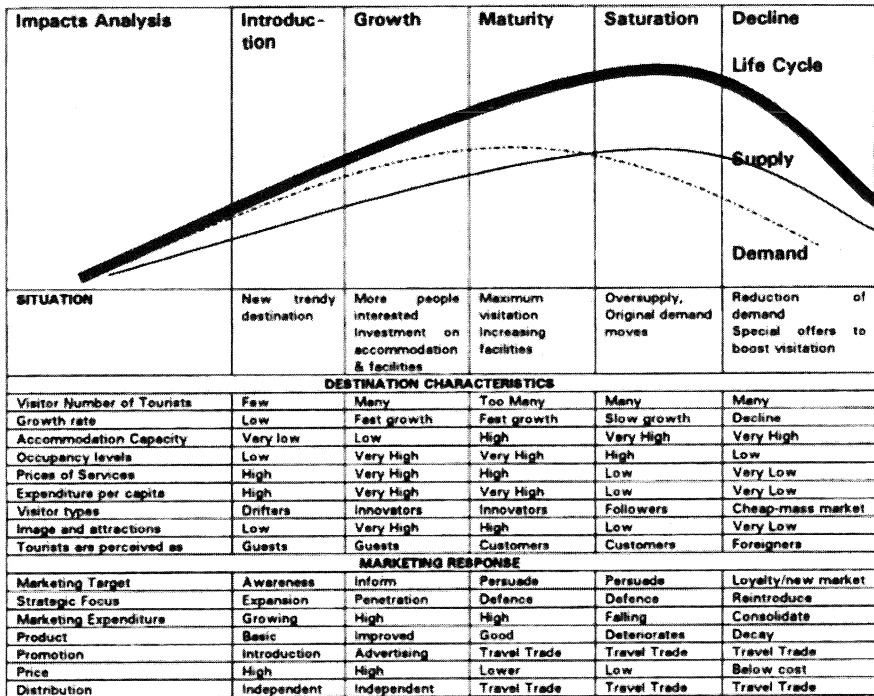
A competitive tourism destination should be able to hold attention of the tourists. Multiplicity of offers, in terms of products, entails different experiences. Each of the products holds the attention of a different set of audience and hence, a common strategy may not be appropriate. Ooi (1998) summarizes the attention management strategies for promotion of a destination.

Distractions	Tourists' Concern	Attention Management Strategy
Competition between cultural products	Lack of awareness, oblivious to tourism products	Advertising and Marketing to raise awareness
	Unaware of cultural significance, details of products	Education (as through product reviews, information outlets)
		Frame products: selection, accentuation, aestheticisation
Environment and amenities: Minimize psychological and physical distractions	Distraction from other products	Combine different products into a wider tourism product (e.g. as in a destination)
	Concerns with regards to basic needs: Costs, food, accommodation, etc.	Transparent about costs, and make visible facilities and amenities
	Fear and insecurity	Enhance sense of security, e.g. provide information for emergency help (e.g. in guide books), show safety procedures (e.g. visible checking of safety before a thrill ride)

Distractions	Tourists' Concern	Attention Management Strategy
	Environmental distraction: weather, traffic, physical conditions	Comfortable environment: air-conditioned well kept environment, amenities and facilities (toilets, wardrobe, etc.)
Contexts : skepticism arising from tourism motive in activities	Commercial and tourism interests embedded in tourism activities	Offer detailed information to incorporate different contexts into the product
		Make tourists go native
	Modern packaging and presentation in historical products	Create a dynamic product by bringing contrasting elements and contexts together.
Preconceptions: Cognitive distractions and expectations	Tourists have preconceived ideas	Control attention and make them notice things that will enhance their experience, and point out misconceptions.
	Have false images	
	Unrealistic expectations	

(Source: Adapted from Ooi, 1998)

Understanding of the destination life cycle proposed by Butler (1980) is important tool for arriving at destination development strategies. Destination strategies focusing on destination characteristics and as well as marketing are summarized below:



(Source: Adapted from Buhalis, 2000)

## Conclusion

In an era of competition, marketers are increasingly focusing on strategies to get over the “clutter.” Marketing as an activity has becoming more focused. Initially, marketing was detailing the strategies to be adopted by the marketers, subsequently marketing is into developing strategies from the perspective of the consumers. Consumers are centric to the system of marketing with an understanding of how information is processed at the brain level of each individual. Marketing coupled with neurological as well as psychological inputs, has influenced the concept of neuro-marketing, wherein flow of information is in relation to the process of information at unconscious as well as the conscious levels. The conventional process of cognition, conation and affection and USP may be considered obsolete considering the multi-functionality of a brand as well as the emotional side of brain assuming more significance compared to the conscious mind. Brands need to be built for an overall experience of the products. In such a scenario, Multiple Selling Propositions with both the product attributes

as well the company involved is required to position themselves in the minds of the consumers. Further, with consumers becoming important, MSP can also be termed 'Me Selling Proposition.' Considering tourism as a significant industry, competitive positioning, requires a marketer to gain attention across A's of tourism. Related attention management strategies along with destination characteristics and marketing strategies are arrived at.

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