

What marketing strategy for destinations with a negative image?

As international tourism grows, some host destinations and communities struggle with the impact of a negative image linked to past conflicts and disasters and even the aftermath of colonial rule. These and other factors can hinder tourism development. Hugues Séraphin, Vanessa G.B. Gowreesunkar and their team of 16 authors explore this in order to determine how the negative effects of past events can be addressed, especially in developing countries. I would like to thank Hugues and Vanessa for establishing a comprehensive approach and in responding to their question, finding possible solutions to the problem. I would also like to thank Anca C. Yallop and Nichole Hugo for their contribution to peer review and coordination.

Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes (WHATT) aims to make a practical and theoretical contribution to hospitality and tourism development, and we seek to do this by using a key question to focus attention on an industry issue. If you would like to contribute to our work by serving as a *WHATT* theme editor, do please contact me.

Richard Teare

Managing Editor, WHATT

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The tourism industry is especially vulnerable to image problems because of exogenous factors like political instability, economic crisis, natural disasters and the outbreak of diseases. Those factors can cause destinations to decline and sometimes even totally disappear from the tourism map and so in this sense, tourism is a problematic industry. Subsequently, some destinations have adopted strategies to mitigate their negative image. For instance, Haiti has changed its Destination Marketing Organisation's (DMO) logo, and also made the diaspora its main target market. Because explicit and aggressive marketing strategies have shown their limitations and also because more subtle marketing strategies theoretically appear more suitable, innovative and specific approaches are important for destinations' marketing strategies.

This theme issue specifically focusses on post-colonial, post-conflict and post-disaster destinations, and on the strategies needed to correct negative images and in some cases, create a new image to restore confidence in the minds of potential visitors. With this foundation, the theme issue explores a strategic question facing many countries relying on their tourism industry: The gap or "blind spots" that need to be adjusted between the negative image of the destination perceived by tourists and the optimistic image promoted by DMOs. Several articles in this issue explore this specific concern. For example, we explore how the development of sustainable tourism can contribute to improving the image of Romania, a destination that has experienced significant challenges in its development posed by political conflict and unrest during the era of its communist regime. A further example comes from Jamaica, a tropical island in the Caribbean region. Despite facing issues such as high crime rates and violence levels, high unemployment and debt burden, Jamaica has been able to overcome its economic crisis and has emerged as a popular "sun, sea and sand" destination. Authors and co-authors from a variety of backgrounds provide a rich variety of insights on the strategies used by some destinations and that are likely to benefit others. Thus, from a practical point of view, this theme could be of interest to marketers in



DMOs. From an academic point of view, this theme issue addresses a gap and advances knowledge in tourism marketing.

We hope that you will enjoy reading each article and you will be able to identify strategies applicable for the marketing of your respective destinations.

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About the Theme Editors

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