Identifying optimal communication mix for strategic destination image formation: A case study of Austria

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ABSTRACT

Identifying information sources influential to travel decisions helps tourism planners strategically utilize resources to improve marketing efforts and create a strong destination image. An on-line survey (N=973) on destination brand image research was developed and implemented. The study examined image perceptions of Austria and what level of influence various information sources have on destination selection. Results indicated a more effective communication mix strategy can be developed to manage tourist destination image perceptions. Frequencies taken from the data revealed information sources that affected travel destination choice have a varying level of influence. A Communication Effectiveness Grid (CEG) was adapted from previous research which included quadrants specifying marketing resource effectiveness.

Keywords: communication effectiveness grid, destination image, information and communication technologies, communication mix, tourism stakeholders

INTRODUCTION

Over one billion tourists traveled internationally in 2012, with more than half traveling for leisure (World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2013). Understanding tourists' perceptions will help destination marketers and planners to strategically utilize resources to improve destination image and tourist involvement, thus increasing the sustainability of future tourism development (Lottig, 2007). Listed as one of the top ten most popular places in the world to travel, Austria was visited by over 21 million guests in 2009 (Statistics Austria, 2010). Tourism contributes significantly to the national income and employment level of Austria. The current share of tourism-induced gross value added has topped 10% of GDP as of 2008 (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich [WKO], 2008). With these significant contributions to Austria's economy, it is necessary for Austria's tourism authorities to stay current with trends and compete with the industry's leading destination countries.

The challenge of capturing and maintaining travel markets constantly faces Tourism stakeholders, such as the Austrian Tourist Board. Destination marketers are confronted with an even more complex additional challenge: the necessity to develop a destination campaign that is alive and offers added value to travel consumers. The role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in image creation is critical when persuading tourists to travel to a specific destination (Álvarez et al., 2007).

Exploratory research was conducted to identify the information sources that influenced travelers' decisions to visit the country of Austria. An adaptation of the study conducted by McCartney, Butler & Bennett (2008) provided the framework for this research. A survey was developed and administered with the resulting data tabulated to reveal travelers' image perceptions of Austria and the degree to which various factors contributed to the collective Austria destination brand decision. These findings were mapped on a Communication Effectiveness Grid (CEG) to illustrate the effectiveness of marketing resources. From the CEG results, tourism stakeholders may infer specific ICTs and marketing methods that best suit Austria's visitors (McCartney et al., 2008).

PURPOSE

The purpose of this research is to better understand the destination image perceptions of travelers for Austrian tourism stakeholders and ultimately develop an optimum communication mix for Austria's visitors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism and Advertising Influences of the Internet

The Internet has changed the way that people research and buy tourism products. According to the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA), over 105 million Americans used the Internet for travel planning in 2008, up from 90 million reported users in 2007 (TIA, 2009). TIA also found that those who made five or more trips annually were more likely to use the Internet for their planning purposes (TIA, 2004). With the emergence of such Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), more traditional travel intermediaries are adopting

ICTs to provide some kind of added value to their customers (Álvarez et al., 2007). Companies using ICTs gain a vital competitive advantage.

Aside from planning purposes, the Internet is increasingly being seen as one of the most effective ways to advertise. The Internet has several advantages over the traditional forms of advertising in the travel and tourism industry because of its accessibility and personalization (Lee & Mills, 2005). A report by Maddox (2009) indicated that all media-supported advertising will slow between 2009 and 2014, except for the Internet. Internet advertising is expected to increase 9.2% in 2010 and by 2011 will make up 14.9% of all global advertising. Consumers are also able to get feedback and information on destinations from other travelers. Research has proven that interpersonal influence arising from opinion exchange between consumers is an important factor in influencing a consumer's purchase decision.

Destination Image

Destination image, "the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination" (Crompton, 1979, p. 18), is an important factor in the successful marketing of a destination. The formation of an image is influenced by "a few impressions chosen from a flood of information" (Reynolds, 1965, p. 69). As far as destination images are concerned; this information comes from sources such as brochures; the opinions of others (i.e., word of mouth); advertising; media reporting in the form of newspaper, magazines and television reporting; popular culture through literature; movies; and the Internet. Several important factors should be considered when promoting a destination image. First, when an image is projected by the local tourism industry it should be somewhat anchored on a true destination identity. This strategy formulates a tourism product and commercializes the offer using this identity and the authenticity of a place, be it real or staged (Govers et al., 2007). Another important factor to consider is that promotional images and secondary place interactions form the basis for a perceived destination image. A secondary place interaction is essentially a vicarious experience which is produced, for example, by media, literature, arts, and popular culture. This image is formed in the mind of the traveler before the location is visited (Govers et al., 2007).

Destination Marketing Organizations

Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) face another challenge with destination images. Image formation involves not just creating an awareness of a place, but also projecting the selected images to a particular market segment or perceived specific audience that is believed to be the most receptive to the message (McCartney et al., 2008). Faced with growing competition worldwide, DMOs must work constantly to attract travelers (Pike & Ryan, 2004). As a result, destination marketers have turned to new tactics to draw tourists away from their competitors. One method is to make a destination seem desirable to several different market segments. A good example of this is New Zealand's recent "100% Pure New Zealand" marketing campaign. This tagline is dynamic, easily changed to reach a variety of audiences and appeal to different travel motives. For instance, "100% Pure Assurance" marks a symbol for quality accommodations in New Zealand (New Zealand Tourism Board, 2010, para. 6). Other alterations could promote adventure, romance, education, spirituality, or value while still tying back to the core slogan. By altering a few words, New Zealand is suddenly inviting and interesting to wide variety of people (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005).

The idea of personalizing an advertisement to a certain type of traveler has proven to be a successful tactic. A recent study by the Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI) showed that travel customers are increasingly seeking and responding to a diversified set of values that suit individual preferences. One size no longer fits all; consumers expect marketers to know what they want (Gast, 2009).

When developing and implementing a country-specific destination marketing plan, it is necessary to recognize that a tourism destination is unique; it is not a single product but a composite product consisting of many service-driven components. The tourism industry sectors encompass lodging; hospitality; theme parks and attractions; gaming, arts; entertainment; culture; heritage; the natural environment; sports; and wellness (Buhalis, 2000; Pike & Ryan, 2004).

Media Tourism

The use of media as a form of tourism advertising has been a popular topic of interest in recent years. Tourism can be generated by books, movies, TV shows and every level of cultural activity. The media greatly impacts the image a person forms about a destination. Consumers are sometimes able to make a better formed ideal by viewing or reading information for reasons other than strictly promotional.

Media tourism first began with the written word. For example, the writings of Sir Walter Scott remain proof of how tourism can be affected by the written word. Sir Scott had a deep love of Scottish history and shared this love through poetry and novels. His writings provoked many people to travel to Scotland and see firsthand what he described (Massie, 2009).

Film tourism is perhaps the most well-known and influential type of tourism media. Though not a new topic, it has gained much attention in the last few years. An example of this newly founded interest comes as a result of The Lord of the Rings trilogy and the increase in tourism interest it created in New Zealand, the filming location of the movies (Bolan & Williams, 2008). In a 2003 survey, 95% of current visitors to New Zealand knew that The Lord of the Rings was filmed there and 9% of those visitors stated that the movie was one of the main reasons they had traveled to the destination (Croy, 2004). The type of large screen exposure a film can give a destination is something that destination marketers cannot hope to pay for or be able to produce (Bolan & Williams, 2008). Movies can showcase a destination's natural scenery, historical background, and culture. Austria is not exempt from this phenomenon. Since the release of The Sound of Music in 1965, many tourists have traveled to Austria in hopes of visiting locations that were showcased in the film (Im & Chon, 2008).

Push and Pull Factors

In studying factors that lead to increased tourism, it is important to note the different push and pull factors of a given location. The push-pull idea provides a simple and insightful approach for explaining the motivations underlying tourist behavior (Klenosky, 2002). A push factor is a specific force in our lives that leads us to the decision to take a vacation, while a pull factor refers to those factors which lead an individual to select one destination over another (Klenosky, 2002). A significant relationship can be drawn between the two factors as people may be pushed by their own internal forces and, at the same time, be pulled by the external forces of a destination. For Austria specifically, it might be that people are drawn to the country as a result

of the culture, history and nature present in the country, each pull factors. Push factors could be as simple as the need to escape and experience something new. Push and pull factors such as these can be used in exploring why travelers visit Austria as well as the effectiveness of the communication channels in promoting Austria's attributes to traveler audiences.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The population of interest was tourists of Austria. Due to time and financial constraints it was not possible to administer the survey to all tourists visiting Austria; therefore, survey administration was limited to a sampling frame. The sampling frame consisted of a convenience sample of Salzburg tourists at Salzburg Airport W.A. Mozart and Salzburg Hauptbanhof train station and readers of the Austria.info newsletter.

A survey instrument was adapted from the questionnaire developed, validated, and used by McCartney, Butler and Bennett (2008). Seventeen sources were included, from controllable sources such as print and broadcast advertising to more uncontrollable sources such as referrals from family, friends and work colleagues (McCartney et al., 2008; Sönmez & Sirakaya, 2002; and Dore & Crouch, 2003). In addition to asking respondents whether or not they heard about Austria from individual advertising sources, a Likert scale was included, ranging from 1 (very unimportant) to 7 (very important). The final validated survey instrument consisted of seven demographic questions and a series of statements to which participants indicated importance or agreement on a 7-point Likert scale.

Communication Effectiveness Grid

The challenge for destination marketers comes from isolating the many media messages that cause changes in a traveler's image perception (Sönmez & Sirakaya, 2002). Focusing on this issue, a Communication Effectiveness Grid (CEG) was formed as an adaptation of the 2008 study by McCartney et al. This grid integrates personal, public relations, marketing, and advertising actions that influence a traveler's formation of image. The information for this grid was taken from the survey question which asks whether the respondent had heard of the destination from a specific information source. Following this determination, a second question was used to determine the level of importance of each source in the travel decision making process. Since a respondent may or may not have heard about a destination from a particular source, this has greater relevance according to the degree of importance the traveler puts on that source, which was scaled from 1 (very unimportant) to 7 (very important).

The CEG is composed of four quadrants which highlight the degree of importance that travelers place on each method of communication in making a decision to travel to a certain location. These quadrants include: (1) excessive, nonrelevant communication; (2) nonrelevant communication; (3) more effective communication needed; and (4) effective communication. Excessive, nonrelevant communication describes instances in which communication that is being carried out by a particular destination is received by the traveler and yet is of little or no importance in the actual travel decision. The nonrelevant communication quadrant describes communications that are not only unimportant to the traveler but are also not received. More effective communication needed reflects communication that is important to the traveler but is not being acted upon. In other words, a traveler is not receiving information from this source but believes it to be a source on which they would base a decision to travel. Finally, the effective

communication quadrant shows communication that is not only important but is also being accepted by the traveler. The traveler is receiving information from sources which they believe to be credible and will be used to select a destination.

DATA ANALYSIS

Predictive Analytics Software (PASW) 18.0 was used for data analysis. In analyzing the combined results of the paper and online surveys, statistical measures were employed. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate means and standard deviations for rated responses, and frequency analyses were made for non-rated responses including travel behaviors, travel activities, and demographics. Using the results of descriptive statistics on information sources, the Communication Effectiveness Grid (CEG) was graphed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 1,185 surveys were collected from April through July 2010. Of the total number of surveys collected, 212 were incomplete or did not meet the residency or age requirements; 973 were deemed usable.

Demographic Characteristics

The participants of this study were 48.6% female and 51.4% male. Just over half (51.2%) of the participants were aged 55 or older, while the majority of others fell between the ages of 45-54 (20.8%) and 35-44 (14.0%). These participants were generally older than those surveyed in 2008 who were primarily aged 25-34 (McCartney et al., 2008). Well over three quarters of the participants reported a post graduate (43.56%) or college (41.1%) education. Only 11.0% had a high school/pre-university education while even fewer reported vocational training (3.5%). Compared to respondents in Hong Kong, Beijing, Kaohsiung, and Shanghai, participants in this study held more post graduate degrees but maintained a comparable number of college degrees (McCartney et al., 2008). The largest proportion (39.7%) reported monthly household income greater than or equal to €5,001. The next highest group of participants (16.4%) reportedly made €3,001 - €4,000 monthly. Nearly half (46.4%) of those surveyed indicated their household structure as a couple without children living at home. Professional (34.0%), retired (25.7%), and management (13.9%) were the most reported occupations of survey participants, while management, technical staff, and professional were occupations most reported by McCartney et al. (2008). A total of 61 countries were represented by respondents, with the United States of America claiming the most representation (61.9%), followed by Canada (6.2%) and Germany (4.2%).

Results of Descriptive and Frequency Analyses

The initial step in the analyses was calculating the frequencies for the quantitative data collected. The frequencies were calculated according to five sections of the survey: (A) Travel Behavior; (B) Travel Motives; (C) Images of Austria; (D) Travel Activities; (E) Cultural Background; and (F) Information Sources.

Travel Behavior

The frequency analysis for Section A: Travel Behavior showed approximately half of those surveyed had visited Austria 1-5 times. In the last three years, most (69.5%) had never taken an international business trip, but 88.95% had taken an international pleasure trip at least once. While the average length of stay for foreign business-related travel was largely not applicable (69.8%), the majority (61.9%) of foreign pleasure trips were longer than seven days.

Travel Motives

Section B analysis revealed the most important travel motives rated by respondents were to: (1) experience a new culture, (2) experience the unfamiliar, (3) learn new things, and (4) relax physically and mentally.

Images of Austria

The descriptive analysis for Section C: Images of Austria indicated that respondents agreed most strongly that Austria has natural scenic beauty and rich cultural heritage. Other images and impressions to which they readily agreed were Austria's many places of interest to visit, its attractions, and unique architectural buildings. Generally respondents agreed that Austria has safe places to visit, is clean and litter free, and provides easy access to the rest of Europe. Additionally, some respondents voluntarily indicated particular images which came to mind when thinking of Austria. Many of these responses can be categorized into themes such as film, culture and history, descriptive, food and beverage, scenic, specific destinations or attractions. For example, one of the most common images associated with Austria is the film The Sound of Music. Respondents also mentioned many items related to Austria's culture and history: old buildings, castles, villages, museums, Mozart, classical music, festivals, and Christmas markets. Some descriptive impressions of Austria included relaxing, friendly, festive, beautiful, pleasant, casual, inviting, or generally positive; mountains, lakes, and snow were often listed as scenic impressions. Beer and coffee were common beverages associated with Austria, and skiing and hiking were common activities listed among responses. Responses with specific destinations and attractions were numerous, with many listing the Alps, salt mines, Vienna, Salzburg, Melk, Schloss Schönbrunn, Mirabell Gardens, and the birth place or residences of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Travel Activities

Section D: Travel Activities showed that of the survey respondents, visits to historical buildings and heritage attractions were the activities with most participation (96.9%), followed closely by leisure activities such as walks, skiing, beach-lounging, etc. (91.7%) and visits to museums (91.4%). Also, many respondents participate in festivals or similar events with music and food (86.1%), go shopping (86.0%), attend an opera or concert, theatre, or cinema (85.3%), and take part in a knowledge-seeking educational activity (77.8%). Other travel-related activities in which respondents indicated their participation were night entertainment such as clubs, discos, and bars (40.6%), sporting events (37.9%), conferences (19.2%), and gambling (9.5%).

Cultural Background

The descriptive analysis for Section E: Cultural Background revealed respondents generally placed a high priority on having a strong image of a destination (*M*=5.38, *SD*=1.28). Respondents also indicated a preference to engage in direct contact with the local people (*M*=5.93, *SD*=1.01) and to travel to countries in which the culture is different from their own (*M*=5.58, *SD*=1.20). Most respondents agreed only slightly that the culture and traditions of Austria were similar to their own (*M*=4.54, *SD*=1.54).

Information Sources

The frequency and descriptive analyses for Section F: Information Sources indicated the sources from which Austria was not only heard about but also that held some importance in decision making included: (1) family and friends; (2) Austrian acquaintances; (3) travel programs on Austria; (4) books on Austria; and (5) Internet/email. The information sources from which Austria was not heard about and held the least importance in the decision process included: (1) telemarketing; (2) trade shows; (3) spokesperson/celebrity; (4) press conference/press release; and (5) familiarization or journalist/press tours.

Austrian Communication Effectiveness Grid

The next phase in analyzing the data included generating the Communication Effectiveness Grid (CEG). The information for this grid was taken from the results of the survey section on information sources. These questions asked participants not only what sources had given them information about Austria, but also how important the sources were in making their decision to travel. As seen in Figure 1 (Appendix), the CEG revealed five important methods of communication about Austria that were effectively reaching travelers: (1) internet/email; (2) family and friends; (3) books on Austria; (4) travel programs on Austria; and (5) movies about or in Austria. There were ten communication channels which most respondents indicated were neither important nor effectively used; these included: (1) telemarketing; (2) trade shows; (3) spokesperson/celebrity; (4) press conference/press release; (5) outdoor advertising; (6) familiarization or journalist/press tours; (7) broadcast advertising; (8) social or work colleagues in Austrian embassy or consulate; (9) direct mail; and (10) Austrian overseas offices. While there were no information sources within the excessive, nonrelevant communication quadrant, two sources fell within the more effective communication needed quadrant: (1) Austrian acquaintances and (2) print advertising.

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The focus of this study was to determine what information sources were important in the decision making process of traveling to Austria, as well as what destination images Austria created in the minds of the public. This study was adapted from the 2008 study done by McCartney, Butler, and Bennett in which tourist perceptions of a specific destination, Macao, were examined. Similar results were evident in relation to what information sources seem to be the most effective and what sources are not. For example, in both studies the opinions of family and friends and information found via internet/email were considered to be among the most

important sources whereas sources such as telemarketing and trade shows were considered least effective. Additionally, compared with previous research travel motives for respondents of this study are similar to those surveyed for Macao (McCartney et al., 2008). Such motives as relaxing physically and mentally and experiencing a new culture were determined to be very important in both cases.

The three primary research topics serving as the basis for this study were: (1) information sources that had the most influential effect on tourists' decision to travel, (2) images most commonly associated with Austria, and (3) major travel motives for tourists. These topics are coupled with the following examination of survey results.

Research Topic 1

Which of the identified information sources had the most influential effect on tourists' decision to travel? The composite variable scores indicated that a majority of the proposed information sources held some level of importance. The five most important sources from which information about Austria is received were: (1) family and friends; (2) Austrian acquaintances; (3) travel programs on Austria; (4) books on Austria; and (5) Internet/email. Although many of the information sources were considered helpful in making a travel decision, sources such as telemarketing and Austrian overseas offices were generally deemed as neither useful nor important. Austria's pull factors, such as its natural scenic beauty and many tourist attractions, can be best promoted using the aforementioned information sources, which were the most important and effective sources influencing travel decisions. These information sources can be categorized as controllable or uncontrollable from a marketing perspective. Controllable information sources such as internet/email, books, travel programs, and movies are readily utilized marketing tools. Though considered less controllable than media messages, positive word of mouth referrals from family or friends can be encouraged by providing free downloadable screensavers, post cards, and other promotional materials that can shared easily and inexpensively. Employing each of these information sources will enhance Austria's pull factors.

Research Topic 2

What images are most commonly associated with Austria? When participants were asked this question it was found that most people focused on the scenic and cultural/historical aspects of the country. Common images included nature, greenery, mountains, castles, festivals, The Sound of Music, beer and coffee. These images are important for Destination Marketing Organizations and other tourism-related organizations for marketing Austria. Using the images commonly associated with Austria the country's marketers will not only market individually to visitors looking for those specific experiences but will also know what lesser-known or new attractions to promote.

Research Topic 3

What are the major travel motives for tourists? When examining the tourism industry it is important to discover what factors motivate tourists to travel. Knowing these motivating factors allows marketers to cater to specific interests, stay current with travel trends, and convey

information that is most relevant to individual travelers. Based on the results of the frequency analysis, the most important travel motives rated by respondents were to experience a new culture, experience the unfamiliar, learn new things, and relax physically and mentally. Knowing these travel motives of potential visitors will assist DMOs in effective marketing strategies.

Communication Effectiveness Grid

The completed Austrian Communication Effectiveness Grid shown in Figure 1 (Appendix) illustrated what information sources were most important when making travel decisions. Respondents indicated five information sources that provide important information: (1) internet/email; (2) family and friends; (3) books on Austria; (4) travel programs on Austria; and (5) movies about or in Austria. Ten communication channels were reported as neither important nor effectively used; these were (1) telemarketing; (2) trade shows; (3) spokesperson/celebrity; (4) press conference/press release; (5) outdoor advertising; (6) familiarization or journalist/press tours; (7) broadcast advertising; (8) social/work colleagues in Austria embassy/consulate; (9) direct mail; and (10) Austrian overseas offices. Finally, respondents indicated that two sources were important but fell within the more effective communication needed quadrant: (1) Austrian acquaintances and (2) print advertising. These results are consistent with the results of the study by McCartney et al. (2008).

As previously discussed in the literature review, the different information sources have varying degrees of influence. Information sources over which marketers have less control (i.e., family, friends, and acquaintances) have the potential to be more credible and believable than paid or more controllable forms of communication (i.e., broadcast media). Some of the controllable media (i.e., outdoor advertising, trade shows and print advertising) are not effectively reaching the surveyed participants. This presents two challenges: first, how to ensure favorable messages are passed from family, friends, and acquaintances; and second, how to encourage effective use of positive imagery of Austria through advertising. One approach to meet these challenges is to provide favorable images to visitors and potential visitors from information points and web pages. Complimentary post cards, downloadable screen savers, and wallpapers that showcase Austria's attractions are just a few specific tools that can be used to promote its pull factors and gain more control over somewhat uncontrollable information sources such as referrals from family, friends, and acquaintances.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

There are several implications that can be drawn from this research. One of the most important observations can be seen in the CEG in Figure 1 (Appendix): namely, not only where travelers get their information but also what information sources they feel are the most important/influential in the decision making process. Close examination of importance ratings in Table 8 revealed that respondents who indicated hearing about Austria from specific information sources rated those sources higher. This is true even for sources which were considered to be generally unimportant, such as trade shows and telemarketing. For example, mean importance ratings for trade shows and telemarketing were found to be 4.99 and 4.58, respectively, for "yes" responses compared with 2.54 and 2.20 for "no" responses, as shown in Table 1 (Appendix). This observation suggests that as information is received it becomes important to travel decisions. Furthermore, used effectively and strategically targeting the right audiences, even information

sources generally regarded as unimportant can be utilized to communicate well to potential visitors.

With this data, groups such as the Austrian Tourism Board can formulate better plans of how and where to broadcast the selected destination images. By understanding where certain travelers look for travel information, more focus can be placed on the well-received sources while developing sources from which information is under-received.

Several changes to the survey instrument are proposed for future research. Because only data rated on a Likert scale can be analyzed using multivariable analytic software, such as EQS, the section of survey questions related to travel activities should be changed to reflect a similar scale representing approximate leisure time spent on each particular travel activity. The scale should quantify the relative amounts of leisure time spent, ranging from 1 (no time spent) to 7 (all of time) rather than simple "yes" or "no" participation while on vacation.

Furthermore, while the data collected on each of the individual variables in this study provides some value to the tourism industry, it is the relationship between the variables that offers the greatest statistical significance. Therefore, future studies could be centered on the comparison of the respondents' perceptions of destination image and their respective demographics, particularly of countries representing varying regions of the world. The addition of a demographic question regarding ethnicity could be useful in drawing other interesting comparisons among variables and between other ethnic backgrounds. Existing demographic questions regarding education and profession could be altered to avoid confusion. Future studies could also employ structural equation modeling to identify and measure relationships between factors that will strengthen destination image and increase visitor intent.

Second, this study could be replicated every five years to identify any changing image perceptions of travelers. By repeating this study every few years, tourism organizations will be able to also see what sources of information continue to be most important to travelers in the future. These organizations will be able to continually refocus their strategic marketing plans to accommodate changing trends in both travel motives and important information sources.

If this study were to be replicated, an additional recommendation would be to change two image questions to better reflect Austria's current images. For example, while beaches technically exist along the shorelines of Austria's many lakes, they are not readily associated with typical images of Austria. Instead of asking whether or not Austria has good beaches, one might question whether or not Austria has good skiing. Also, even though gambling opportunities are available, since Austria is not particularly well known for gambling activities, these questions could be eliminated unless a major movement for gaming is in Austria's foreseeable future.

Third, although informative data was collected from current travelers in Austria and from readers of the Austria.info newsletter, a survey such as the one used in this study might be more effective if it were to be distributed to a broader, more generalizable population. Distributing it among more diverse population samples, such as neighboring countries of Austria, will provide richer research data and results representative of geographic regions.

From the survey data analyses it was determined which factors are important to travelers' destination decisions. It is essential to note that information collected in this study was restricted to a convenience sample with high representation from the United States of America. These findings should not be used in making any large marketing decisions as they may not reflect the views of other, more diverse populations. Nevertheless, research information such as this should

be collected as it will help DMOs and other tourism organizations in their efforts to most effectively market destinations.

In summary, destination image is one of the most powerful marketing tools Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) can use to promote destination products. While optimum communication mix can be achieved by providing useful information to visitors via more prevalent information sources, underutilized information sources may also prove useful to attracting new visitors. Knowing where tourists look for information and what information sources are most important will help marketers use their resources most effectively to promote destinations and increase visitor count.

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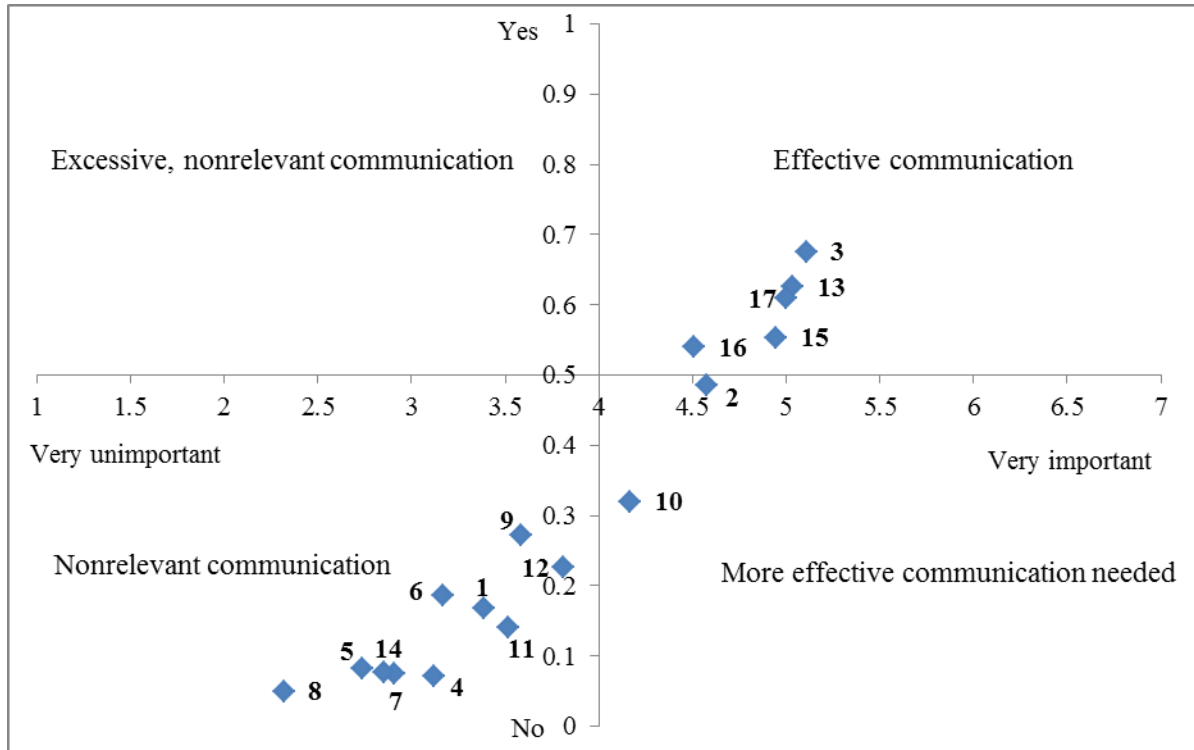
APPENDICES

Figure 1. Austrian Communication Effectiveness Grid

Note. Sources of Information: Key to Figure 1

1. Broadcast advertising
2. Print Advertising
3. Internet/email
4. Outdoor advertising
5. Trade shows
6. Familiarization or journalist/press tours
7. Press conference/press release
8. Telemarketing
9. Direct mail
10. Austrian acquaintances
11. Social/work colleagues in Austria embassy/consulate
12. Austrian overseas office
13. Family and friends
14. Spokesperson/celebrity
15. Travel program on Austria
16. Movies about/in Austria
17. Books on Austria

Table 1

Information Sources: Importance (N=973)

	Yes		No	
	M*	SD	M*	SD
Broadcast advertising (n=969)	4.47	1.54	3.17	1.61
Print Advertising (n=969)	5.30	1.37	3.91	1.71
Internet/email (n=970)	5.62	1.37	4.04	1.75
Outdoor advertising (n=970)	4.90	1.61	2.98	1.54
Trade Shows (n=970)	4.99	1.51	2.54	1.44
Familiarization or journalist/press tours (n=970)	4.87	1.52	2.78	1.59
Press conference/press release (n=969)	4.92	1.55	2.75	1.52
Telemarketing (n=969)	4.58	1.44	2.20	1.41
Direct mail (n=969)	5.26	1.23	2.96	1.66
Austrian acquaintances (n=970)	5.76	1.23	3.42	1.69
Social/work colleagues in Austria Embassy/consulate (n=969)	5.48	1.34	3.19	1.66
Austrian overseas office (n=970)	5.35	1.26	3.36	1.63
Family and friends (n=968)	5.95	1.15	3.52	1.80
Spokesperson/celebrity (n=968)	4.92	1.49	2.68	1.50
Travel programs on Austria (n=969)	5.74	1.02	3.98	1.66
Movies about/in Austria (n=969)	5.19	1.23	3.71	1.57
Books on Austria (n=968)	5.71	1.07	3.90	1.52

Note. *1 (Very Unimportant); 2 (Unimportant); 3 (Somewhat Unimportant); 4 (Neutral); 5 (Somewhat Important); 6 (Important); 7 (Very Important)