

## “Does It Make Sense to Sell Destination to Internal Publics?”

Nimit Chowdhary

Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management, Noida, India

### Abstract

*This paper talks about a unique concept of educating stakeholders to be more sensitized towards tourists. In academic world this is an internal marketing intervention. The idea is that a tourist's experience at any destination to a large extent depends upon the how the stakeholders including the local community behave with them. While most countries talk about an external marketing campaign, in India, besides the popular external marketing campaign of “Incredible India”, there is an internal marketing campaign popularly known as “Atithi devo bhava”. Internal marketing calls for educating the stakeholders for an understanding of the destinations' tourism objectives, operational priorities on one hand, and impact of this effort on the values, beliefs, priorities and culture of the stakeholders on the other. The present study tries to investigate the affects of internal promotional campaigns on the perception of general public who are the internal stakeholders at the destination.*

**Keywords:** educating stakeholders; internal marketing; tourism

**Paper type:** Scientific paper

### Introduction

Developing tourism at a destination is in the interest of the stakeholders who earn direct benefits from tourism sales. Additionally, state through its agencies (Boards, Departments, etc.) also have significant stake and interest in development of tourism. This is driven by the belief that benefits of tourism, primarily economic, are distributed relatively evenly among the host community. On the other hand, host community is invariably an integral part of the tourism product. Community's natural, cultural and built assets along with the lifestyle provide the essential context for a tourist's experience. The community concurs for tourism at their place. The local authorities then on behalf of the community; or as cooperative efforts of some players/ cartels promote and organise for tourism related services to be delivered to tourists. Some of the members of the community may decide to provide some services for the visitors as individual entrepreneurs. The tourism service providers therefore draw sanction or at least have concurrence from the community. The business interests of individual service providers force them to compete to offer superior services to the visitors. However, the experience for a tourist may go haywire if the community is hostile or is unwelcoming. Individual service provider's efforts go unnoticed if the larger experience is not so good. At every point of travel through the destination, a tourist comes across the members of the host community who sometimes have little

idea as how to engage with tourists. It is therefore being considered if the members of the community need to be educated about good behaviour towards tourists. The underlying premise of this study is that only when the community correlates tourism to its welfare, they develop a positive disposition towards tourists. When there is a positive vibe, experience of tourists is superior. Better the experience of tourists greater will be the demand for the destination and so more money comes into the local economy. Therefore, some tourism authorities around the world educate stakeholders including general public for desirable behaviour. Some researchers have referred to this as internal marketing (IM) at the destination. The question is does it make sense to spend on such interventions.

The concept of internal marketing has not been used quite explicitly in the context of the destinations. There have been a few theoretical discussions but empirical testing has been limited (Gowreesunkar, Cooper, & Durbarry, 2009). The whole concept of internal marketing appears to be interpretation of what Herb Kelleher, Founder and Chairperson of Southwest Airlines, often said “*our most important customers are our employees. If you take care of your employees they will take care of your customers. And when your customers are taken care of, they will keep doing business with you. Then your shareholders will be happy*”. However, there are a few caveats. One, this suggests that if your employees (read internal stakeholders) do not feel good about your company

(read destination) and do not believe in your brand promise, then why would your external customers (read tourists) be interested in your offer? Two, the onus is on the company to enable the employees to deliver what the company has promised to the customers. Third, the whole idea has so far been discussed with reference to companies who make a promise to an external customer and have some amount of control over the employees who deliver the promise.

However, in case of a tourist destination, the challenge is that the tourists' experience is a result of services provided by numerous independent businesses that have their vested interests and partner with several other companies in the supply chain for a win-win case. However, there are numerous other stakeholders who contribute to a tourist's experience but fail to relate to the Destination Management Organisation's (DMO's) promise as they are not able to make out how promoting and selling tourism at the destination benefits them. Stakes are often varied and the correlate between living the promise and the return is frail. Stakeholders are not salaried employees of the company. A casual meeting of a tourist with a villager in a remote village is as much a part of her experience as her interaction with a street side vendor who sells a bottle of water; or a porter who helps her at the railway station; or a taxi driver who takes her around Delhi or the trained tour guide who escorts her; or the staff of a tour company. Therefore, an organic relationship exists between the residents (and other service providers) and the tourism destinations... (Gowreesunkar, Cooper, & Durbarry, 2009). Cooper & Hall (2007) talk about the interdependency and co-creation aspects which are prerequisites in delivering the final tourism experience. Keeping together all stakeholders and reinforcing the promise at the destination is the challenge that DMOs must live up to. Tourism being an ephemeral experience, the interaction with the stakeholders is the most perceptible and tangible cue. Challenge therefore is to turn these different stakeholders into evangelists that go above and beyond for the DMO and the destination. For this to happen, the stakeholders must buy-in the destinations' promise and values that define the destination's brand.

Ebren (2006) refers to internal marketing as the application of marketing inside the organisation to instill customer focused-focused values. But this is not restricted to communication with internal stakeholders. Internal marketing is a comprehensive approach to enable 'internal publics' deliver. Different researchers have suggested constructs that construe internal marketing- inter-functional coordination and integration (Winter, 1985; Narver & Slater, 1990; Glassman & McAfee, 1992); customer-orientation (Gronroos, 1981); marketing like approach (George, 1990); job satisfaction (George, 1990; Nahavandi, Caruana, & Farzad, 2008); empowerment (Gronroos, 1981; Berry & Parasuraman, 1991; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1998); stakeholder's motivation (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1998; Nahavandi, Caruana, & Farzad, 2008; Cahill, 1996); quality of service (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991); stakeholder's development (Foreman & Money, 1995; Piercy & Morgan, 1989); vision of the firm (Foreman & Money, 1995); strategic rewards (Ahmed, Rafiq, & Saad, 2003); commitment (Gummesson, 1994); rewards (Lee-Ross, 1999); training and development (Nahavandi, Caruana, & Farzad, 2008); senior leadership (Ahmed, Rafiq, &

Saad, 2003); and, internal communication (Ahmed, Rafiq, & Saad, 2003; Schultz, 2006).

Schultz (2006) offers the following concept of internal marketing: *'It involves all activities, actions and managerial directions that an organisation implements in order to encourage and generate employee and other stakeholders' support for marketing programs within the firm'*.

Kemp, Williams, & Boredelon (2012) in a recent study suggest that some elements of marketing mix contribute to citizens eventually becoming committed to destination's branding efforts. Once they accept the intrinsic values of the brand, residents feel such a strong connection to the branding efforts of the destination, that the brand becomes aligned with their self-concept. Stakeholders, especially residents begin to zealously advocate the brand. This also helps in creating a civil consciousness that helps to strengthen the destination's brand management system, especially as it is introduced to external constituents, such as potential tourists. Crick (2002) has also cited efforts of three Caribbean destinations that have internally marketed tourism to their host populations in order to encourage the desired attitudinal expressions. (Kaurav & Prakash, 2011) maintain that while stakeholders serve as service providers they must also be treated like clients.

Gowreesunkar, Cooper, & Durbarry (2009) cite Cahill (1996) to conclude that in case of tourism destinations there could be no external marketing without internal marketing. The acceptance of residents to welcome tourists within their living environments is a prerequisite as this influences tourists' satisfaction and perception of tourism at the destination. Even service providers draw sanctity for a business from the host community's willingness to address tourist issues. Cooper (2007) suggests that destinations need to deploy an internal marketing approach as it includes all the efforts necessary to gain commitment and involvement towards destination partners and tourists. Chi & Qu (2008) in their research observe that "overall satisfaction with hospitality experience is a function of satisfaction with individual elements/ attributes of all the products/services that make up the experience such as accommodation, weather, natural environment, social environment, etc.

Johnson & Scholes (1989) suggest that the consolidation of acceptance (by stakeholders at a destination) is vital and is achieved through communication. Gowreesunkar, Cooper, & Durbarry, (2009) conclude that Communication has to be given a central position in the internal marketing process, as ideas, knowledge (tacit and explicit), information and suggestions need to be extracted from the host community, the service providers, authorities and associations. The result is co-operation and this leads to cohesion of stakeholders in the delivery of the tourism product. Internal communication is a powerful enabler, especially in the case of destination marketing, where loosely connected independent stakeholders need to come together to recreate an experience for the tourist visiting the destination. One example is the '*Atithi Devo Bhava*' campaign of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. Ministry of Tourism, as the national tourism authority, with this public will campaign encourages all internal stakeholders for good behaviour towards tourists.

## Atithi Devo Bhava (Guest is God)

The „Incredible India“ campaign was launched in 2002 by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and, like its name, made an immediate impact on the tourism industry of the country. The tourist influx of the country increased manifold in the subsequent years. „Atithi Devo Bhava“ campaign was initiated in 2005 to improve relations between host and the visiting foreigners. Having understood the role and importance of host community for shaping a tourist's experience, government had decided to sensitise the general public for treating tourists, especially the foreigners, properly. „Atithi Devo Bhava“ is a public communication type of a campaign that focuses on creating 'public will', which will motivate members of the community to demonstrate generous behaviour towards visiting tourists. The campaign targets the general public, while also touching other stakeholders of the tourism industry. The main components of the campaign are training and orientation to taxi drivers, guides, immigration officers, tourist police and other personnel, who get to directly interact with the tourist.

Union Ministry of Tourism chose Mr. Aamir Khan, the popular film actor, as the brand ambassador for its immensely successful 'Incredible India' campaign and spread the message of 'Atithi Devo Bhava' (guest is god). The campaign is a country wide awareness drive to enlighten the people about the necessity of cordiality towards both domestic and international tourists. As a brand ambassador, Aamir Khan is expected to promote the rich cultural heritage of India, and ways to preserve and enhance it. He will also try to convey to the general public to behave in accordance with the spirit of 'guest is god'. The TV commercials as well as the print advertisements and posters featuring Mr. Aamir Khan have gone public from January 21, 2009.

The primary aim of the campaign is to encourage good behaviour towards tourists. Having had a superior experience, tourists are likely to return and pass on a positive word-of-mouth. This in turn is expected to boost tourism in the country, which will further act as a catalyst for India's economic development. The national level initiative was designed to address the pertinent issues of behaviour towards tourists both at micro and macro levels and work towards acceptable solutions to address them.

## Research issues

The present study tries to investigate the affects of internal promotional campaigns on the perception of general public who are the internal stakeholders at the destination. The case in point is the „Athithi Devo Bhava“ campaign for advocating good behaviour towards tourists.

The purpose of the study is to understand if such a campaign is effective in changing the perceptions of the public and therefore justifies the investment in such an effort. Since different places are not equally popular for tourism, a difference in opinion of people about tourism being good for them can be expected. To investigate this, opinion of the respondents about tourism as benefactor was captured. It was theorised to be a benefactor because it creates jobs, it's good for the economy and it contributes to promoting peace through raising understanding.

Further, the underlying assumption was that those destinations which are more touristic have enlightened stakeholders who believe that tourists deserve a better treatment. In fact this is the underlying assumption in the „Athithi Devo Bhava“ campaign. The research hypothesis in this case was that members of community in popular tourist destinations believe that tourists are not properly treated (and that they deserve a better treatment).

It was decided to measure and compare disposition of those who were exposed and those who were not exposed to the campaign that promotes good behaviour towards tourists. Research endeavours to establish if exposure to campaign brings about a change in self efficacy. Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1992) defines self efficacy as the belief that one has the skills and abilities necessary to perform the behaviour under various circumstances and that this motivates to bring about the necessary change in behaviour. This translates into whether exposure to campaigns encourages stakeholders to take action in case they come across a situation where tourists are being ill-treated.

Research also solicits opinion about whose responsibility is it to ensure good behaviour towards tourists. It was hypothesised that once exposed to campaign stakeholders would increasingly start owning up responsibility for ensuring good behaviour towards tourists.

## Results

Evaluation was based on a sample of 14697 respondents spread across 30 States and Union Territories in the 5 regions of the country- north, south, east, west and north-east. Stratified random sampling was done in 49 cities in these 30 geographical units. These cities represented 6 category-X cities, 21 category-Y cities and 22 category-Z cities. Cities in India are classified by Government on the basis of their population. X category cities include large metropolis (Tier I). Y category cities are the other bigger cities (Tier II) while the Z category cities are the smaller cities (Tier III). Field survey was carried out during May, June and early part of July of 2011. A panel of experts categorised the destinations into 3 categories based on whether a destination was *very popular*, an *upcoming destination* or an *obscure destination*. Such categorisation clubbed 9 cities in category one (2754), 18 cities in category two (6669) and remaining 22 cities in third category (5264).

11741 respondents reported recalling the campaign while 2518 respondents reported that they have not seen the campaign (advertisements in print or audio-visual media). There were 438 missing values (2.98%).

## Is tourism good?

Three independent variable Tjobs (Tourism creates jobs), Twealth (Tourism brings wealth) and Tpeace (Tourism brings peace/ harmony) were regressed with Tgood (tourism is good). A step-wise regression was used. The resulting regression equation was:

$$T_{good} = 2.106 + 0.383 T_{jobs} + 0.093 T_{wealth} + 0.071 T_{peace}$$

The multiple correlation between variables was 0.577. The model explained 33.3 % of variation ( $R^2$ ) in dependent vari-

able Tgood. However, model also suggested that Tjobs, Twealth and Tpeace were all significant predictors of the Tgood. The adjusted R<sup>2</sup> increased to 0.333 in stepwise regression results. Tjobs with standardised beta of 0.440 was found to be the most important predictor.

However, an interesting result was obtained when Tgood (Tourism is good) was measured and compared across the three destinations types- popular destinations, upcoming destinations and obscure destination. Results of ANOVA are as below:

**Table 1. ANOVA for difference of means for opinion 'Tourism is good'**

	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	P-value
Between groups	1686.90	3	562.30	2439	0.000
Within groups	3383.15	14674	0.23		
Total	5070.05	14677			

Analysis suggests that there is significant difference in opinion of the community across the three destination types. The community at obscure destinations concurred least (mean score 4.29) with the proposition that 'tourism is good'. Community at upcoming destinations (mean 4.44) and popular destination (mean 4.40) had a more positive disposition. It is interesting to see that community at popular destinations is less enthusiastic about tourism being good as compared to community at upcoming destinations who are most enthusiastic. Results of regression and ANOVA read together suggest that while community at popular destinations feel more strongly that tourism creates jobs, brings wealth and brings peace and harmony; perhaps they have felt the pressures of tourism. Those at upcoming destinations are driven by the enthusiasm that tourism is good.

**Table 2. Comparison of belief of community at different types of destinations (on a 5 point scale)**

	Popular destinations		Upcoming destination		Obscure destinations	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Tourism creates jobs	4.25	0.70	4.22	0.72	4.14	0.59
Tourism brings wealth	4.18	0.74	4.13	0.76	4.04	0.59
Tourism brings peace/ harmony	4.12	0.74	3.93	0.84	3.89	0.64

#### **Tourists are not properly treated**

Comparing mean scores of responses at the three categories of destinations using ANOVA suggested a significant difference in means.

**Table 3. ANOVA for difference of means for 'Tourists are not properly treated'**

	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	P-value
Between groups	170.21	2	85.10	89.66	0.000
Within groups	13937.73	14684	0.95		
Total	14107.94	14686			

The mean scores of responses suggest that with increase in popularity of a destination community starts believing that tourists are not properly treated and they deserve a better treatment. At more popular tourist destinations the mean was 3.88 followed in order by upcoming destinations (3.81) and obscure destinations (3.61). The difference was found to be statistically significant 5% level.

#### **Does educating publics make a difference?**

Respondents were asked what they would do if they saw someone cheating the tourists. They were given four options and there was a statistically significant difference in the opinions on the issue between those who were educated through the campaign and those who were not.

**Table 4. Cross tabulation of respondent's choice of action when they see tourists being cheated. Compassion between those educated by the campaign and those left out**

	% of those who were educated through the campaign	% of those who were not exposed to the campaign	Total
I will report to the police	28.0%	14.4%	25.6%
I will ask other people to intervene	16.5%	5.8%	14.6%
I will stop the miscreant	48.7%	42.1%	47.6%
I cannot do anything	6.8%	37.7%	12.2%
Total (percentage)	100%	100%	100%
	11741	2518	14259
	respondents	respondents	respondents

Significant difference at 1% for Pearson's Chi-square test

Further, those who were exposed to the campaign were positive (relatively) about the efficacy of such an educational programme to bring about desirable change in attitude of the people towards tourists. T-test suggested a difference significant at 1% level between the opinions of the two groups- educated (4.08 on 5 point scale) and unexposed (3.57 on 5 point scale).

#### **Whose responsibility is good behaviour towards tourists?**

Opinion of respondents regarding the responsibility for good behaviour towards tourists is given below:

**Table 5. Comparison of opinions about whose responsibility is good behaviour towards tourists?**

Whose responsibility is good behaviour towards tourists?	Those not exposed to the campaign			Those exposed to the campaign		
	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank
1. Tour company	3.09	1.25	4	3.53	1.08	4
2. Police	3.31	1.15	2	3.78	0.98	3
3. Government	3.40	1.17	1	3.98	0.97	1
4. General public	3.29	1.29	3	3.81	1.01	2



The results suggest that respondents believe that it was most importantly the government's responsibility to ensure good behaviour towards tourists. Similarly, tour company was considered least responsible (among the four options given to the respondents) for good behaviour towards tourists. However, public who was not educated believed that it was more of Police's responsibility than general public or Tour Company. However, once educated, respondents started owning up the responsibility visible from a higher rank for general public than police's. However, for those not educated about the issue the difference in rating for police's and general public's responsibility was not significant. But, once educated about the issue the rating for public's responsibility (3.81) was found to be significantly more than responsibility rating for police (3.78) at 5% level of significance deploying a pair wise comparison.

### Should DMO invest in such an effort?

DMOs in India are the tourism departments of the government. Once the community was educated about good behaviour towards tourists they also supported sustained efforts of government to educate public for the same. A negatively worded question 'Government is wasting money on a useless issue' was rated low (2.084 on a 5 point scale centred at 3). However, those exposed to campaign (mean 2.08) negated the idea more than those who were not (mean 2.7). The difference was also found to be statistically significant.

Further, respondents were quite clear (4.32 on a 5 point scale) that government (read DMO) should continue with such campaign. Again those who were educated were more supportive of continuing such campaigns (4.33) as against those who were not exposed to such campaign (3.77). The difference was statistically significant at 1%.

### References:

- Ahmed, P. K., Rafiq, M., Saad, N. (2003). Internal marketing and the mediating role of organisational competencies. *European Journal of Marketing*, 37 (9), 1221–41.
- Bandura, A. (1992). Exercise of personal agency through the self-efficacy mechanism. In R. Schwarzer, *Self-efficacy: Thought control of action* (pp. 3–38). Washington, D.C.: Hemisphere.
- Berry, L. L., Parasuraman, A. (1991). *Marketing services: Competing through quality*. New York: Free Press.
- Cahill, D. J. (1996). *Internal marketing: Your company's next stage of growth*. New York: The Haworth Press Inc.
- Chi, C., Qu, H. (2008). Examining the structural relationships of destination image, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty: An integrated approach. *Tourism Management*, 29 (4), 624–636.
- Chowdhary, N. (2012). Incredible India: Is it time to rethink? *Indian Management*, 51 (10), 36–43.
- Crick, A. P. (2002). Internal marketing of attitudes in Caribbean tourism. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 15 (3), 161–166.
- Ebren, F. (2006). Impact of integrated marketing communications: Program in enhancing manager and employee performance. *International Conference on Human and Economic Resources Proceedings*. Cortland: Izmir University of Economics.
- Foreman, S., Money, A. (1995). Internal marketing: concepts measurement and application. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 11, 755–768.
- George, W. R. (1990). Internal marketing and organisational behaviour: A partnership in developing conscious employees at every level. *Journal of Business Research*, 20 (1), 63–70.
- Glassman, M., McAfee, B. (1992). Integrating the personnel and marketing functions: The challenge of the 1990s. *Business Horizons*, 35 (3), 52–59.

### Conclusion

A powerful destination brand is one that reverberates with targeted customers and has a buy-in by internal publics- the different stake-holders (Chowdhary, 2012). It implies that all stakeholders at every point of time during the visit should ensure that a visitor's actual experience supports the image that is created, making the brand believable and relevant.

For above to happen, the (host) community should buy the idea of tourism at the destination and emotional proposition enshrined in the brand. All stake holders at the destination must have unflinching faith in the intrinsic values that the brand portrays. Community is the key contributor to a visitor's experience. The context of the community sets the premise for experience. The way members of a community conduct self has a lasting impact on a tourist. Members of the community are therefore the best and most powerful brand champions. A good destination strategy, therefore, envisions internally advocating the values and tourism products.

Sheehan & Ritchie (2005) have opined that that as part of Internal Destination Development (IDD) responsibility of a DMO, they must try to solicit cooperation of multiple stake holders at a destination else it may threaten the DMO's ability to achieve its objectives. Such a coordination is therefore considered the central activity of a DMO (Presenza, Sheehan, & Ritchie, 2005). While DMOs carry out visible activities to coordinate the stakeholders, they must also invest effort in internal marketing.

Results of this research clearly suggest that advocating internally does affect the perception of the destination stake holders, and therefore their beliefs and actions. It is also clear that such advocacy cannot be left to chance. It has to be a part of well thought of destination strategy clearly identifying what need to be communicated to internal publics and having a institutionalised mechanism in place. DMOs must come forward and own the responsibility for such an effort.

- Gowreesunkar, V. G., Cooper, C. P., Durbarry, R. (2009). The role of Internal Marketing (IM) in sustainable destination management: A case study of Grand Bay, Mauritius. *The International Journal of Environment, Culture, Economic and Social Sustainability*, 5 (5), 141–160.
- Gronroos, C. (1981). Internal marketing theory and practice. *American Marketing Association's Service Conference Proceedings*, (pp. 41–47).
- Gummesson, E. (1994). Internal marketing in the light of relationship marketing and network organisations. In *Internal Marketing: Directions for Management*. New York: Routledge.
- Johnson, G., Scholes, K. (1989). *Exploring Corporate Strategy- Text and Cases*. London: Prentice Hall.
- Kaurav, R. P., Prakash, M. (2011). Internal marketing- A gizmo to bind employees' power in tourism enterprises. *South Asia Journal of Tourism and Hospitality*, 4 (2).
- Kemp, E., Williams, K. H., Boredelon, B. M. (2012). The impact of marketing on internal stakeholders in destination branding: The case of a musical city. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 18 (2), 121–133.
- Lee-Ross, D. (1999). HRM in tourism and hospitality. In *International perspectives in small to medium sized enterprises*. UK: Cassel.
- Nahavandi, N., Caruana, A., Farzad, A. (2008). The effect of internal marketing on organisational commitment in Iranian banks. *American Journal of Applied Sciences*, 5 (11), 1480–1486.
- Narver, J. C., Slater, S. F. (1990). The effect of a market orientation on business profitability. *Journal of Marketing*, 54, 20–35.
- Piercy, N. F., Morgan, N. A. (1989). Internal marketing strategy: managing the corporate environment for marketing. *Proceedings of the Annual Marketing Education Group Conference*, (pp. 404–24). Glasgow.
- Presenza, A., Sheehan, L., Ritchie, J. R. (2005). Towards a model of the roles and activities of destination management organizations. *Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Science*, 25 (3), 1–16.
- Rafiq, M., Ahmed, P. K. (1998). A customer oriented framework for empowering service employees. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 12 (5), 379–94.
- Schultz, D. E. (2006, January 15). Definition of internal marketing remains elusive. *Marketing News*.
- Sheehan, L. R., Ritchie, J. R. (2005). Destination stakeholders: Exploring identity and salience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 32 (3), 711–734.
- Winter, J. P. (1985). Getting your house in order with internal marketing: a marketing prerequisite. *Health Marketing Quarterly*, 3 (1), 69–77.

### **Nimit Chowdhary**

PhD, Professor (Business Studies)

Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management

Noida, India

e-mail: nimitchowdhary@gmail.com