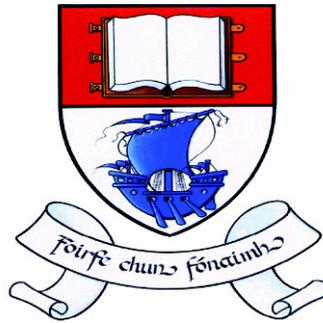# A Stakeholder Approach to the
Branding of Urban Tourism Destinations

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts by Research

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Declaration

I Tony Quinlan, declare that this thesis is submitted by me in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Art is entirely my own work except where otherwise accredited. It has not at any time either whole or in part been submitted for any other educational award.

Signature: _____

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Date: October 2008

Abstract

The increasingly competitive nature of the international tourism sector means that the creation of memorable tourist experiences and experience branding are two of the major strategic challenges facing destination managers. It is the assertion of this research that high levels of destination stakeholder unity are a key requisite for success in the creation and management of destination experiences. The competitive strength of a destinations product offering can emerge only as a result of deliberate and unified effort on the part of all the destination stakeholders.

The study presents a review of literature from a number of different management streams and where necessary concepts are adapted to the context of tourism destinations. A key theme emerging from the literature is that a true destination experience must be more than the sum of its parts; destination stakeholders need to take an active role in shaping the overall destination experience. The literature gives strong support to the researcher's assertion that the quality of a destination experience and a destination brand are contingent upon the levels of stakeholder unity at the destination.

In order to test the research propositions a case study approach is utilised, involving two urban destinations, Waterford and Kilkenny, as case examples. The case approach is widely advocated for the examination of complex phenomena within their own context and as many of the variables under investigation in this study are dependent on individual or group perspectives, a case approach using multiple sources of evidence was deemed most appropriate. A detailed case protocol was developed to guide the stakeholder interviews (N=20) and tourist questionnaires (N=60) and the data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS V.15) and NVivo (V. 7).

The findings of the study indicate that the levels of unity among stakeholders in Waterford and Kilkenny are low and moderate respectively. The study found that although the difference in stakeholder unity between the two urban destinations was not enormous, the presence of lower levels of stakeholder unity in Waterford impacted quite significantly on its ability to develop a clear destination experience or strong destination brand. The findings of the study clearly signify that stakeholder unity can have a very real effect on the quality of destination experience and gives support to the need for destination managers to be deliberate and proactive in the management of stakeholder relationships.

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Finally, and most importantly, I dedicate this thesis to my parents Richard and Pauline who have always supported and encouraged me in my educational pursuits.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 <u>Overall Context</u>

It is increasingly apparent that the competitive future of Irish tourism destinations customer satisfaction depends on key success factors such as innovation, managerial competence and unity. Therefore, if such key success factors are to be accomplished, involvement and strategic agility from every stakeholder is required. In order to seize upon customer satisfaction opportunities and thereby respond to its challenges, destination stakeholders need new thinking, strategic agility and a will to revitalise both the economy and society. The strength of Ireland's tourism innovation environment lies in the cooperation, competence, collaboration and the management of the various destination stakeholder relationships. Tourism destinations are subject to a multitude of forces both internal and external and these forces impact on the creation of tourist experiences and destination brand development. The building of successful tourism destinations incorporates many factors, but this dissertation focuses on three emergent areas: the experience economy, destination branding and the degree of participation of destination stakeholders in the management and branding of their tourism destinations.

1.2 <u>Background to the Study</u>

The Tourism Policy Review Group's *"Vision for Irish Tourism 2002-2012"* identified that international tourism is increasingly driven by more demanding customer requirements, with greater emphasis on unique experiences, authenticity and emotional involvement. In its response to this report the Irish Tourism Industry Confederation (2006:55) state *"The core goal for Irish Tourism is to develop and deliver distinctive, authentic and memorable experiences that stimulate increased visits, longer dwell times and higher expenditure…The quality of experience is key"*. The creation of a destination experience is only one step in modern destination management. Thus once the

experiential components have been realised, the next priority is to brand this new destination experience. Critical to the attainment of this objective is the development of a strong and cohesive unity between stakeholders of the destination.

Blain, Levy and Ritchie (2005) regard the application of branding theories to places and in particular tourism destinations as relatively new. Branding is seen as a powerful tool in relation to examining, explaining and creating value in tourist destinations, but Hankinson (2001) contends it is not always understood or applied effectively. Recent literature suggest that two themes have emerged as critical in the building of successful destinations; the need to incorporate experience elements in the destination offering (Snepenger *et al.*, 2004), and the need to develop recognisable brands for destinations (Kolter and Gertner, 2002). Although the need for the branding and addition of experience components is widely acknowledged, the practicalities involved in achieving a branded destination experience is altogether more elusive. Many academics have argued that places are too complex to include in branding discussions as they have too many stakeholders with too little control (Morgan, 2003; Blain *et al.*, 2005; Pike, 2005; Park and Petrick, 2006). The present study seeks to explore if strong stakeholder unity at destination level is the key to the management and branding of destination experiences.

1.3 <u>Research Rationale</u>

The competitive nature of contemporary tourism underpins the critical importance of destinations to find ways of attracting and then retaining tourists. The establishment of a recognisable brand is therefore vital, while the design of memorable experiences can help reveal the brand's identification (ITIC, 2006). The creation of experiences offers a bond between the destination and the tourist; therefore active experience management needs to be present. New tourism destination models are emerging; those of the "*Destination Experience"* (Voss, 2004) and the "*Destination Brand*" (Caldwell and Freire, 2004). The modern destination must instil customers with a sense of added value. Thus, the redesign of existing services with the inclusion of experiential components is being widely recognised as a route to improved customer satisfaction (Pine and Gilmore,

1998). Strong unity among destination stakeholders is vital in achieving this, as it has the potential to increase levels of stakeholder coordination, collaboration and communication, thus enhancing the efforts of the stakeholders in working towards a common goal (Aas, Ladkin and Fletcher, 2005; Jones, 2005). Experience characteristics augment those of a service with the addition of two extra components, namely emotional theme and participation activities (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Gupta and Vajic, 2000). The building, offering and management of destination experiences is a key aspect to innovate tourist products (Voss, 2004), and if managed effectively by destination stakeholders, experiences can offer a location or region the opportunity for higher yields, increased market growth and increased competitive advantage (Pine and Gilmore, 1998).

Establishing a brand identity for a tourism destination is critical in terms of creating awareness and contributing to a destination's sustainability by positioning and differentiating the destination from others. This is an increasingly important process in an evermore competitive market. However, tourism destinations do not lend themselves easily to branding. Hankinson (2001) posits that although the branding of tourist destinations is becoming increasingly difficult there is no evidence suggesting that branding a destination is unachievable. Successful destination branding requires a strong unified network of stakeholder relationships in order to create a common vision of the destination core brand (Morgan, Pritchard, and Piggott, 2003; Hankinson, 2004).   The present research will continue to explore this phenomenon through a comprehensive review of predominant theories relating to destination branding.

Building a unique destination experience is also crucial in terms of creating awareness and contributing to a destination's sustainability. The wellbeing of a tourism destination calls for work, competence, collaboration and balance between different sectors of life. It is therefore essential that a greater clarity of roles and contributions of stakeholders in the process of creating and branding destination experiences must be developed. Preble (2005) outlined a systematic six step process for utilising stakeholder management concepts and practices. For the purpose of this study the stakeholder management process is adapted from that of an organisation to the context of a tourism destination

with its stakeholders. Adopting such a strong stakeholder management process has the potential to increase the legitimacy and operating performance of stakeholders, resulting in a better understanding of demands and expectations of stakeholders at the destination and identifying and aligning those demands towards a common vision (Preble, 2005).

While recent studies have addressed the application of branding techniques to products and services, there remains a necessity for a more concerted effort in relation to branding techniques to places and in particular to tourism destinations (Gnoth, 1998; Keller, 2003). This field of inquiry requires further exploration as the topic of destination branding has received little space in academic journals and research on destination development using marketing concepts such as experiential tourism is yet to be reported (Haemoon, Byeong-Yong and Jee-Hye, 2004). This study makes a contribution to theory as it adapts the literature on experiences and branding from that of an organisation and its members to a tourism destination context and its relevant stakeholders. This is important as competition is intensifying, not just between destinations, but between products and activities within destinations. In addition, questions remain unanswered regarding the impact and contribution destination stakeholder unity has in relation to the design and creation of quality destination experiences, and subsequently the destinations brand development.

The present study seeks to understand the role of stakeholder unity in the branding of a tourism destination. A case study approach was selected whereby the level of stakeholder unity in two urban tourism destinations, Kilkenny and Waterford was assessed in order to empirically investigate if the level of stakeholder unity had a direct impact on the quality of destination experience and on destination brand development. The relationship between stakeholder unity and the creation of a destination experience and thus, destination brand development has not been previously tested within an Irish tourism context. This research therefore will address this research gap.

1.4 <u>Research Aims and Objectives</u>

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the level of stakeholder unity at each urban tourism destination and examine the correlation between the level of unity and the success of the destination in delivering and branding a quality destination experience. Another aim is to ascertain if stakeholder unity can be measured and secondly whether a value can be placed on the level of stakeholder unity at both destinations. A further aim is to investigate the relationship between the level of stakeholder unity and its corollary effect on the creation of a quality tourist experience and furthermore its development of a recognised brand for both destinations.

Three objectives were identified:

1. To investigate the degree of stakeholder unity at each urban destination.
2. To examine the relationship between destination stakeholder unity and the quality of destination experience.
3. To examine the relationship between destination stakeholder unity and destination brand development.

1.5 <u>Research Contributions</u>

In a tourist destination both public and private sector stakeholders are akin to its organisational membership and therefore it is clear that the degree of stakeholder unity can either facilitate or impede the creation of a successful brand identity (Jones, 2005). This dissertation will combine a range of academic literature and primary research findings to demonstrate that success in both the creation of destination experiences and destination brand development is contingent on strong stakeholder unity.

This study contributes significantly to both the academic and industrial domains. Academically the importance of greater synergies across the areas of destination branding, destination experience management and stakeholder theory will be developed

further by enhancing Niininen, Hosany, Ekinci and Airey's (2007) model of building a place brand while adapting Preble's (2005) stakeholder management process from that of an organisation to that of a tourism destination. The potential relevance to industry includes the identification of pre-requisites for success in destination experience branding and the study will provide recommendations that will contribute to improved cohesiveness in stakeholder management and unity. This will be of benefit to destination management organisations, tourism authorities, government bodies, county based tourism learning networks and all destination stakeholders, public, private, host community and visitors alike.

1.6 <u>Methodological Approach</u>

This dissertation takes the form of a comparative case study of two urban tourism destinations; Kilkenny city and Waterford city. Qualitative and quantitative research methodologies are employed. The dissertation details the levels of stakeholder unity, differentiation, brand evidence and tourist evaluations of both destinations drawing from multiple sources of evidence. Secondary and primary research was used to gather and triangulate the data. This was achieved by reviewing existing literature from texts books, academic journals, organisation reports, documents, qualitative interviews and questionnaires. This research was conducted in accordance with established methodological guidelines and every effort was made to ensure its validity and reliability.

1.7 <u>Research Assumption</u>

Kolter *et al.* (1996) identify two types of destination; macro and micro. Macro destinations refer to countries while micro destinations represent destinations within a destination such as regions, cities, towns and visitor sites within a particular country. For the purpose of this research Kilkenny and Waterford are micro tourism destinations as distinct from the macro destination of Ireland. Both destinations are assumed to have assembled freely, that is they are made up of a mixture of stakeholders with a broad

array of service offerings. A similar assumption was adopted by Niininen *et al.* (2007) in building a place brand where they investigated the case of Surrey Hills in the South-East of the United Kingdom under the assumption of a micro regional destination and a destination consisting of multiple stakeholder groups offering a variety of products and services.

1.8 <u>Outline of Dissertation Chapters</u>

Chapter One

This chapter presents a background and overview to the study. The research rationale, research aims and objectives, anticipated research contributions, methodological approach and outline structure of the study and a summary of the chapters are presented.

Chapter Two

The literature on managing tourism destinations and experiences is examined. In this chapter the different groups that make up destination stakeholders are identified and the main destination management activities are discussed. The vital role that effective destination management plays at different stages within its life cycle is outlined. The nature, dimensions, qualities and characteristics that differentiate an experience from a service are identified and explained. The importance of effectively and efficiently creating awareness and promoting tourism experiences as a brand for potential tourists is discussed. The chapter concludes with an outline of the challenges facing experience management at destinations.

Chapter Three

This chapter presents literature on destination branding and discusses the role of destination brands, distinguishing between the different modes of branding and aims to provide a better understanding of the process associated with building a destination brand. Future trends are highlighted and key challenges facing destination managers when trying to develop a successful destination brand are brought to light.

Chapter Four

This chapter introduces the concept of stakeholder theory and applies the theory from an organisation context to one of a tourism destination. Various stakeholder groups are identified and their roles and contributions are highlighted. The destination stakeholder management process is outlined and its various stages are described. The chapter concludes with the development of a number of propositions bringing together the three broad areas of destination experience management, destination branding, and stakeholder theory, highlighting the common themes that exist in the quest for attaining a successful destination experience brand.

Chapter Five

The philosophical stance and methodology of the research dissertation are discussed. A review of the philosophy paradigms in order to guide the most appropriate methodologies for the study was undertaken. A subjective position was adopted and a case study approach was deemed most suitable to achieve the stated objectives. Evidence was gathered from a review of secondary literature sources, documentary evidence, qualitative interviews and questionnaires; all of which contributed to the formation of a comparative case study. The reliability and validity of the sources of evidence as well as the triangulation of evidence is discussed. The chapter concludes with a detailed description of the case study process, discussing the sampling design, control factors, pilot study, on-site data collection, the preparation of data and forms of data analysis.

Chapters Six and Seven

Chapters six and seven present the researcher's findings of the stakeholder interviews and the tourist questionnaires. Chapter six details the findings from the stakeholder interviews, while chapter seven details the findings of the tourist questionnaire. In chapter six an overview of the destinations is presented, along with a profile of the various stakeholder participants. The findings of each destination in relation to the interviews are presented independently into the areas of levels of destination stakeholder unity, levels of destination differentiation and levels of brand evidence. Chapter seven

provides a brief description of the demographic profile of the questionnaire respondents and details their perceptions under various categories such as: destination leisure activities available for various age groups, quality of destination leisure amenities, quality of destination experience, destination satisfaction and the likelihood of revisiting the destination.

Chapter Eight

This chapter presents a discussion of the research findings in relation to the literature review and the research propositions. The discussion is divided into five dimensions: levels of stakeholder unity, levels of destination differentiation, levels of brand evidence, tourist destination evaluation, and testing the research propositions. Using these dimensions the stakeholder interview findings are compared with the tourist questionnaire findings. Speculative explanations are offered for the most pertinent findings, together with the resultant managerial implications.

Chapter Nine

The final chapter outlines the limitations of the study while presenting the overall recommendations resulting from the present findings, as well as offering suggested future research opportunities.

Chapter Two

Managing Destination Experiences

2.1 <u>Introduction</u>

In today's competitive environment tourists demand an ever increasing variety of tourism experiences, experiences which have significance beyond their functional value (Sharpley, 2005). Tourism destinations are facing tough challenges and circumstances are only set to get more demanding (Chen and Gursoy, 2001). The concept of loyalty is becoming more and more of an issue in the service sector, including the area of tourism (Rahman, 2006). Loyalty towards a tourist destination relies on tourists attaining a quality relationship with that destination in order for them to visit enthusiastically (Huang and Chiu, 2006). ITIC (2006) recognise Ireland as having the resources to provide the essential ingredients for travel experiences; unspoilt rural areas, rugged shorelines, a rich cultural heritage and friendly people. However, they suggest that little appears to jump out as being particularly new or innovative for tourists seeking customised and engaging experiences. Failte Ireland (2007) identifies Ireland as a destination that needs to better combine its tourism resources to allow for more holistic visitor experiences which are more learning, rewarding, enriching and adventurous orientated. Furthermore if these experiences are to be achieved, the tourism destination needs to be managed effectively.

Tourism destination management requires collaborative management across both operational and strategic levels. Destination management takes into consideration all components of management incorporating people, financial, strategic, market and product aspects. Destination stakeholders must identify where their destination is positioned within its life cycle and thus develop appropriate strategies and approaches that address loyalty factors such as experience (Haung and Chiu, 2006). Pine and Gilmore (1999) hypothesised that developing experiences is the most suitable basis for

future growth. Experiences create added value by engaging and connecting with tourists in a memorable way (Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons, 2004), and progress the economic value of a destination's market proposition via differentiation (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). Morgan (2003:87) stated that *"to really achieve destination branding, marketers must be in the business of delivering impactful experiences, not merely constructing a clever brand identity on paper with slick slogans and logos"*. Customer Experience Tourism offers tourists a bonding experience in relation to a destination (Mitchell and Orwig, 2002), and to form tourism as an experience, effective destination management must be in place. Chen *et al.* (2001) contend that the experience benefits are more likely to be positive and satisfy the needs of the tourist if outputs are managed and delivered effectively. For this to be achieved the process of creating differentiated customer experiences needs to change from that of a *"highly intuitive art form"* into a *"management discipline"* (Carbone and Haeckel, 1994:9). This chapter identifies the different partners involved in tourism destination management. If a tourism destination is to include additional experience components that enable it to differentiate itself from simply a destination offering products and services to that of a destination experience, destination stakeholder management activities and strategies need to be implemented.

2.2 Destination Management and Destination Management Activities

As stated above if tourists are to gain a positive experience and want to return, effective management must be exercised at the destination. Indeed Tourism Destination Management involves the coordination of economic, social and geographical elements (Carlsen, 1999). Essentially the destination is managed so that the needs of its sectors are balanced i.e. place, visitors, host community and stakeholders (Page, 2007). Tourist destinations comprise of an active public and private sector (Davidson, 1997), made up of primary and secondary stakeholders. A close working relationship between these sectors is fundamental to balance the needs of both sectors and establish a successful destination brand (Elliott, 1997; Failte Ireland, 2007).

It is the responsibility of the various stakeholders to coordinate, plan and promote the destination (Page *et al.*, 2006), in an attempt to attract a range of target markets to the destination. Upon arrival there is great anticipation and desire for that target market to return and relive their experience (Voss, 2004).

As seen in Figure 2.1, destination management operates on both a macro and micro level and integration across these levels is critical if a destination is to function effectively (Page *et al.*, 2006; ITIC, 2006). The macro dimension comprises mainly of public sector activity and is more strategically focused, examining areas in relation to destinations policy, planning and development (ITIC, 2006). Page *et al.* (2006) view the role of the public sector in a destination as having to communicate welfare, enhance visitor satisfaction, provide environmental and cultural protection and increase economic benefits. The micro dimension represents chiefly the private sector (ITIC, 2006; Page *et al.*, 2006) and is more operational, carrying out the day to day duties and responsibilities in an effort to achieve the aims and objectives contained in the destinations policy, planning and development strategies (Page *et al.*, 2006). The main duties and responsibilities carried out by the private sector in relation to destination management are in the areas of accommodation, transport, entertainment, information technology, labour supply and innovation (ITIC, 2006), wherein they manage capacity, standards, scheduling and inventory control (Ritchie, 2003; Page *et al.*, 2006).

Figure 2.1 Sectors Involved in Destination Management Activities
Source: Adapted from ITIC (2006)

The public and private stakeholder sectors both contribute to the management of a tourism destination. Activities associated with destination management include, marketing management, organisation and implementation of duties, human resource management and environmental management (Dwyer and Chulwon, 2003; Ritchie, 2003; Page *et al.*, 2006).

Marketing Management

Marketing management at a destination is focused on promoting the destination in its entirety to enhance its overall appeal. Lewis, Chamber and Chacko (1995) further developed the view of marketing management whereby the collection, analyses and dissemination of market research data is amalgamated and used to establish target markets. Lewis *et al.* (1995) regarded these further developments as helping organise, coordinate and support the private sector in identifying key characteristics of travel markets, travel volume and associated spending. Hassan (2000) supports this claim, stating that *"destinations are winning competitive battles by careful analysis and response to the core values and needs of the segmented market place"*. Pyo (2005) regarded the implementation of destination knowledge management as an imperative aid to destination marketing management as it helps to establish a knowledge mapping structure of the needs and preferences of potential visitors to a destination. Consequently the destination is better positioned to meet their needs and wants.

Organisation and Implementation of Duties

Organisation is a vital destination management activity and is a key success factor of competitiveness. Organisation is centred on four aspects, namely coordination, information dissemination, performance monitoring and evaluation. Organisation serves as a coordinating tool for both public and private sectors and helps to promote an understanding and awareness of management, strengthening stakeholder attitudes, values and actions towards sustainable

development (Dwyer and Chulwon, 2003). Effective use of information technology can provide destination stakeholders with the information required on customer needs and wants, which can be used when marketing the destination (Berthon, Hulbert and Pitt, 1999). Two categories of information are important. Internal information enables a greater ability to manage the performance of the products and services at the destination, while external information facilitates a destination to adapt to changing markets through its market strategy. Such information can enhance destination stakeholders' ability to forecast demand and aid long term sustainability.

Human Resource Management

Human resource management plays a key role in destination management, given that people are the prominent frontline service providers in the tourism industry (Davidson, 2001). Careful management is needed to impress on staff, and the wider general public, the importance of quality interaction with tourists (Failte Ireland, 2003). Dwyer and Chulwon*,* (2003) identified that employees constitute the *'organisational brain'* within organisations therefore the same application can be applied to a destination where all the stakeholders make up the *'destination brain'*. Organisational knowledge can play a central role in sustaining competitive superiority and ongoing training and development is seen as imperative in achieving organisational knowledge (Narasimbha, 2000). Competent individuals who are well rounded and reassured are creative and innovative and able to utilise a diversity of information sources and division of tasks better.

Environmental Management

Murphy, Pritchard and Smith (2000) identified the environment as a key predictor of destination quality and of critical importance viewing it in terms of climate, scenery, ambience and friendliness. Mihalic (2000) claims destination

attractiveness and its competitiveness can be increased by correct and appropriate management of environmental quality. Wade-Benzoni (1999) contends that achieving sustainable tourism activity requires a shift in management thinking from a *'Compliance'* or *'Reactive'* environmental stance to a more active *'Compliance Plus'* strategy whereby the environment is placed high on the business agenda and environmental concerns are integrated into the destinations culture.

As stated, competition between tourism destinations is intensifying; destinations are therefore constantly endeavouring to augment their destination to add value. Destination management incorporates many activities as outlined above and these activities must be carried out simultaneously. The various sectors, both public and private, must work together and function as one if their needs are to be balanced and lead to more effective destination management performance. Both sectors need to work together and act as representatives of the destination, investigators of issues and problems, negotiators to ensure destination resources are organised effectively, evaluators who examine and control aspects of destination activities and supervisors who direct and delegate responsibilities (Page, 2007). This is vital as destinations can not be sampled prior to consumption. Consequently effective destination management activities become even more vital to a destination's success.

2.3 Destination Management and Destination Life Cycle

Destination managers need to identify exactly where their destination lies within its life cycle as the position of the destination will affect and dictate the level and degree of intensity required in utilising destination management practices and activities (Cooper *et al.*, 1998). Establishing the destination's position is crucial, as by doing so there is further potential to exploit benefits giving destination managers a greater ability to identify and understand the markets in which their destination evolves, thus allowing them to develop the most appropriate operational and strategic approaches. The theoretical framework destination managers can use to see how favourably their

destination is performing, and the intensity of action required in their activities, is the Butler Sequence S- Shape model (Butler, 1980).

Figure 2.2 Destination Life Cycle: Butler S-Shape Model
 Source: Butler (1980)
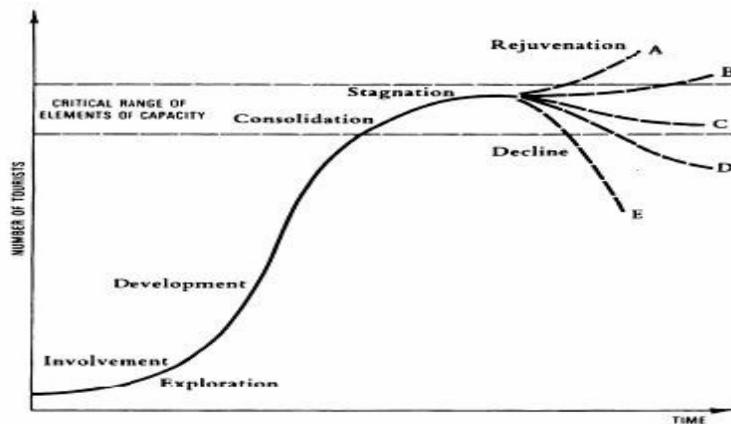
Figure 2.2 depicts this model with the shape of the curve dependent on such factors as the destinations rate of development, access, government policy, market trends and other competing destinations. In Butler's model a destination is said to go through six stages within its life cycle. They include: exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation and decline or rejuvenation (Cooper *et al.*, 1998; Kelly and Nankervis, 2001). Ireland is both a destination and a cluster of destinations, all of which are at different life-cycle stages and therefore have their own issues and difficulties and will require planned and tailored management strategies and approaches if tourism sustainability is to be maintained. The following section details the levels of tourism activity at the various stages and identifies a variety of strategies and approaches that can be implemented to ensure effective destination experience management and tourism sustainability.

- At the Exploration Stage a destination remains unchanged by tourism. It is characterised by small numbers of visitors and natural attractions are the main pull factors. The host community play a large part in the involvement stage given

they decide whether to encourage tourism and to what scale. Carrying capacity limits are identified and sustainable principles are introduced. Identifying carrying capacity limits is a management decision, in which destination managers need to decide at what point the quality of experience will start to decline and become unacceptable from excess visitor numbers (Cooper *et al.*, 1998).

- The <u>Development Stage</u> is decisive as the nature and quality of a destination may decline at this point if it is not managed effectively. This is due to the large number of tourists attracted to a destination. Therefore various controls need to be implemented. Managing the control of tourists is seen as a major contributor towards effective destination management and tourist satisfaction (Laws, 1995). Three methods of management are identified, namely through community objectives, more responsible tourist behaviour and strategies for minimising visitor impacts. Community objectives include the provision of incentives to encourage local ownership of tourist facilities, helping to retain locally the economic benefits generated through tourism's multiplier effect. Residents must be guided and trained to work in tourism at all levels, and local residents must be educated about tourism concepts, issues and benefits. Authenticity of the destination must be maintained while obtaining a balance with spontaneity. More responsible tourist behaviour is needed. Tourists must be informed in greater detail of local customs, environment and ecology. Tourists who respect local traditions and cultures need to be targeted and encouraged to visit, as set out in the destination's activities (Laws, 1995).

- The <u>Consolidation Stage</u> is at the latter part of the cycle. By this stage the destination is well recognised and identifiable and although effective destination management is crucial throughout every stage of its life cycle, it is critical at this stage. Destination stakeholders need to apply strategies and techniques such as resource stewardship and visitor management if efficient management and control of the destination is to be maintained and sustainability accomplished.

Resource stewardship is a relatively new concept in destination management (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003), and concentrates on the management of the basic resources to which tourism ultimately depends. Ritchie *et al.* (2003) identifies these resources as the physical and human resource base. Visitor management although similar to that of resource stewardship in that they both share the same goal of contributing to a destinations success is more operational. Visitor management involves developing and implementing rules and regulations at a destination in an attempt to eliminate improper use and sustain the value of the resource (Kuo, 2002).

- During the Stagnation stage tourist numbers have hit there highest point and a destination is beginning to show signs of strain. Competition is severe and the destination often has succumbed to environmental, social and economic problems if effective destination management has not been implemented (Cooper *et al.*, 1998). Once a destination has reached this stage it has but two options. It can either go into decline where visitors are lost or it can attempt to rejuvenate itself by seeking new markets, repositioning itself and finding new businesses and facilities (Cooper *et al.*, 1998)

Determining where a destination lies within its life-cycle is of critical importance as it aids in identifying the level and type of management required. The life-cycle of a destination provides a framework for understanding how destinations and their markets evolve. The advantage of segmenting a destination's life into various stages is that it enables the stakeholders to possess a greater capability to analyse the context of their destination. This analysis helps to identify the destination's current situation in relation to community values, the destination's tourism product, tourism growth, opportunities and positioning (Cooper *et al.,* 1998). Monitoring the destination also becomes less arduous as more explicit standards are ascertained, thus identifying more stringently the current position of a destination in comparison to its most favourable situation. By identifying where a destination lies within its life-cycle, stakeholder management becomes more efficient as destination management issues become more detailed,

focused and specific, thereby helping identify problematic situations in relation to economic, social and environmental areas more rapidly (Cooper *et al.,* 1998).

2.4 <u>Managing Destination Experience: A Multi Strategy Approach</u>

Due to the complexity and numerous stages of a tourist destination life-cycle; it is evident that if experience benefits are to be realised and exploited to their full potential, effective destination management between multiple sectors is fundamental. Cohesiveness and unity among stakeholders is central to achieving quality tourist experiences. Stakeholder unity is achieved through shared collaboration, coordination and communication, improved knowledge sharing, capabilities and pooling of resources, all of which provide the ability to deliver more holistic tourist experiences. Therefore, destination management activities, the alignment of expectations, and search for cohesiveness will not succeed if carried out in isolation; they all need to be managed collectively through multi stakeholder alliances and affiliations (Morgan, Pritchard and Piggott, 2003; Hoffmann, 2007). It is for this reason Formica and Uysal (2006) in agreement with Carlsen (1999), stated that an open integrative systems approach is best when dealing with destination management. This approach is deemed most appropriate due to the interdependence between sectors while helping to accommodate social and environmental processes, economic factors as well aiding decision making in relation to the destination activities (Carlsen, 1999; Formica and Uysal 2006). Font and Ahjem (1999) contend that a blend of both market led and supply oriented strategies is required when implementing destination management activities. Market led strategies are consumer driven, monitoring changes in motivation and satisfaction while supply orientated strategies involve making the most of existing resources (Font and Ahjem, 1999).

Ansoff (1965) and Wernerfelt and Karnani (1987) identify three strategies that act as enablers to both market led and supply orientated activities when attempting to cope with complex changing environments such as tourist destinations. These strategies include reactively *'adapting'* to the changing environment, actively *'shaping'*

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environmental development and finally *'stabilising'* the environment in order to elude change (Hoffman, 2007). Collectively these three strategies incorporate the exploration and exploitation of resources. Both *'adapting'* and *'shaping'* strategies involve exploration (March, 1991) because of their strategic intent to develop new resources and capabilities and explore new development opportunities and therefore can be aligned more to customer led strategies. *'Stabilising'* strategies involve exploitation of existing resources and protecting competitive advantage and therefore can be aligned to supply orientated strategies (March, 1991).

A systems approach is most appropriate for the implementation of these strategies as it helps form multiple alliances all assisting in the combination of strategies that enable destination managers to overcome trade-offs between exploration and exploitation (Hoffman, 2007). These strategies allow managers to better respond to changes, interact with the environment, and understand the pressures associated with tourism development (Carlsen, 1999). By incorporating both strategic perspectives, there is greater scope for destinations to provide tourists with more meaningful stays as the chance of delivering a more differentiated experience is increased.

2.5 <u>The Nature of Destination Experiences</u>

Carbone and Haeckel (1994:9) regard experiences as the *"take away impression"* that tourists get; shaped by their various encounters at a destination constructed from their perceptions after combining all their sensory information. Experiences are seen as distinct economic offerings, not amorphous structures but as tangible an offering as any other product or service (Carbone and Haeckel 1994; Pine and Gilmore, 1998). Experiences are a complex combination of objective but principally subjective factors that shape peoples feelings and attitudes (Page and Connell, 2006). Uriely (2005) regards experience as different to the customs of everyday life and the pursuit of strangeness and novelty. According to Gnoth (2002) experiences occur on three levels, namely functional, experiential and symbolic. The functional aspect relates to the core characteristics of the product or service, experiential aspects relate to the sensual aspects

while the symbolic aspect relates to what it means to the tourist. Gnoth (2002) posits that the functional aspect is straightforward to imitate by competitors, but both the experiential and symbolic aspects offer openings for diversification and uniqueness.

2.5.1 <u>Experience Realms</u>

The nature of experiences is that they are systemic processes (Carbone *et al.*, 1994) which are engaging, connecting, intense, intimate (Ryan, 1997; Gupta and Vajic, 2000) staged, personal, memorable and multi attributive in quality and outcome (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). Experiences have their own distinct qualities and characteristics and can be considered on two dimensions, firstly customer participation and secondly connection or environmental relationship (Pine *et al.*, 1998). Both dimensions have varying scales; customer participation varies from passive participation where the person involved does not affect the performance but observes and listens to active participation where the person involved plays a key role in the performance. The connection or environmental dimension brings together the customer with the event or performance and ranges from absorption where the customer is on the peripheral, to immersion where the customer is actively involved. Experiences can be further sorted into four categories or realms according to where they fall along the scale of the two dimensions. As shown in Figure 2.3, these experience realms include entertainment, educational, escapist and esthetic. The entertainment experience realm goes along the configuration of passive participation and absorption while the educational experience realm involves more active participation but tends to be more outside rather than immersed. The escapist experience realm is a blend of both the entertainment and educational realms and has greater involvement, while within the esthetic experience realm customers are involved but have little or no effect on the surrounding environment.

Figure 2.3 Realms of Experience
Source: Pine and Gilmore (1998)
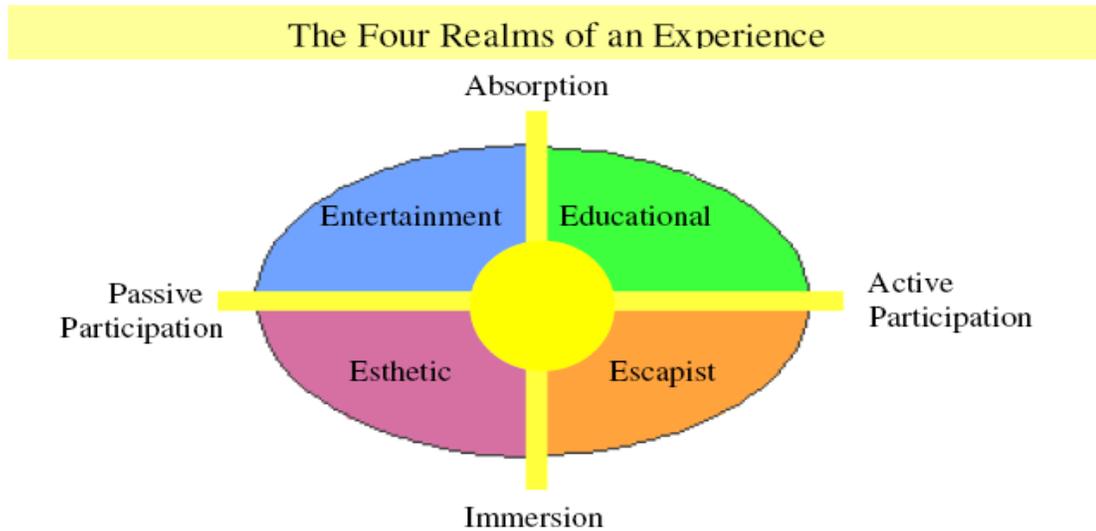
The most valuable experiences are those that include aspects of all four experience realms. This is, however, difficult to achieve. Therefore, it is imperative that experience providers focus on identifying which specific experience they wish to offer and how they will come to best define, differentiate and deliver that experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1998).

2.5.2 Experience Components

The quest to create and deliver superlative and sought after experiences at a tourist destination makes effective experience design critical. Product and service components alone are no longer enough; experience components require more to make them truly authentic and innovative. Sharpley (2005) identifies authenticity as something traditional, original, genuine, real and unique, produced or enacted by local people according to custom or tradition. In tourism, authenticity is used to distinguish between specialist or niche market tourism products and mass tourism products and this is particularly important in Ireland. Innovation is an ongoing process that translates ideas into values for the customer and involves *"discovering what already exists, what's right*

in front of you, but seeing and thinking differently" (Enz, 2007). Service components include people, physical environment, process, perception, people and service benefits (Lovelock and Wright, 1999). Experience components comprise of services with the addition of two extra components, namely emotional theme and participation activities (Fynes and Lally, 2008). Emotional theme involves developing well defined themes that consider customer's emotions, such as thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Participation in activities will allow customers to engage all their senses and enable them to use the environment in a way that best suits them, thereby promoting interaction and enabling the tourists to absorb the experience and develop positive connections. These components contribute to a better understanding of the nature of experiences, and in order for these experiences to reach full potential and result in a competitive advantage, they must be unique and advance the value offered by being aligned not only with existing tourist needs and wants but with hidden or previously unimagined needs and wants (Esgate, 2002).

Poulsson and Kale (2004) contend experiences will be better understood and their creation made easier if greater and more in-depth consideration is given both to the customer and experience provider. On the customer side, consideration needs to be given to the antecedent conditions they bring to the experience and their resultant feelings and sensations during the experience encounter. On the experience provider side, the tools and practices that are used by the experience provider to create those feelings and sensations need to be examined. This will help experience providers offer meaningful and relevant experiences (Poulsson and Kale, 2004). These feelings and sensations may include personal relevance, novelty, surprise, learning and engagement and the greater the blend of these feelings and sensations the more powerful the experience will be (Poulsson and Kale, 2004). Personal relevance is directed to a person's internal state of excitement, and their awareness to connect in a specific experience. Personal relevance has a direct effect on a person's enthusiasm with the experience and influences their level of involvement (Poulsson and Kale, 2004). Novelty refers to something that is new and different, a change in circumstances from that of a past experience, while surprises include outcomes that are unexpected, and excite the

customers. Learning is developed through motivation, clues, responses and reinforcement. Motivation acts as a vehicle for learning; clues provide direction, responses sum up reaction to the clues while reinforcement strengthens the chance of certain responses happening again (Poulsson and Kale, 2004). Merely amusing and exciting customers is no longer sufficient; experience providers need to strive to engage their target markets by exciting them and setting high standards and continuous value delivery (Poulsson *et al.*, 2004; Valencia *et al.*, 2005).

2.5.3 <u>Experience Characteristics</u>

Gupta and Mirjana (2000) identify three main characteristics and differentiating factors that help experiences add value, reach their full potential and aid in achieving a competitive advantage. These are: (1) the destination's influence over the customer's use of the environment, (2) customer participation and (3) social interaction. Butler and Hinch (1996) stated that the contact of many tourists to indigenous cultures is limited and is often subject to inauthentic representations. Gupta and Mirjana (2000) suggest that the active role tourists play in creating their own environment distinguishes an experience from both a product and a service. Therefore, experience providers need to create experience environments that are facilitated by a detailed understanding of the nature of all activities that engage a customer during their interaction with a product or service. In the present study, the destination stakeholders are the experience providers. The design of the destination environment also requires enough flexibility so that tourists who have different knowledge structures and preferences can create their own unique interpretation of the destination environment during their interaction and therefore, their own unique destination experiences (Gupta and Mirjana, 2000).

The presence of the tourist is often seen as a source of variation from established standards (Gupta and Mirjana, 2000), due to the high levels of contact within service operations (Stamatis, 1996). This view leads to the conclusion that tourist activity should be limited to standardised transactions and to achieve efficiencies in routine processing. In this sense tourists are seen as passive recipients. This passive role, however, can lead

to a source of frustration tourists due to the lack of control they have, and they feel alienated. Therefore, successful experience providers (the destination stakeholders) must realise the importance of active tourist participation in creating a unique memorable experience. This interaction allows tourists to use the environment in a way that suits themselves best, thus enhancing their experiences (Gupta and Mirjana, 2000). Interaction is an essential part of the experience process, as it allows tourists construct their own meanings of the context and shape their preferences. It can enhance the sense of belonging and help to create a sense of being a group member. Personal relationships that develop through interaction with both experience providers (destination stakeholders) and tourists make the experience unique for the customer. This can form a source of relationship marketing, aiding the development of emotional attachments forming retention, and thus loyalty (Gupta and Mirjana, 2000). The development of these emotional attachments is further aided by experience clues and Carbone and Haeckel (1994) regarded these clues as helping to enhance tourist attitudes and feelings. These clues can be performance and context based and can be further divided into functional and emotional aspects.

Functional aspects include such factors as reliability and competence, while emotional aspects are segmented into mechanic and humanic factors. Mechanic factors are centred on senses and include such things as physical objects and surroundings, while humanic factors are centred on people and include such things as behaviour and appearance. Each clue carries a suggestive message for the customer, and it is the composition of all these clues that create the total experience (Ogilvy, 2002). Experiences help create value dimensions towards the product or service in that they help form emotional bonds and reactions, a willingness to interact and promote dialogue. Such value dimensions include hedonics, peace of mind, involvement and recognition. The hedonics dimension reflects the desire of the tourist to engage in something they love, having their imaginations stirred and thrilled by the experience. Characteristics of the hedonic dimension include having fun, being memorable, doing something new or different, being challenged in some way and a feeling of escape. Peace of mind involves physical and psychological aspects and again relates back to Chen and Gursoy's (2001) prominent tourist

preferences of safety and comfort. Personal security, privacy and relaxation rank high among tourist priorities. The involvement dimension relates to customer participation, involving educating and informing the customer, making them more receptive, giving them an element of choice and allowing them greater levels of control over their outcomes to enhance their experience. The recognition dimension involves making the consumer feel important and imparting them with the feeling they are being taken seriously and are valued. It is important for destinations to create and incorporate all these value dimensions as they help contribute to positive experiences, which thereby make customers feel closer to the product or service, helping to develop lasting relationships and loyalty, as mentioned above.

Voss (2004) contends that tourist experience is increasingly being seen as a real and sustainable differentiator. Tourists who become close to a product, service and thus experience are expected to remain longer, purchase larger amounts, more frequently, show more willingness to pay premiums and create positive word of mouth evaluation (Valencia *et al.*, 2005). This is important as tourists nowadays are looking for experiences that complement their lifestyles and brands that reflect their aspirations. Ireland's largest overseas target market at 50-55% is sightseers and culture seekers (Failte Ireland, 2007); therefore Ireland, as a tourist destination, must seek to take advantage of this and build upon its product and service portfolio, and encourage and promote greater tourist participation and interaction. There is greater scope for improved participation and social interaction in the areas classified as 'soft adventure'. Combining themes and resources such as hidden Ireland, gastronomy, urban culture, wellness, self improvement, arts and crafts, genealogy, rural culture and soft adventure makes for more enriched experiences. The Southeast region of Ireland for example with its historic cites has the opportunity to amalgamate themes such as heritage based tourism experiences with urban culture and gastronomy. Between 2000 – 2005 tourists taking part in soft adventure themed tourism has been static or in some cases has declined (Failte Ireland, 2007); therefore the need to refresh, bring together, promote and communicate these themes and resources more effectively is crucial, because, when delivered properly, the

combination of location and experience can be truly differentiated and compelling for visitors.

2.6 <u>Destination Experience Management</u>

The competitive position of tourist destinations is dependent on the ability of destination stakeholders to effectively design and manage world class experiences that will, at minimum, satisfy tourists' needs, but with the hope of exceeding them. Therefore, the destination stakeholder practices require activity, entrepreneurship, creativity and interactive skills. Cooperation between stakeholders needs to be multi-sectoral and characterised by respect for difference and open learning from each other. Destination stakeholders will need to use foresight, and be agile and engaged in continuous renewal. Destination experience management can help interlink different themes and resources and has become a new phenomenon in marketing, enabling destination stakeholders to use judgements and apply human skills to achieve competitive advantage and tourist loyalty. Conversely, if an experience is mismanaged or unmanaged, it is not uncommon for negative, unintended, clues to cancel out even the most high-impact positive ones.

What differentiates destination experience management from destination management is the stakeholder's ability to combine activities, to add value, to clearly identify their target markets and market segments and have an in-depth knowledge of their needs, wants, attitudes and preferences. This enables destination stakeholders to be more specific and focused in their offering, enabling them to tailor and customise their products and services to best fit their markets, thus making their experience more meaningful. Destination experience management affords tourists a greater sense of ownership of the destination's resources and enhances a greater mix of passive and participative activities, offering them greater opportunities to discover the destination. It is for this reason that destinations which focus on the idea of experiences need all their stakeholders to be absolutely passionate about the idea. Valencia and Westberg (2005), in agreement with Carbone and Haeckel (1994), contend that experiences need to be a principal business model in industries such as leisure and tourism, and can not afford to

be relegated to lower management responsibilities. Experiences are difficult to articulate; therefore, tourist destinations need sustainable tourism development, implemented by destination stakeholders with high-quality skills. Functional knowledge is also required and destination stakeholders should ideally possess a number of competencies. Such competencies include a background in dealing with people, operations, project management, change management, leadership, teambuilding, empowerment, problem solving, decision making and marketing and design (Valencia *et al.*, 2005; Peters, 1993).

Voss (2004) contends that a chief experience officer should therefore be in place if the concept of experience is to be implemented to its full potential. The responsibility of the chief experience officer would be to look after the experience portfolio within the destination, facilitating and connecting functional areas such as operations, marketing and human resources bringing all the expertise together ensuring they are all aligned with the brand. The role of the chief experience officer would also include driving the experience cycle, setting objectives, developing initiatives, overseeing operations, designing activities, exploiting innovative opportunities and measuring experience results and impacts (Voss, 2004). Destination stakeholders need to see the development and management of experiences as a way to establish tourist loyalty while attempting to mould the tourist as an advocate of the experience. Destination stakeholders, as experience providers must be continuously educated linking their knowledge, skills and practices to increase performance and profitability. People working in tourist industry must be seen as valuable assets and their contribution as highly important. Tourism needs the right people with the right skills in order to provide and deliver premium products, services and experiences with the highest quality and standards (Failte Ireland, 2007). This is important as tourists have become an everyday target for marketing communications and many of the marketing techniques employed are becoming invasive and verbose (Valencia *et al.*, 2005). Tourists are looking for products, services, destinations and experiences they can relate with, which make them feel closer and evoke their trust. Developing and establishing a definite brand created from positive experiences is the key.

2.7 Destination Experience Management Challenges

Developing experiences and delivering continuous high standards and value delivery at destinations is increasingly demanding as many challenges are faced. Such challenges include budget constraints, range and diversity of products and services, legislation and restrictions, lack of structured organisation and difficulties in achieving continuity between the various stakeholders (Pike, 2005). The concept of experience struggles against traditional marketing tools; its cost effectiveness is difficult to determine and destinations and companies are uninterested in embracing new unfamiliar tools like experience (Valencia and Westberg 2005). The cross-functional nature of developing experiences is also complex, due to the variety of tasks that must be linked together. A further constraint is a lack of organisation while the task of organising is usually mixed up within other functions with no obvious principle assigned leader. Due to the many and diverse destination stakeholders, continuity is not easy to achieve and activities are not easy to bring about, making communication and connection between functional areas difficult to standardise (Blain *et al.*, 2005; Pike, 2005; Park and Petrick, 2006).

Allocated budgets in relation to the area of experience is small because the area of experience is seen as a major investment and the benefits of experience are challenging to quantify and prove their value (Valencia *et al.*, 2005). Development of experiences is seen as a long term strategic exercise carried out over a sustained period of time, thus making experiences more difficult to justify as destinations and companies look for more rapid tactical short term results. The key to justifying the development of experiences over a long time frame is to prove its worth and value. A number of ways by proving an experience's worth and value is by measuring its effectiveness, marketing effectiveness, and brand impact. Experience effectiveness can be measured on a number of dimensions such as quality of individual experiences, customer feedback and customer satisfaction, all of which help to improve and develop experiences. Marketing effectiveness involves measuring coverage, impact and response, while brand impact uses the experience to build and support the brand, strengthening pre and post experience encounters. As the concept of experience is a new phenomenon there are few

professionals, publications, definitions, required skills, metrics and best practices identified thus leading to a lack of understanding and confusion about its scope and purpose (Valencia and Westberg, 2005). There is a lack of organisational structure for experience, therefore its value is not properly understood and consequently it is not promoted effectively and to its full potential.

2.8 <u>Conclusion</u>

An important focus of the present study centres on the creation of tourist experiences, and the influence these experiences can have on destination brand development. As noted tourists are becoming more discerning and demanding, looking for a variety of different experiences at destinations. Therefore, developing and establishing a definite destination brand created from positive tourist experiences is vital. Experiences can represent the next step in the evolution of a destination as products and services are becoming increasingly commoditised. Experiences must have a distinctive, authentic and differentiating factor creating an added value formed by taking a holistic approach of the surrounding environment. Positive experiences can make tourists feel closer to the destinations thereby helping to develop relationships and form an emotional attachment. This emotional attachment is a vital contributor to achieving destination brand recognition and brand recognition is seen as the best form of advertising (Keller, 2003). Keller (2003) claims brand recognition is created by establishing a behavioural loyalty and attitudinal attachment, formed through extensive in-depth analysis of the tourist, trying to understand their mind set and how best to appeal to them. Tourists increasingly want to be entertained and spend accordingly. This ideal has increased the importance of brand experience (Valencia and Westberg, 2005). Brand recognition has the force to push Ireland to the forefront of tourists' options when they are choosing between alternative holiday destinations (ITIC, 2006), and being innovative and pro active in their approach are key ingredients (Smith and Wheeler, 2002). This in turn has put an added pressure on destination stakeholders to create and manage their experiences more effectively in the hope of achieving tourist loyalty. Therefore, for tourist destinations to engender tourist loyalty and position themselves to appeal to tourists self images and

lifestyles, effective destination management activities, structures and polices, as outlined above must be in place. The next chapter looks at the concept of destination branding and outlines the process for building a successful destination brand.

Chapter Three

Destination Branding

3.1 <u>Introduction</u>

Experience management as mentioned in the previous chapter, plays a vital role in developing a successful destination brand as it is the quality of experience that contributes towards shaping people's feelings and attitudes whilst offering the destination the chance of uniqueness. Experience components cultivate an emotional attachment stemming from an unforgettable positive occurrence, thereby contributing to the establishment of tourist loyalty. This close attachment between the tourist and the destination engender feelings of trust, culminating in a relationship. Conversely tourist loyalty is a vital contributor to brand recognition, which is a fundamental tenet of successful marketing. This is important, as the concept of marketing assists management determine the needs of their customers. Identifying these needs gives a competitive advantage, only, however if the value of their marketing offer, is projected into the public domain (Keller, 2003). In relation to tourism, and in particular tourist destinations, marketing is a vital contributor to the success of its development. Due to increased customer sophistication marketing tourism destinations has evolved from the idea of simply standing for or communicating an image of a place to concerning itself with attempting to sell an experience of a place by openly relating to the lifestyles of potential tourists (Hannam, 2004).

With its advancing complexity, marketing tourism has become a difficult task for destination managers to direct. Aaker (1996) believes this task can be made less demanding by applying the concept of branding as a marketing strategy, as branding is central to modern day marketing, as it combines all strategic elements into one success plan. Kotler and Gertner (2002) suggest, given that product characteristics can easily be duplicated, that brands have been considered a key tool for marketers when creating

differentiation and promising value. The development of a recognisable brand can assist managers to connect with their customers, bringing them closer to their brand offer. This chapter highlights the important role brands play as communicators and differentiators, distinguishing between the various types of brands while also detailing the process and management needed to brand tourist destinations.

3.2 Role of Brands

Brands play an important role, both pre and post experience. The role of brands pre-experience is to help provide identification, differentiation, anticipation, expectation and reassurance. By identification we mean recognition and association; by differentiation, uniqueness; by anticipation, desire; by expectation, benefits perceived, and finally by reassurance, happy things will go well. The role of brands post-experience is to help provide consolidation, tie memories together and reinforcement, cementing a coherent memory (Seaton *et al.*, 1996). Berthon, Hulbert and Pitt, (1999) stated that a product brand plays important functions for both the buyer and the seller. For the buyer it performs the function of reduction, while for the seller it performs the function of facilitation. Adapting Berthon *et al.*'s (1999) functions of a brand theory (figure 3.1) from focusing on products to tourist destinations, the buyer can characterise the tourist and the seller can represent the tourism product or service provider.

Figure 3.1 Role of a Destination Brand for the Tourist and Product/Service Provider
Source: Adapted from Berthon, Hulbert and Pitt (1999)
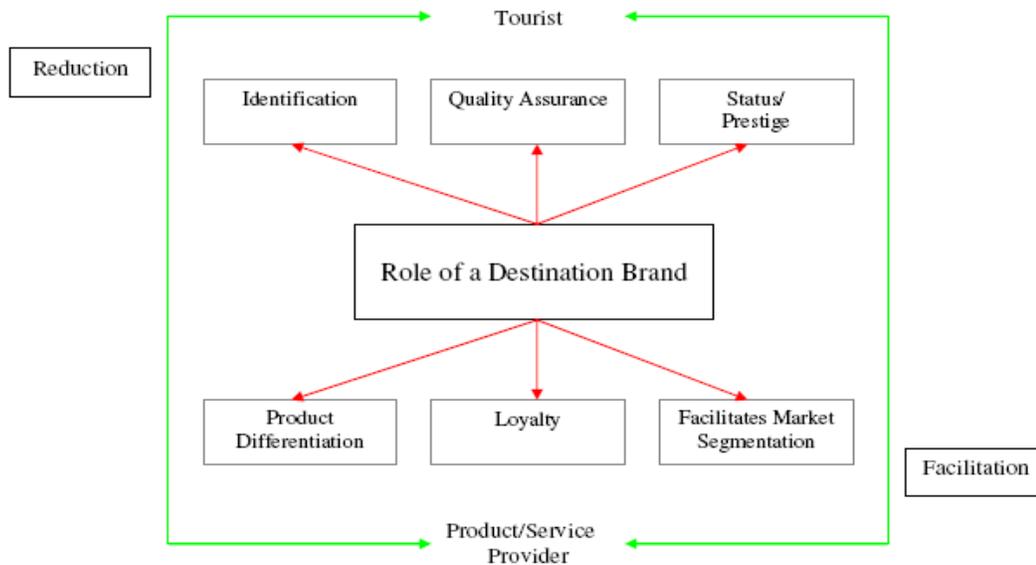
By adapting product brands to destination brands, destination brands can therefore perform the role of reduction for the tourist, in that it can aid in the identification of specific products and services and in turn reduce search costs, perceived risk and provide psychological reward. For the product/service provider's destination brands perform the role of facilitation, that is, they ease some of the tasks carried out by these providers thus facilitating repeat purchase and enhancing financial performance (Berthon *et al.*, 1999).

Brands can be identified as a name, term, sign, design, symbol, slogan or a combination of these (Kolter *et al.*, 2002; Pike, 2005). Brands are a way of building and communicating trust and reputation and their power is often attributed to their ability to differentiate themselves from similar products (Aaker, 1997; Hart and Murphy, 1998; Ritchie and Ritchie, 1998). Berthon *et al.* (1999: 64) regard brands as *"no longer static monoliths facing survival or extinction. Rather they are dynamically evolving functional patterns"*. This suggests that brands are no longer inflexible, but are consistently advancing by looking to enhance their added value and appeal. Branding is a strategic

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marketing tool (Caldwell and Freire, 1994; Seaton and Bennett, 1996) that builds on core product and service features by offering additional benefits used to appeal to a persons senses, reason, emotion and beliefs (Hankinson,2001;Kolter *et al.*, 2002). The use of branding theories to places, in particular tourism destinations is in its early stages (Pritchard and Morgan, 1998). The present competitive situation in the tourism sector has made the creation and management of a destination brand vital. Destination brands are required to create an identity, convey the promise of a memorable travel experience and promote the destinations unique selling points (Seaton *et al.*, 1996; Ritchie *et al.*, 1998; Page *et al.*, 2006). Gnoth (1998) identified three levels of destination brand attributes, namely functional, experiential and symbolic and contends the more symbolic experiences are for tourists, the more successful the brand will be in the long term. Berthon, Hulbert and Pitt (1999:53) noted that the dominant logic has been *"build a brand, and the world will beat a path to its door"*. In order to accomplish this, Mommas (2003) proposed the idea that destinations need to be shaped categorically, thematised and brought to the attention of the more mobile and less location dependent visitors so that a destinations marketing offer is maximised to its full potential.

3.3 <u>Brand Types</u>

Branding can be applied to both tangible products and intangible services. However, the nature of branding is changing from simply including products and services to the incorporation of additional fields where both products and services interact simultaneously. Such areas include tourist destinations and tourist destination experiences. Riezebos (2003) stated that the word brand probably derived from the Norse word *brandr,* referring to the branding of cattle. Symbolic branding featured prominently in the design of pub signs and shops in the United Kingdom (Hart and Murphy, 1998; Blain, Levy, and Ritchie, 2005). The real staring point for the development of modern brands and brand management was the industrial revolution. Factors such as improved transport, communication and distribution lead to improvements in mass production and increased consistency and standardisation enabling producers to persuade consumers that their products were reliable (Riezebos,

2003; Hart *et al.*, 1998).   Stamatis (1996) contends that the branding of products in relation to quality incorporates both goods and services where the majority of goods are purchased for later performance and the majority of services are purchased for immediate performance. Goods focus on the tangible attributes of the product and are under complete management control concerning complexity, design and ownership (Gnoth, 2004). Services however, are more intangible and susceptible to variations. Each product has its own individual brand logo, trademark, name and package design making it exclusive and distinctive. Each element of the products marketing mix can be carefully tailored to maximise access into the chosen target market (Ellwood, 2002).

Service branding has received relatively less attention than product branding in the literature, but there is a general recognition that there are important differences between the execution of product and service brands (Jones, Shears, Hillier, and Clarke-Hill, 2002). Services are more complex than products and service branding is different to that of product branding as it deals with more intangible and perishable attributes, making it more susceptible to quality variations because of the high dependability of the person aspect. There are high levels of interaction and customer contact with service operations which gives rise to greater levels of variability (Stamatis, 1996). As most service providers deal with customers directly, and services are bought for immediate use, the concept of right first time is made even more significant. Service brands can therefore distinguish and set themselves apart from the competition by performing best in their class and consistently delivering the same quality service consistently (Lovelock, Vandermerwe, and Lewis, 1999). Segmenting the service into different categories can aid the service provider as it helps represent and distinguish the different levels of expectation more easily for the customer.

Anholt (2002) in agreement with Pritchard and Morgan (1998) acknowledged the paucity of branding theories in the context of tourism, but contend that tourist destinations can be branded in a similar manor to that of a product and service. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Kolter *et al.* (1996) identified two varieties of tourist destinations, macro representing countries or micro representing destinations within a

destination such as regions, cities, towns and visitor sites. Gnoth (2004) characterises destinations as those which are vertically integrated and those which are freely assembled. Management at vertical integrated destinations have chains of command with good levels of control and function as one, i.e Disneyland. Freely assembled destinations are made up of a mix of stakeholders with a broad array of service offerings. Most urban destinations would fall into the category of freely assembled given the large number of various stakeholders across a range of disciplines. Destinations can differ in relation to their geographical features but the composition of these features is however, common in that they are all physical and socio-cultural entities (Kolter, Bowen and Maken, 1996) consisting of a combination of places and components such as attractions, facilities, infrastructure, transportation and hospitality (Gunn, 1994; Cooper *et al.*, 1998; Gnoth, 2002; Voss, 2004). Snepenger, Snepenger, Dalby and Wessol (2007) believe that these components are building blocks on which tourism destinations are constructed to serve as storehouses of meanings that capture value and support expectations for experiences. The term destination is commonly used within the tourist industry to depict a mix of tourism products, services and experiences all promoted to potential tourists (Page and Connell, 2006; Ryan,1997).

The nature of tourism destinations is evolving (Laws, 1995; Voss, 2004) from the traditional model of a place where tourists simply go to spend their holidays to a more complex model, a model where managing the demand and effects on the destination are incorporated (Laws, 1995). Kendall and Gursoy (2007) contend that tourist destinations need to offer performances and experiences, and not merely physical objects. Contemporary tourist destinations are multidimensional and complex with a diverse mix of resources, activities and uses (Davidson, 1997; Cooper *et al.*, 1998; Voss, 2004) and can be viewed as an amalgamation of individual products and services to form a total experience (Murphy, Pritchard and Smith, 2000). It is because of this increased complexity in the nature of tourist destinations that effective destination branding is becoming increasingly imperative. Cai (2002) identified the challenge of branding destinations to sit within the complexity of the product offered. Tourist destinations offer a greater array of product and service offerings, and often combine both. This enhanced

choice makes it more difficult for tourists to make decisions, as there is more of an abundance of information for them to absorb (Cai, 2002).

Blain, Levy and Ritchie (2005) regard destination branding a relatively new phenomenon that remains narrowly described. One of the major challenges destination branding faces is that the general public do not yet regard destinations as brands (Foley and Fahy, 2004). Branding tourism destinations is seen as a combination of marketing products and services and the commoditisation of people's culture and environment (Gnoth, 1998). Destination branding is concerned with destinations utilising their unique selling points; that is the products and services that make them sustainable, believable and relevant in order to promote their attractive features by building a brand to connect their target markets with the destination (Page and Connell, 2006). Branded destinations such as cities and regions if managed effectively can provide an umbrella of trust and a guarantee of quality for tourists (Ansolt, 2002). Blain *et al.* (2005) develop this view by contending that destination branding is developed around themes such as identification, differentiation, experience, expectations, image, consolidation and reinforcement. Recognition, consistency, brand messages and emotional response have being added and further integrated into destination branding thereby providing a more enhanced description (Blain *et al.*, 2005). Place/location branding is similar to that of destination branding, that is, both are concerned with the power of branding in making people aware of the setting and then linking desirable associations (Kerr, 2006). Richie and Richie (1998:17) defined a place brand as *"a name, symbol, logo, word or other graphic that identifies and differentiates the place; it conveys the promise of a memorable experience that is uniquely associated with the place; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the place experience"*. Place/location branding however is more holistic and larger in scale, size and diversity to that of destination branding. Destination branding is seen as a stepping stone for larger geographic location branding as the achievements attained in destination branding are enhanced, carried forward and built upon in location branding (Kerr, 2006). Product and services can be combined within destinations to form more complete overall experiences. A brand can

be acquired for these experiences by linking desirable associations with the destination, through greater personal involvement and participation with the tourists.

Gregoire (2002) identifies two key directions that can be taken when branding customer experiences, namely *'experiencing the brand'* and *'branding the experience'*. Experiencing the brand begins with the brand, turning it into a promise and delivering on it, whereas branding the experience concerns creating an innovative experience and then branding it. Branded customer experiences are at there most powerful when they are designed to meet the needs of clearly identified target markets (Gregoire, 2002). Branding destination experiences therefore, is holistic and is centred on visitor empathy with a destination (Morgan and Pritchard, 2002). This empathy arises from a combination of product branding, service branding, destination branding and community stakeholders (Mitchell and Orwig, 2002). Elwood, (2002) regarded the key to creating innovative experiences is the satisfaction tourists desire without resorting to current marketing clichés.

Caldwell and Freire (2004), in agreement with Anholt (2002) and Pritchard and Morgan (1998), argued that the same utilisation of branding that is given to tangible products can be adapted to intangible services carried out at tourist destinations. Nandan (2005) takes a similar viewpoint, regarding brands as assets, for both products and services that can build value and provide a source for maintaining sustained competitive advantage. As previously mentioned the branding of locations differs to that of destination branding in that the branding locations is more holistic and complex and can be aligned more to corporate brands due to the similarities in their scale, size, diversity given that they both have many unrelated industries, products and cultures (Kerr, 2006). Alternatively a destination brand is aligned more closely with that of a product brand which defines the tourism product. Hankinson (2004) further developed this view and offers a wider vision of the nature of brands characterising them as perceptual entities, communicators, enhancers and relationships, thus postulating a model for place/location brands based on the view of brands as relationships. The contribution of stakeholders is discussed in chapter four.

3.4 Destination Brand Management

Destination brand management involves a process whereby stakeholders decide on a strategic plan, the purpose of which is to identify the most appropriate brand architecture to adopt, to change or improve brand equity components such as brand awareness, value, relevance, personality, emotional connection and accessibility. The overall result is the ability to change price premiums, decrease price sensitivity, increase customer loyalty, increase flexibility for future growth, stakeholder value and market share (Keller, 2003). Brand architecture or structure is often referred to as a brands 'family tree' (Keller, 2003), and it is the way in which destinations decide the most suitable approach to take when deciding on how to organise, manage and market their brand portfolio (Kerr, 2006). Different strategies may require different brand architectures with a mix of brands and sub brands. Important considerations when choosing brand architecture include careful analysis of key internal and external markets, outlining the role of the brand from the outset and thinking through elements and the extent to which the brand can be liked (Van Auken, 2002). Petromilli, Morrison, and Million (2002) identified what are now two of the most common forms of brand architecture: *"Branded House"* and *"House of Brands"*. 'Branded house' architecture employs a single master dominant brand to span a series of offerings that may operate with descriptive sub brand names. 'House of brands' architecture characterises a group of stand alone brands each operating independently to maximise their own market share and financial return (Petromilli *et al.*, 2002). The selection of brand attributes is crucial to brand architecture as the attributes chosen aid the establishment and formation of the competitive environment as well as identifying services required to deliver the brand. These attributes help characterise the tourism products and services, and are chosen based on selection criteria such as competitiveness, uniqueness and desired identity (Gnoth, 2002).

Effective brand management involves gaining an in depth understanding of the target market and competitors. Weaver, Weber and Mc Cleary (2007) contend that the greater the understanding tourism marketers have on potential market segments, the more effective their marketing strategy can be. This can be achieved through qualitative research such as brand equity monitoring, marketing effectiveness and competitive monitoring (Keller, 2003). Carrying out such research helps brand managers to highlight the benefits which are important to them and those which are the most unique, differentiating and provide purchase motivation to their brand. These benefits can be functional, emotional, experiential or self expressive (Hankinson, 2004). Brand equity monitoring highlights any changes in consumer attitudes, preferences and behaviours and suggests that the value of a brand is developed through the customers brand awareness, perceived quality of the brand, brand associations and brand loyalty (Blain *et al.*, 2005). Marketing effectiveness monitoring helps identify the value of each element of the marketing mix and gives an indication of the level of return on marketing investment. Competitive monitoring helps establish how well the brand is performing relative to its closest rivals. Once this research has being carried out and satisfactory information has been gathered the process of developing and designing the brand can begin.

3.5 <u>Destination Brand Development Process</u>

Adapting Niininen *et al.*'s (2007) model of key components of place branding, it is proposed to develop a framework with additional elements to give a more holistic understanding of a destinations brand design process. This is illustrated in figure 3.2.

Destination Brand Design Process

	Stage	Steps	Academic
1	Understand Brand Dimensions	Awareness of both Functional and Intangible Characteristics of a Brand	Pritchard & Morgan (1999) Caldwell *et al.* (2004) De Chernatony & McDonald (2001)
2	Market Segmentation/ Target Marketing	Destination Positioning	Baloglu *et al.* (1998) Keller (2003) Berthon *et al.* (1999)
3	Identify Destination Brand Concepts	Brand Essence Brand Core Values	Aaker (1992) Van Auken (2002) Nandan (2005) Niinien *et al.* (2007)
4	Destination Brand Development	Determine Brand Strategy Common Brand Vision	Dwyer *et al.* (2005) Newsone, Moore & Dowling (2003) Gnoth (2002)
5	Destination Brand Promotional Campaign	Communicating the Brand	Niinien *et al.* (2007) Kavartzis (2005) Kohli, Harich & Leuthesser (2004)
6	Structural Destination Brand Management and Organisation	Manage Stakeholder Relationships Managerial Qualities – Managing Challenges – Brand Council	Morgan *et al.* (2003) Taylor *et al.* (2006) Van Gelder (2005) Edwards *et al.* (2005) Blumental & Bergstrom (2003) Niinien *et al.* (2007)
7	Measuring Destination Brand Performance	Evaluation/Audits Monitoring – Future Trends	Seaton & Bennett (1996) Kavaratzis (2005) Morgan & Pritchard (2002) Page *et al.* (2006) Niinien *et al.* (2007)

Niininen *et al.*'s (2007) model identifies four key components within which to place brand building; (1) determining a brand vision, (2) communicating the brand vision, (3) managing partnerships and (4) measuring brand performance. As shown in Figure 3.2, the model further develops Niininen *et al.'s* (2007) model and purposes the idea that a destination's brand development process is dependent of seven key components: (1) Understanding destination brand dimensions, (2) Market segmentation and target marketing, (3) Identifying destination brand concepts, (4) Developing a destination brand, (5) Destination brand promotional campaign, (6) Structured destination brand

management and organisation, (7) Measuring destination brand performance. These purposed stages are further explained as follows:

Stage One: _Understanding Destination Brand Dimensions_

The initial stage of the process is to gain an understanding of the dimensions that make up a brand. Despite the scarcity of research on branding in the context of tourism, some agreement among academics has been reached which postulates that tourist destinations can be branded in a similar manner to that of products and services (Pritchard and Morgan, 1998; Anholt 2002). Adopting Pritchard _et al's._, (1998) and Anholt's (2002) viewpoint of brands in the context of tourism destinations, destination brands can satisfy both basic and self actualisation needs. Destination brand managers must understand that different destinations attract different types of tourists depending on those tourists wish for certain qualities such as weather, landscape and amenities. However, their choice is also influenced by other intangible features such as status and social pleasure. Therefore destinations must be very specific about what they want to market and to whom (Kolter and Gertner, 2002; Caldwell _et al._, 2004).

Using the theoretical framework of the brand box model, Rook (1999) made a case that brands are categorised into two areas: 'technical capability' and 'personality dimension'. Munson and Spivey (1981) also categorised brands according to two dimensions, the first being 'value expressive', where the brand is consumed to express one's self concept and the second, 'utilitarianism', is concerned with the performance of a product. Solomon (1983), in agreement with Munson _et al_. (1981), saw brands as developing 'functional utilities' and 'social meanings'. De Chernatony and Mac William (2001) further developed this line of thinking as they classified the strength of brands using two concepts, 'representationality' and 'functionality'. Representationality refers to the idea that consumers use brands to help express something about themselves, while functionality refers to a product's or service's competence and reliability.

Appling this concept to tourist destinations it can be seen that different types of destinations will have different branding techniques, depending on their attributes. O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy (2000) contend that because country's, as a destination is so functionally diverse with multiple political and economic agendas they should promote the representational aspect of their brand identity, while regions and cities as destinations given their smaller size and complexity should promote their functional tangible features.

Having identified the different brand dimensions, Caldwell *et al.* (2004) contend that the public image and character of a brand could be more important for sales than many technical facts about a product and thus stated that *"it is important to remember that brands are not only characterised by one of these dimensions, but a combination of the two"* (Caldwell *et al.,* 2004:5)

Stage Two: *Market Segmentation and Target Marketing*

Following the identification and understanding of the destination's brand dimensions the next step is to segment the market while specifically targeting the chosen segments, hereby ensuring the destination brand meets the tourist needs, is preferred and admired by them and has the potential to provide revenue and profit in the long term (Keller, 2003). Van Veen and Verhallen (1986) grouped market segmentation into two categories, namely forward and backward. Forward segmentation involves grouping tourist characteristics based on demographic, personality, attitude and benefits sought, while backward segmentation involves grouping tourists based on their similarities in relation to their choice of products and services. A number of researchers in marketing and consumer behaviour highlight that consumers may belong to multiple segments rather than just one (Chaturvedi, Carroll, Green and Rotondo, 1997). Baloglu *et al.,* (1998) contend that the reason for segmentation is to allow marketing organisations focus on each segment with specific marketing mix elements such as product and price offerings, promotional strategy and distribution channel

systems. Overlapping segments can offer destination marketing organisations the chance to combine segments into one and target the combined segment more effectively making the organisation more productive (Baloglu *et al.*, 1998). This in turn will aid destination marketing organisations position their destination more efficiently.

Positioning offers a practical means for destination marketers faced with the challenge of identifying the one, or more features from their diverse (Caldwell *et al.*, 2004) and multi-attributed product range (Pike and Ryan, 2004) that could be developed to differentiate their destination in a more meaningful way for tourists. Positioning is of major importance to destination branding as it is the image the visitors have in their mind (Morgan and Pritchard, 1998). Effective positioning requires concise, focused and consistent messages with an understanding of how a destination is perceived to perform on the attributes deemed important to the target market relative to that of the competition (Day, Skidmore and Koller, 2002; Morgan *et al.*, 1998). Continuous foresight, as well as strategic agility, in response to a tourist's changing needs is essential. That is, means the type of thinking from destination stakeholders needs to focus on where the end user is positioned at the core of all activity. Usability, functionality, humanity, environmental friendliness and interactivity are all significant in this context.

Two implications of positioning theory that confront destination marketers to which they have to overcome are identified. The first issue is which attributes should feature in the positioning campaign and which should be omitted, while the second issue involves identifying a positioning theme that meets the needs of the target market on a consistent basis (Pike *et al.*, 2004). Therefore in order to achieve this destination marketers need to move away from broad based markets to more targeted and customised positioning (Poon, 1993). Applying Berthon *et al's* (1999) theory of positioning to tourist destinations, destination managers have much to gain by considering tourists in relational rather than transactional terms. Heath (1999) contends that positioning should be the platform from which

all other activities, like advertising, educating stakeholders and stimulating consistent delivery flows stem from. By establishing the correct points of difference and points of parity, associations can aid and guide destination marketers with positioning (Keller, 2003). Points of difference associations are associations that can be performance or image related and are strong, favourable and unique in the minds of customers depicting an overall superior quality. Points of parity associations, on the other hand, are not unique and are shared by other similar brands. They come in two forms category and competitive. Category associations are those necessary for the brand to be legitimate and credible while competitive associations are those that counteract the competitor's points of difference (Keller, 2003). It is important that when dealing with destination market segmentation, target marketing and positioning that destination marketers are fully aware of the key and emerging trends in the area and can clearly identify and define their destination's brand essence. That is, the destinations 'heart and soul'; the destination brand's timeless quality and inspirational feature (Keller, 2003).

Stage Three: _Identifying Destination Brand Concepts_

Once the brand essence is identified the differentiating benefits that the brand possesses needs to be established. These benefits are found in the brands core values, which are the brands identity, image and personality. Van Auken (2002) posits that brand identity involves everything in a brand's design, and is how a destination seeks to identify itself through individuality and distinctiveness (Nandan, 2005). In broad terms it engages the brands essence, promise, personality, positioning and is a combination of visual, auditory and other sensory components that create recognition, represent promise, provide differentiation, create synergy and are proprietary (Van Auken, 2002). Brand identity involves determining the most fitting components and attributes that will aid in devising the most suitable strategies to enable effective positioning (Kendall and Gursoy, 2007).

Brand image is the totality of perceptions resulting from all experiences with the brand and can be described as representational constructs (Kendall and Gursoy, 2007). It is also the way a particular brand is positioned in the market based on customer associations and impressions attained from many sources (Hart *et al.*, 1998; Nandan, 2005). According to Blain *et al.* (2005) a recognised well-differentiated and consistent image is crucial to the success of destination branding.

Aaker (1997) identifies brand personality as the set of human characteristics associated with the brand, the chosen characteristics that best communicates the brands proposition to the target audience, drawing their attention, interesting them, encouraging them to take action and purchase (Ellwood, 2002). It is well accepted by social psychologists that brands can be associated with personality traits (Whelan, 2004; Aaker, 1997; Tan Tsu Wee, 2004) such as sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, ruggedness and conviviality that provide self expressive or symbolic benefits to the consumer (Hosnay *et al.*, 2006; Van Auken, 2002; Aaker, 1997). Brands represent popularity, dependability, uniqueness and practicality. For example Venice as a holiday destination when personified can be described as romantic and elegant (Page, 2007). Hankinson and Cowing (1993) regard brand personality as a unique mix of both functional attributes and symbolic values. Functional attributes are concerned with extrinsic tangible aspects while symbolic and experiential values are more intrinsic, intangible, physiological desires (Mitchell and Orwig, 2002). Similarly to the concept of brand personality being linked to human characteristics towards a brand, destination personality can be adapted and linked with a set of human characteristics associated with a destination as perceived by the tourist (Ekinci *et al.*, 2006). Ekinci *et al*. (2006:127) regard destination personality *"as a viable metaphor for building destination brands and crafting a unique identity for tourism places"*. Brand identity and brand image are essential ingredients in the creation of strong brands. In order for brand loyalty to be achieved it is vital the two work in agreement. The similarities between brand identity and image need

to be strengthened, because in an over communicated marketing environment it is very easy for brand image and identity to be out of line. If this happens consumers will move elsewhere as there are countless other competitive brands waiting to entice consumers with their own alluring messages (Nandan, 2005). Identity represents the destination's reality, while image represents the visitor's perceptions (Nandan, 2005).Essentially, therefore the brand message is 'packaged' or 'wrapped' in terms of brand identity and is 'unpackaged' or 'unwrapped' in the form of brand image.

Brand identity, image and personality can also be applied to tourist destinations like they have to products. Crompton (1979) defines destination image as *"an attitudinal concept consisting of the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a tourist holds of a destination"*. More and more researchers are supporting the view that destination image is multidimensional, made up of cognitive and affective components (Hosany *et al.*, 2006). The cognitive component refers to the beliefs and knowledge about the physical attributes of the destination while the affective component refers to the appraisal of the affective quality of feelings towards the attributes and the surrounding environment. Adapting Aaker's (1997) research it is then possible to view destination personality as *'the set of human characteristics associated to a tourism destination'*. This is important because knowing a person's personality may enable their lifestyle patterns, behaviour and consumption choices to be predicted and explained (Tan Tsu Wee, 2004).

Stage Four: *Destination Brand Development*

Increased market competition means destination marketers must concentrate on developing strategies that highlight their distinctive personality, based on the emotional components of the destination (Hosany and Ekinci, 2006). It is important that destinations clearly define their brand personality, and then strive to develop and maintain brand congruity in all aspects of the brand.

Brand development plays a vital role in the design process when unearthing a destination's 'sweet-spot'. Brand development involves four stages; 1.) identification, 2.) differentiation, 3.) personification and 4.) assets (Riezebos, 2003). The first stage deals with recognising and associating a product or a service with its producer or service provider for purchase consideration. Differentiation is the second stage and signifies that the product or service will be identified in new unfamiliar marketplaces against increased competition. Functional factors are no longer enough; intangible, augmented, and experiential factors are also required (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). Once the product or service is differentiated the next step is personification. This is where the visitors gain an attribution of social and symbolic meaning to the product or service. Once personification is achieved the brand is then an asset with increased economic and loyalty benefits (Van Auken, 2004). Brand loyalty is based on developing emotional connections; the brand needs to be trustworthy, honest, appealing, unique and stand for something. As brands are classified as assets and provide strong value, it is imperative their potential and performance be maximised.

Destinations can achieve this loyalty by unearthing their 'sweet-spot', utilising it to its maximum potential which in turn will help develop strong emotion connections between the destination and the tourist. Destination personality is seen as having a positive impact on perceived destination image and on ones intention to recommend. Brands like humans grow old and weaken, therefore it is imperative that destination marketers acquire the competencies to revitalise their brands and stay competitive. The concept of experience utilised more and more as a differentiator for brands (Valencia and Westberg, 2005). For differentiation to be realised, destination marketers must clearly determine their brand strategy and also share a common unified vision for their destination brand. Determining a brand vision relies on the establishment of core values at a destination, and should be based on actual place characteristics and not be manufactured (Niininen *et al.*, 2007). Determining a common unified vision is difficult because relationships between stakeholders are complex (Dwyer *et al.*,

2003). Planning at a holistic level, therefore is required (Buhalis, 2000). Developing and managing destinations within a command of controls, each one clearly identified and a process of accountability implemented for each is needed (Dwyer *et al.*, 2003). If this is implemented the outcome should strike the balance needed between the sectors with regards development, economic benefits, social and environmental protection. A proactive role with full commitment from all stakeholders is required if this balance is to be met and sustainability achieved. Newsome, Moore and Dowling (2003) believe a destination's vision should provide the direction to achieve this balance. Gnoth (2002) reiterates this, stating that a tourism brand community can only evolve through value-orientated, networked cooperatives and a shared vision. The strategic vision for the Irish tourism industry is to *"create a dynamic, innovative, sustainable and highly regarded sector, offering overseas and domestic visitors a positive and memorable experience beyond their expectations"* (Failte Ireland, 2003). Once a vision has being formulated, the stakeholders must then audit the existing resources and facilities to see if the destination has the capability to gain a competitive advantage. Pechlaner (1999) regards responsiveness to tourism demand and ability to sense and react to changes as key factors in achieving this. As destinations are so multifaceted it would be unwise to use a 'wide focus' or 'catch all' approach when setting a brand vision. Therefore, as highlighted in stage two of the destination brand design process (figure 3.2), the market should be segmented accordingly and the brand should represent the 'reason for visiting', the core values and reputation of the destination (Gilmore, 2002). The core values of the destination can be obtained through surveys of local business, economists, competing destinations and previous as well as potential tourists (Niininen *et al.*, 2007).

Stage Five: *Destination Brand Promotional Campaign*

Communicating the brand vision involves designing and managing promotional campaigns (Niininen *et al.*, 2007). Pritchard and Morgan (1998) believe highly choreographed and focused communication campaigns are the key to increasing awareness of the destination brand. According to Kavaratzis (2005), destination branding must focus on the destination itself as the main brand communicator by communicating the destinations attribute's in two forms, namely primary and secondary. These attributes should be consistent with the destinations overall positioning and heritage (Keller, 2003). Primary communication is divided into four areas: landscape strategies, infrastructure projects, organisational structures and city's behaviour. Landscape strategies refer to decisions that are relevant to such things as urban design, architecture, public art and heritage management. Organisational structure refers to the effectiveness of the destination's governing structure, developing networks and stakeholder participation in decision making along with establishing public private partnerships through brand building, promotions and sponsorships (Keller, 2003). The destination's behaviour refers to such issues as the vision, strategies adopted and financial incentives provided.

Secondary communications are more formal and intentional and include elements of the communication mix such as promotional campaigns, advertising and public relations, e-marketing and web development. Kohli, Harich and Leuthesser (2004) contend that selecting a brand name for a destination is significant in accurately communicating a destination's brand vision. Successful brand names help position a destination from the visitor's perspective, as it conveys a combination of symbolic meanings (Kohli, Harich and Leuthesser, 2004). Powerful destination names and slogans can build brand equity through brand awareness and image (Keller, 1998). An example is Dublin tourist board's use of three slogans to symbolise their brand when promoting Dublin. These slogans are 'Truly Authentic' referring to Dublin's historic culture, 'Madly Energetic' echoing the entertainment the city provides, and 'Deeply Relaxing'

asserting the city as a place for shopping and personal time (Dublin Tourism, 2007).

Stage Six: *Structured Destination Brand Management and Organisation*

Morgan *et al.* (2003) argue that the definition of destination branding incorporates collective phenomena, as the management and design of a destination brand requires a collaborative effort among all stakeholders. Hankinson (2001) contends that destinations need to develop winning brands through structured organisation controls while delivering consistent, effective management of partnerships, coupled with an ability to define the product's complexity and an ability to measure the resultant success. Van Gelder (2005) contends that all destinations need to build competitive advantages, and believes no advantage is more powerful than that of a compelling brand. The key to building successful compelling brands is acquiring the correct blend of (1) strategy (2) creativity and (3) leadership, while understanding how these three concepts interact and differ across various markets.

- *Strategy*

  Three forms of strategy are important to brands, namely business strategy, brand strategy and marketing strategy. Business strategy assists branding as it identifies *"the vision, purpose, objectives, business model, resources, competencies and motivations for the brand"* (Van Gelder, 2005). The brand strategy deals with *"unique, inspiring, believable, trustworthy and likeable"* attributes that make the brand (Van Gelder, 2005). The marketing strategy comes into play as a means of communicating experiences into a valuable brand.

- *Creativity*

  Creativity entails, thinking in a different way about present issues or coming up with new ones (Taylor and Greve, 2006). Creativity feeds innovation and

must be applied throughout the entire strategic process from the formulation of its vision right through to the design and delivery of its products and services. Creativity requires the application of deep knowledge that should not be limited and that needs to engage all stakeholders (Taylor *et al.*, 2006; Van Gelder, 2005).

- *Leadership*

Leadership involves influencing members to accomplish tasks (Balkundi and Harrison, 2006). This is achieved by creating vision, structures, systems, trust and clarity that inspire stakeholders to achieve their strategy and apply creativity to their actions within their destinations. Martin (2007) recognises the need for a shift in relation to decision making from that of a conventional traditional way to an integrative way. By adopting this method of thinking less obvious but relevant factors can be sought, multidirectional instead of linear relationships can be considered, and problems such as examining how parts fit together and how decisions affect one another can be viewed as a whole (Martin, 2007). Therefore leading a brand entails setting a background and a compatible culture within which stakeholders live and align their personal values to the brand. Ethical integrity and consistency between words and actions is crucial (Palanski and Yammarino, 2007). The creation of partnerships is becoming increasingly involved in leadership (Van Gelder, 2005). Public private brand partnerships are the main variety establishing themselves in tourist destinations. These partnerships entail shared strategising, shared development and shared implementation. Greater levels of negotiating are required, which may add strain on leadership. The leadership established by the partners helps to keep the brand development and progress on track as it helps provide the clear guidance needed (Van Gelder, 2005).

It is for this reason Blumenthal and Bergstrom (2003) state that the development of a brand council is a centralised organisation designed to protect and cultivate the brand and whose role it is to integrate social responsibility and leadership through strategic brand management thereby having the potential to combine all activities of a destination under the umbrella of the brand (Van Gelder, 2005). In effect the brand council would be made up of destination stakeholders with varying skill sets and levels of management who would act as brand advocates charged with assuring their team practices. Such practices include creating, understanding, evaluating proper strategies, promoting communication, and defining accountabilities are aligned with the brand promise, thus functionalising the essential qualities and values needed. The development of a structured council is important because companies are analogous to people, their actions determine how others see them (Blumenthal and Bergstrom, 2003). Knowing this and applying it to tourist destinations, destination stakeholders must always try and act in ways that will create positive impressions. Blumenthal and Bergstrom (2003) believe that brand councils can assist in developing these positive impressions and can be seen as an emerging best practice in the brand industry because they help manage issues such as challenges that may arise in the marketplace, and they understand the brand and supervise it in a strategic manner. Gnoth (2002) further extended these issues and challenges to include the negotiation, coordination and management of brand attributes. Brand councils are a growing phenomenon and recognise branding as a holistic management process and are alert to the fact that brand management is growing more complex and therefore needs to continue defining and redefining themselves (Blumenthal *et al.*, 2003). Brand councils are also aware of the importance of intangible value creators and acknowledge that the reality of branding is to incorporate all of the tangible and intangible promises organisations make into one package. Blumenthal *et al.* (2003) believe this yields synergy making the brand significantly more powerful. The above theory is concerned with organisations but the same applications may be adapted to tourist destinations. Blumenthal *et al.* (2003) contend that the formation of brand councils can help lesson the risk of

concentrating power on a single individual, enhance cultural integration, create more integrated strategic focus and pave a way for more global branding.

Jones (2005) believes brand managers must understand not only the importance of relationships between the organisation and the consumer but also the relationships between business to business. Stakeholders form these relationships at respective destinations; made up of both the public and private sectors. Jones (2005) believes brand equity and value is not just created through dyadic relationships between the brand and the consumer, but rather is a mixed concept that is affected by the sum of a range of relationships that share the strategising, development and implementation (Van Gelder, 2005).

Within destinations brand managers are challenged on two fronts; firstly they need to broaden their view of brand relationships by considering a range of different stakeholders from both the public and private sectors, and secondly, they need to be able to access and value the worth of these relationships.

Stage Seven: *Measuring Destination Brand Performance*

Destinations require structures to be set up to enable destination organisations to measure the success of their brands and to prove that destination branding is an effective strategy (Hankinson, 2001). Seaton and Bennett (1996) contend that destination audits best attain the information needed, as they provide destination managers with the ability to access current and future markets, analyse the destination's market appeal, develop strategic objectives, the marketing mix and create an organisation for implementing the objectives and evaluate the results, thus leading to better positioning analysis. Central to this monitoring to ensure brands do not weaken, lose competitiveness and for these benefits to be truly effective the brand must remain extremely important to the target market, the brand provider must be uniquely suited to delivering the brand and competitors must not currently be addressing it. This is the area where a competitive

advantage can be achieved. Experience can represent this at a tourist destination and if managed effectively can build the brands personality through emotional connections. These emotional connections are formed through positive experiences with the destination over time and emotional connections are widely heralded as key to branding success (Thompson, Rindfleisch, Arsel, 2006). Destination branding has the potential to play a coordinating role for a broad range of community development efforts, and Kavaratzis (2005) in agreement with Page *et al.* (2006) proclaim branding is about helping destinations tie together their unique selling points to promote their attractive features. Morgan and Pritchard (2002) put forth the idea that branding is aimed at connecting the tourist with the destination and suggest *"Modern branding is not just about developing appealing communication strategies; it is about defining and delivering leading edge product or service quality to match or exceed customer expectations"*. In order to tie unique selling points together and define and deliver cutting edge quality experience it is important destination characteristics are identified. Managing and monitoring tourist experiences and satisfaction in relation to service quality and the match between experience attributes and brand values allows for greater insights into the perception and condition of a destinations cultural, social, natural and economic position (Gnoth, 2007), which in turn can lead to the development of a more differentiated compelling brand.

3.6 <u>Conclusion</u>

According to Page *et al.* (2006) destination marketing in the future will be increasingly more dependent upon achieving a competitive advantage. In order for destinations to gain this competitive advantage, market research will need to be harnessed more effectively and greater innovation and creativity required in attracting tourists. Failte Ireland (2007) sees the pursuit of individualism and custom designed travel as key to achieving this competitive advantage. *'Just a trip'* is no longer satisfactory; tomorrow's tourists want trips that are memorable and based on a quality experience. Ireland as a tourist destination must not only develop tangible products but it must also develop

intangible augmented services and experiences which appeal to consumers, as it is these services and experiences that persuade potential tourists where, how and when to take a holiday (Failte Ireland 2007). A number of key areas important to successfully achieving these services and experiences were identified.

One of the most important marketing approaches is that of branding. It is identified as a key marketing communicating tool and therefore in today's competitive environment it is imperative if tourist destinations are to remain competitive they must create and manage effective brands. It is contended brands are more likely to be successful when the product is homogenous, correctly priced and distributed and promoted to a defined market segment (Pike *et al.*, 2004). Unlike products, destinations do not have the privilege of homogenous products, prices cannot be controlled and market segmentation and target marketing is more difficult as branding a destination has to appeal to a variety of visitors (Pike, 2005). There is also a lack of continuity between stakeholders, the host community must be considered, techniques to gain visitor feedback is difficult to attain as monitoring and evaluation is more complex due to large populations and there is a lack of funding and backing by government authorities (Gnoth, 1998; Pike *et al.*, 2004). The legal environment is also an issue faced when attempting to brand a destination as there are different kinds of regulatory obstacles existing in different countries and they are constantly changing (Pike, 2005). As a destination may try to target a range of markets difficulties may arise as different target groups may have varying needs, wants and usage patterns, as a result of different cultural values and seasonality (Foley and Fahy, 2004; Pike , 2005). Even with these complex issues Hankinson (2001) contends that there is no evidence to suggest that branding of destinations is not achievable. Destinations are arguably the tourist industry's biggest brand opportunities and nowadays with tourists spoilt for choice when choosing destinations to holiday it is imperative for destinations to develop effective and recognisable brands (Pike *et al.*, 2004).

King (2002:5) states "*for destination marketers, it will be the relevance of the experience they offer the customer, rather than the destination they promote, which will*

be the key ingredient for success in the future". Therefore effective leadership in managing multiple destination stakeholder groups becomes even more critical. The next chapter looks at the concept of stakeholder theory applying it to tourism destinations.

Chapter Four

The Role of Stakeholders in the Management
and Branding of Destination Experiences

4.1 <u>Introduction</u>

It is clear from Chapters Two and Three that destination stakeholders play an essential role in managing tourist destinations, creating destination experiences and branding these destination experiences. For destinations' stakeholders to be at their most effective and to fulfil their full potential they need to work as a unified team within a cohesive structure. Before discussing the role of stakeholders in creating and branding destination experiences, some key concepts of stakeholder theory are addressed.

4.2 <u>Stakeholder Principles</u>

The term *'stakeholder'* originated in the 1960s from a document originating from the Stanford Research Institute (Freeman and Reed, 1984). In this document, customers, shareowners, employees, suppliers, lenders and society are all listed as stakeholders. Not until the mid 1980s when Freeman (1984) launched '*Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach'* did the concept of stakeholders gain widespread acceptance (Preble, 2005). Carroll (1993) sees stakeholders as firstly groups of individuals with whom the organisation interacts or has interdependencies and secondly, any individual or group to whom can effect or is affected by the actions, decisions, policies, practices or goals of the organisation. Similarly, Clarkson (1995) describes stakeholders as persons or groups that have, or claim, ownership rights or interests in a corporation and its activities, past, present or future. However, Philips, Freeman and Wicks (2003:494) believe that *"a stakeholder approach is not necessarily confined to business companies; It can be applied to other forms of business and even organisations in general"*. Adopting this viewpoint the present theory is adapted from a theory of an organisation and its workers to a theory of a tourist destination and its stakeholders.

While the above definitions are extremely useful and insightful, they are still somewhat problematic in the context of tourist destinations, given that they still do not narrow the field sufficiently. The question arises where to draw the boundary on the scope of stakeholders. Argenti (1997) proposed the idea of an infinite number of potential stakeholders while Freeman (1984) argues there is a wide ranging scope in the identification of stakeholders. Polonsky *et al*. (2003) contend that there is no universally accepted definition of stakeholder theory or what constitutes a stakeholder, but see it from two different perspectives highlighting a two way relationship between the stakeholders and the destination each one relying on the other for their survival. Carroll (1997) views stakeholder theory as a way to understand corporate social responsibility. Taking the approach of Polonsky *et al.* (2003), stakeholders can be viewed as instrumental in improving commercial performance and maximise profits (Berman, Wicks, Kotha and Jones, 1999). Stakeholders possess a normative obligation where the goal is maximising social welfare and minimising the level of harm produced within the exchange process (Berman *et al.*, 1999). Preble (2005) advocates this second approach stating that it has more intrinsic value and takes a more inclusive perspective rendering it more ethical and moral. Frooman (1997) found empirical support for what he regards as the concept of *'enlightened self interest'*: where business and societal interests are closely intertwined. In order for this concept to be realised and implemented to its full potential, a holistic approach to stakeholder theory needs to be taken with clear identifications and classifications made between multiple destination stakeholder groups. Koltler (1992) calls for a broadening of marketing interests to take into account relationships between a destination and its public. Consequently, a number of academics devised different frameworks and models to identify and group stakeholders (Christopher, Payne and Ballantyne, 1991; Kolter 1992; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Payne and Holt (2001) consider the *'six markets'* stakeholder model to be the most thorough, as each of the six market divisions can be sub divided. The likelihood of encompassing all major stakeholders therefore is more plausible. The six market divisions include customers, referral, influencer, employee, supplier and internal (Christopher *et al.*, 1991). Murphy, Stevens and Mc Leod (1997) developed the model further by identifying stakeholders who have vital stakes in the setup, acting as a social capital community

(Merrilees and Miller, 2007), and without whose agreement and support the destination would cease to function. Murphy *et al.* (1997) identify these stakeholders as customers who provide revenue, employees who provide skills and competencies, suppliers who provide services, the community who provide a supportive culture and shareholders who provide financial backing. These stakeholders then need to be prioritised and managed effectively.

4.3 <u>Stakeholder Management</u>

Preble (2005) noted that little attempt has been made to build a thorough stakeholder management process model that enables the facilitation of actual stakeholder management within modern organisations. Organisations and its managers must implement such processes so that their organisation's functioning, ability and overall well-being will be enhanced, thus enabling the organisation better deal with the ever evolving environment (Preble, 2005). Adapting Preble's (2005) stakeholder management model process (figure 4.1) from an organisation setting to a tourist destination can better enable and assist the identification, prioritising and development of stakeholder management, thus enhancing stakeholder unity. Businesses managers must start using the process and acknowledge that adopting such a stakeholder perspective and pursuing constructive stakeholder management techniques will considerably progress the functioning and strength of their destination (Wolfe and Putler, 2002; Preble, 2005).
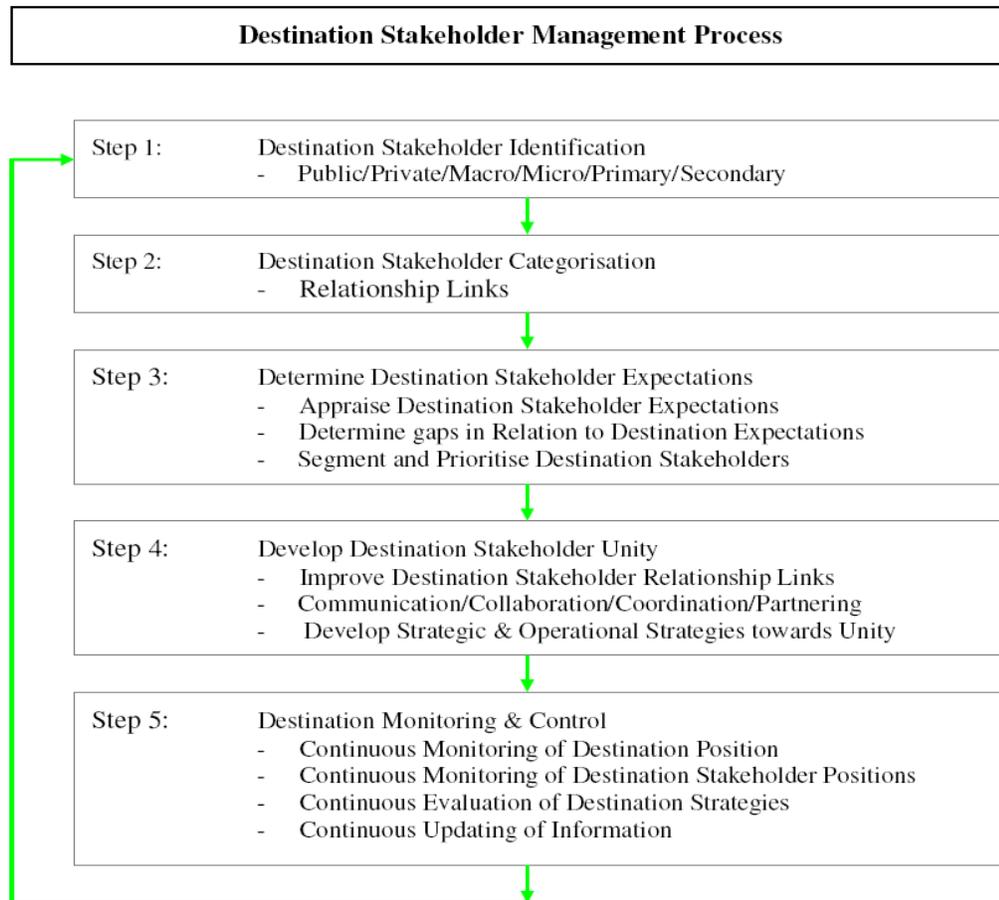
Step One: *Destination Stakeholder Identification*

The first step of the destination stakeholder management process involves destination stakeholder identification. Stakeholders can be segregated into two groups; primary and secondary. Primary stakeholders are those who have stable and regular interactions, and with whom a destination's survival depends on through continued continuing participation (Preble, 2005). Secondary stakeholders are those who have less interaction but who fulfil requirements on specific issues (Clarkson, 1995; Jones, 2005). Secondary stakeholder groups are not essential to the direct functioning of the destination but can strongly

influence how the destination is perceived by the public (Preble, 2005); examples of which include the media and other special interest groups (Clarkson, 1995). Therefore the initial target is to identify and classify all destination stakeholders, in which the destination has an interest, and can influence and contribute positively to the destination, both directly and indirectly. Adapting Preble's (2005) stakeholder map concept from that of an organisation to tourist destinations can aid the identification process as it illustrates the relevant stakeholder groups most applicable to the destination.

Figure 4.2 Destination Stakeholder Map
Source: Adapted from Freeman (1984)
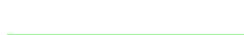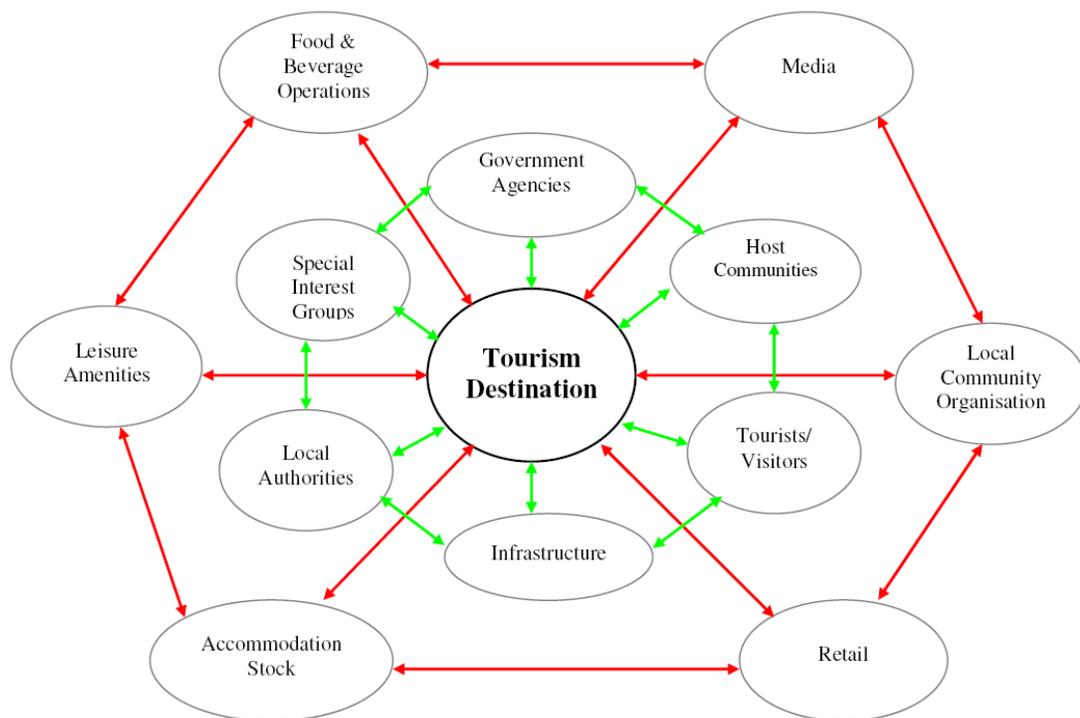
_____   **Primary Stakeholders**

_____   **Secondary Stakeholders**

Step Two: *Destination Stakeholder Categorisation*

Once the destination stakeholders have been clearly identified using the destination stakeholder map concept, the next step is to classify them into categories and ascertain the relationship links (Hankinson, 2004). Kolter and Armstrong (1999) describe stakeholder relationship marketing as involving the creation, maintaining and enhancing of strong relationships between stakeholders with the goal of delivering economic, social and environmental value to all stakeholders involved, thereby enhancing their performance and sustainability. These relationships involve complex interactions; Oliver (1991) refers to these interactions as stakeholder multiplicity. Benjamin and Menguc (2006) developed a framework to assist in better understanding stakeholder multiplicity, utilising three forms of *'fit'*; namely 'fit as matching', 'fit as moderation' and 'fit as gestalts'. Fit as matching provides the means to assess whether different stakeholder claims are competing or complimentary. Fit as moderation provides a means to assess the degree of competition or complementarily between two or more claims. Fit as gestalts provide a means to assess the extent of cooperativeness between two or more stakeholders (Benjamin and Menguc, 2006).

Hankinson (2004) contends that the multiplicities of stakeholder relationships can be classified into four categories, namely primary service, infrastructure, media and consumers. All destination stakeholder relationships are interlinked and must work together if a successful core brand is to be created. Capaldo (2007) contends that these relationships help develop networks and increase openness, fostering a learning environment thereby increasing skills and capabilities and enhancing flexibility. Those services at the heart of the brand are the primary services. Without a good relationship between these service providers the core brand would be difficult to develop. These relationships are dependent on the core brand specifications and may include associations between retailers, hotels and other recreational organisations (Hankinson, 2004).

Infrastructure relationships take into consideration issues such as access, hygiene facilities and brandscape. The brandscape refers to the setting or built environment in which the various services that form part of the core brand interact and these can add or subtract from the destinations ambience (Hankinson, 2004).These relationships are one of the most difficult areas of the destination brand to develop, as access relationships are so broad and involve stakeholders on local, national and international levels. Good relationships also need to be established with those who manage hygiene facilities such as public car parks, toilets, baby changing areas and streets. Media relationships involve both media and communication and are concerned with promoting the brand offer. Their roles are vital, because unless a consistent identity is portrayed through the various marketing communication channels such as advertising, and public relations the core brand will ultimately fail. Therefore it is important, that strong, positive and persuasive messages are conveyed, which represent the strong and persistent qualities of the destination. Consumer relationships combine all these relationships; those between all stakeholders in the destination, employees, organisations, the host community and visitors (Hankinson, 2004). Building positive relationships and balancing the needs of each stakeholder is critical when attempting to create a successful core brand.

Step Three: *Determine Destination Stakeholder Expectations*

When the most suitable destination stakeholders have been identified, it is important that the expectations of these stakeholders in relation to the destination are verified (Preble, 2005). By doing this, the influence each destination stakeholder holds is better defined, thus enabling the destination better identify which stakeholders are most fitting and suitable in relation to delivering the overall aim (Preble, 2005); in the case of this present study is a destination experience brand. Freeman (1984) contends that the nature of a stake in a destination is spread across a spectrum, ranging from an equity stake to that of an influencer with groups in the middle who have an economic or market stake.

Destination stakeholders who have a financial stake in a destination are afforded greater economic and political power (Preble, 2005), while influencers are said to have a more social stake in the destination, that is, simply interested in its activities. Step three involves appraising destination stakeholder expectations, needs and demands on various matters and comparing them to the destinations' culture and determining whether performance gaps exist (Preble, 2005). Destination stakeholders need to identify and understand fully their own expectations and align them with those of the destination in order to maximise strengths and build a cohesiveness destination brand. Audits can be conducted to highlight the magnitude of these gaps, identifying what the destination stakeholders want from the destination and determine if those needs are different to what the destination is capable of providing. Once any disparities are detected, strategies can then be formulated to reduce these gaps, thereby minising any potential clashes (Preble, 2005). Destinations may not have adequate resources to simultaneously deal with such shortcomings; therefore the next step will is to increase the value of destination stakeholder groups. A technique to achieve this is to measure the stakeholders' salience against multiple attributes, such as legitimacy, power and urgency (Mitchell, Agle and Wood, 1997). Legitimacy focuses on issues such as legal obligation and moral interest. Power attributes focus on one's ability to influence behaviours while urgency attributes are concerned with on issues that require immediate attention (Marzano and Scott, 2005). A variety of destination stakeholders can then be developed and segmented as a result of possessing one or more of these attributes. Mitchell *et al.* (1997) segment stakeholders into five categories:

- *Latent Stakeholders*
  Latent stakeholders are stakeholders who have little salience to stakeholder management as they only possess one attribute.

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- *Expectant Stakeholders*

Expectant stakeholders possess two attributes and provide moderate salience as a result.

- *Dominant Stakeholders*

Dominant stakeholders possess both power and legitimacy attributes

- *Definitive Stakeholders*

Definitive stakeholders have a high degree of salience as they regard power, legitimacy and urgency as coinciding.

- *Non stakeholders*

Non stakeholders are the opposite of definitive stakeholders. They have no power, legitimacy or urgency attributes, therefore have little or no salience.

Harrison and St John (1996) developed a further structure for establishing the key stakeholders by giving them a priority status. An increased need to manage stakeholders strategically through partnerships was recommended (Harrison and St John,1996). This would lead to the erosion of hierarchy management stakeholder configurations and the introduction of more unified management structures with greater levels of interdependence between stakeholders with high and low levels of importance (Harrison and St John 1996). Perry-Smith (2007) supports this claim, proposing that stakeholders need to incorporate both strong and weak ties. With strong ties the stakeholder networks and partnerships limit themselves as they tend to have similar traits and interests and the information gathered circulates within a closed loop (Perry-Smith, 2007). By broadening their scope and incorporating stakeholders with weak ties, that is stakeholders on the peripheral of the group of strong and dominant stakeholders, the added dimension of more valuable, constructive, creative and innovative information can be gathered (Perry-Smith, 2007).

Step Four: *Develop Destination Unity*

Having identified the key destination stakeholders, their expectations, and compared them with the destinations culture to highlight differences, the next step is to develop destination responses to minimise these gaps (Preble, 2005). This aids the creation of a common goal and improves destination stakeholder unity (Hankinson, 2001). Harrison *et al.* (1996), in agreement with Freeman (1984), contend that direct communication and open dialogue is critical in developing these responses and closing the related gaps to form common goals. Building relationships is vital to developing and delivering these goals and responses and thus, unity, at a destination, as it enhances greater coordination, collaboration and communication (Aas *et al.*, 2005). Greater understanding, levels of emotional closeness, interaction and reciprocity, higher levels of trust, knowledge sharing and cohesion between stakeholders is promoted (Perry-Smith, 2007; Gnoth, 2004). This collaboration and partnering between stakeholders increases shared control. Salancik (1978) encourages joint ventures, cooperative product development, collective campaigns and closer alignments. The goals and targets of aligning the expectations of the stakeholders with those of the destination are made clearer as specific programs and tactics can be set out, making it more focused, thus leading to a more common unified goal.

Step Five: *Destination Monitoring and Control*

The final step in the process focuses on monitoring and control. This stage is crucial due to the complex and evolving environment of the tourist industry. Destination stakeholder management programs and networks need to be continuously evaluated and monitored in order to guarantee that progress towards the goals is being achieved (Preble, 2005). Preble (1992) contends that a process for strategic control is perfect for assimilating this task. This process monitors progress on the developed strategies as they are being implemented. The control process checks to ensure that the strategies are on course and are still

relevant or if new strategies need to be devised (Preble, 1992). Exploiting the information acquired as a result of monitoring and control, destination stakeholders can then repeat the process, starting with step one. This facilitates regular assessment and continuous improvement purposes (Preble, 2005). This final stage is critical as the information gathered is fundamental to continuously evolving and enriching the brand's personality, building on the initial strengths to broaden its appeal (Morgan *et al.*, 2003). For these strategies to meet the demanding needs of today's tourism industry, they require six key characteristics: availability, feasibility, simplicity, continuity, consistency and comparability. The challenge for many destination stakeholders is to ensure that their chosen performance indicators for their strategies benefit from as many of these characteristics as possible (Wehrle, 2006). This is important as the economic contribution of tourism to host economies is ever increasing. Effective destination management, implemented by its stakeholders, is imperative, as it is the underlying factor that determines whether a destination will be successful or not. If carried out effectively and efficiently by all stakeholders the destination will thrive, thus making the task of marketing and branding the destination more achievable. In order for this to be accomplished a strong stakeholder unity between all stakeholders is required. That is, between primary, secondary, public and private all working closely together to create and deliver a quality overall experience, thereby developing a recognisable destination brand. Strong stakeholder unity among destination stakeholders is characterised by clearly identified and categorised stakeholders, all of whom play leading roles in the management of the destination. This requires regular contact with constant interaction and communication, with planned and structured meetings with a clear tourist agenda which has policies and procedures in place to deal with leading issues. In addition, one or more formally appointed individuals in a designated position at the destination, to maintain sustainability while also having the ability to lead and drive the tourism industry forward should be in place. Moderate stakeholder unity is typified by limited the interaction between destination stakeholders and less structures in place regarding tourism. The

contact between stakeholders is also only adequate and administration is mainly directed by voluntary organisations. Low stakeholder unity at a destination is characterised by minimal interaction between stakeholders, with little or no formal structures in place, for contact and communication among stakeholders compounded by the lack of a leader. The next section looks at developing a model which outlines a structure for establishing a destination experience brand with strong destination stakeholder unity as the key success factor.

4.4 <u>Introduction to Research Propositions</u>

The literature review brought together three broad areas of academic study: destination experience management, destination branding and stakeholder theory applied to tourism destinations. The area of stakeholder involvement and stakeholder relationships was common across all three areas of review. It is purposed that the creation of a destination experience brand stems from a destination's ability to combine and amalgamate resources and themes making for more holistic, differentiated, and memorable tourist experiences, as a result of strong cohesive unity between all destination stakeholders.

Pike (2005), in agreement with Hankinson (2001), note that there are relatively few academic articles concerned with the promotion of locations as brands. Caldwell and Freire (2004) assert that there is a significant need for empirical research into this area and the present study responds to this call, whilst purposing that there is a need for the development and amalgamation of destination branding and destination management research within the emerging area of experience management. The present study is founded on the proposition that the development of a successful destination experience brand can only be attained through the creation of strong unified stakeholder relationships in the management of destination experience. Caldwell *et al*. (2004) contend destination brand success is gained through the clear identification of the core destination features, the effective analysis and segmentation of customer needs (Seaton and Bennett, 1996), and the ability to cluster and theme products and services to form more differentiated, holistic and multi-faceted experiences. These tasks can only be

accomplished if there is a strong sense of unity between destination stakeholders (Hankinson, 2001). These stakeholder relationships must allow for the consensus development of various political, social and environmental forces (Morgan, Pritchard and Piggott, 2003). This relationship has been identified by a number of academics but has not been examined empirically within a tourist context. The present study aims to address this research gap by empirically investigating the connection between stakeholder unity and the creation of a successful destination brand experience.

4.4.1 <u>Quality of Destination Experience</u>

There is a general academic agreement that the tourist product of a destination is not created by each stakeholder within a destination independently, but rather between them; each stakeholder is essential to the performance of the total system (Morgan *et al.*, 2003; Foley and Fahy, 2004; Gnoth, 2004). Taylor and Greave (2006) state that the greater the size of a team the greater the knowledge span and ability of the destination to innovate. However, if stakeholders are to work as a unified team, this cannot be merely at a transaction level, they must embrace a common destination vision and culture that is aligned to their own personal values (Van Gelder, 2005). Developing a bond between stakeholders, based on good close working relationships, with enhanced coordination, collaboration and communication is vital (Gnoth, 2004; Aas *et al.*, 2005; Jones, 2005). This unity will help to promote higher levels of trust, cohesion and knowledge sharing (Gnoth, 2004), as all stakeholders will be devoted to working for a common goal (Jones, 2005). The broadening of relationships and stronger ties between destination stakeholders also means shared and enhanced destination strategising, development and implementation (Van Gelder, 2005). With greater direct communication and enhanced collaboration and partnering amongst destination stakeholders, destination management activities will be made less difficult and areas such as market research will benefit, as it will highlight, for example, what makes the products and services at their destination different and unique as a better understanding of attitudes, preferences and behaviours of target markets will be attained (Van Auken, 2002). With the extensive pool of knowledge generated as a result of these extended destination stakeholder relationships,

being in close contact and exchanging information regularly, a greater ability to define the tourist product and service portfolio that the destination has to offer can be achieved (Gnoth, 2004). A greater scope and ability to measure the success of this portfolio is also more achievable (Hankinson, 2001). Therefore, by identifying what the product and service portfolio consists of and their value, destination stakeholders will have greater expertise, capacity and leverage to build upon this portfolio by combining these resources and amalgamating themes. This culminates in more imaginative, innovative and creative products and services design, resulting in more holistic quality experiences that best fit the tourist. Taking these factors into account, the first proposition is:

> **P 1.** *Strong stakeholder unity has a positive relationship with the quality of destination experience*

4.4.2 **Destination Differentiation**

The second factor that is of critical importance to the successful management of tourist destinations is the attainment of differentiation – the perception by customers that the destination offers something different and unique. In order to attain differentiation a detailed understanding of the nature, design and flexibility of all activities involved in creating a quality experience is required. For a destination experience to be unique, the value or benefit proposed must be important to the targeted tourists; the destination must be exclusively suited to delivering it, and the destinations competitors must not be currently addressing this need. Gnoth (2002) believes that tourism destination stakeholders must exploit the experiential and symbolic levels of an experience, as it is these components that provide the greatest openings for diversification, uniqueness and thus differentiation. Stakeholder unity is crucial to achieving differentiation as it is high levels of unity that build knowledge sharing and collaboration, (Gnoth, 2004; Aas *et al.*, 2005), thereby augmenting the destination's ability to segment the market effectively, develop participation and interaction activities, and bundle and cluster resources under themes suited to the target tourist needs. Tourists need to be encouraged to shape and

use the destination environment and engage in and become more participative rather than passive, thus allowing them the scope and freedom to discover the destination further. By working as a unified group, destination stakeholders can bundle and cluster products thus allowing the tourists discover the destination. This results in their experiences becoming more meaningful, thereby advancing its differentiation value (Gupta and Vajic, 2000). Strong stakeholder unity can support the development of a destination's personality and can craft a unique differentiated identity for the destination (Ekinci *et al.*, 2006).

> **P2.** *Strong stakeholder unity positively increases the prospect of creating holistic tourist experiences, thus achieving destination differentiation.*

4.4.3 Destination Experience Brand

Grant (1991) contends that the more difficult an advantage is to understand and replicate, the greater the benefit and the longer it can be used as a competitive weapon. Identifying core features and attributes at a destination that encompasses distinctive personalities and emotional components is vital in attaining a competitive advantage (Caldwell *et al.*, 2004). Destinations need to move away from broad based markets and become more focused on positioning and customisation, tailoring to more individualistic tourist needs (Poon, 1993; King, 2002). By customising the experience to best fit the lifestyle of the target market the destination can then appeal to the tourist, be more meaningful, make them feel closer to the destination and evoke their trust. Consequently, a preference for the destination is formed through this emotional connection, thus contributing to the development of a destination brand. Pike *et al*. (2004) posit that destinations are arguably the tourist industry's biggest brand opportunities and given that tourists are now spoilt for choice when choosing holiday destinations it is imperative for destinations to develop effective and recognisable brands. Offering a differentiated experience is essential to creating a successful brand and therefore strong stakeholder unity is ultimately fundamental to both.

P 3. *Strong stakeholder unity positively enhances the potential to create differentiation at a destination and thus the development of a recognised destination brand.*

4.5 <u>Conclusion</u>

The recent literature suggests that two critical themes have emerged as significant in building successful destinations: the need to incorporate experience elements into the destination offering (Snepenger *et al.*, 2004), and the need to develop recognisable brands for destinations (Kolter and Gertner, 2002). This literature review has illustrated the systematic attention that needs to be directed at understanding the sub- stages involved in building a successful destination experience brand and the steps required in the process of managing stakeholders at tourist destinations. The idea of strong stakeholder unity is prominent through-out the literature review and is reflected in all three propositions presented. Simply stated, destination stakeholders can only interact successfully on the basis of a collective understanding, a common vision and some sense of accepted and expected behaviour and action brought about by more formal, structured and regular stakeholder contact, collaboration and unity. If research is to gain an understanding of the deeper forces occurring into these stakeholder interactions, then conceptualisations must be developed that reflect their nature and complexity. This study seeks to explore if strong stakeholder unity at destination level is key to effective management and branding of destination experiences. Therefore, the main premise is in the creation of tourist experiences; consequently destination brand development can only be successfully established on the basis of strong cohesive stakeholder unity at the destination.

Chapter Five

Philosophical Foundations and Methodology

5.1 Philosophical Stance to the study

It is imperative a researcher understands such research paradigms as Positivism/Objectivism and Interpretivism /Subjectivism in order to choose the correct methodology. A knowledge of philosophy underpins the methodology as it enables the researcher to recognise the design that best fits the research and clarify the overall configuration of a piece of research. The configuration takes into consideration the kind of evidence to be gathered and from which sources and how such evidence is interpreted in order to provide good quality answers to the research questions (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Lowe, 1991). Positivism/Objectivism adopts a clear quantitative approach to investigating incidences, as opposed to Interpretivism/Subjectivism approaches that aim to describe and explore in-depth incidences from a qualitative viewpoint (Crossan, 2003). The philosophical level of a research method relates its assumptions based on the most general features about the nature of social science, covering such aspects as ontology (reality), epistemology (knowledge), human-nature (pre-determined or not), and methodology as shown in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 Assumptions about the Nature of Social Science
Source: Burrell and Morgan (1979)

The Subjective-Objective Dimension

The subjectivist approach to social science	Assumption	The objectivist approach to social science
Nominalism	Ontology	Realism
Anti-positivism	Epistemology	Positivism
Voluntarism	Human Nature	Determinism
Ideographic	Methodology	Nomothetic
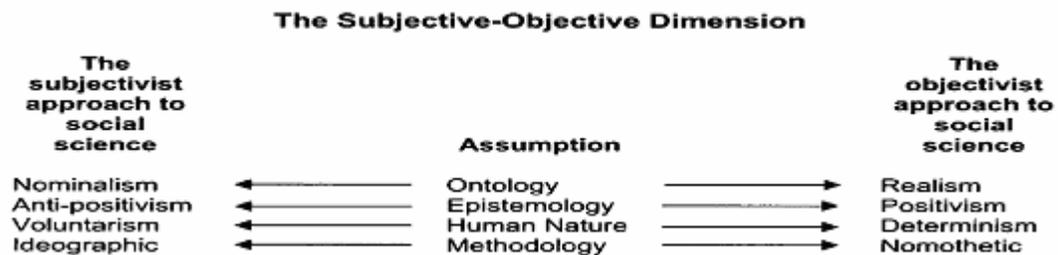
Positivism/Objectivism and Interpretivism/Subjectivism have been described as a band of opposites with varying philosophical positions aligned between them (Lynch and Holden, 2004). Interpretivism/subjectivism perceives the social world and what passes for reality as a projection of individual consciousness and so humankind has freewill, they will shape the world within the realm of their own immediate experience (Morgan and Smircich 1980:494). This is in contrast to the positivism/objectivism perspective where it is maintained that the world predates individuals and contends that the world would still exist as an observed component, made up of "hard tangible and relatively immutable structures" self-reliant of cognitive efforts of individuals (Gill and Johnson, 1997). Whatever a researcher's sociological point of view, the researcher will find that these assumptions have a knock on affect on each other, that is their view of ontology effects their epistemological influence which in turn effects their view of human nature, and resulting in their choice of methodology (Holden and Lynch, 2004). Having examined and considered both viewpoints, the current research will take a predominantly interpretive subjective position in relation to the assumptions. This entails adopting a qualitative study. Thus the current research position will lie towards the subjectivist side of the spectrum, as shown in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2 Basic Assumptions Characterising the Subjectivist-Objectivist Debate within Social Science
Source: Holden and Lynch (2004)

	Subjectivist Approaches to Social Science					Objectivist Approaches to Social Science
Core Ontological Assumptions (Reality)	Reality as a projection of human imagination	Reality as a social construction	Reality as a realm of symbolic discourse	Reality as a contextual field of information	Reality as a concrete process	Reality as a concrete structure
	Nominalism					Realism
Basic Epistemological Stance (Knowledge)	To obtain phenomenological insight, revelation	To understand how social reality is created	To understand patterns of symbolic discourse	To map contexts	To study systems, process, change	To construct a positivist science
	Anti-positivism					Positivism
Assumptions About Human Nature	Man as pure spirit, consciousness, being	Man as a social constructor; the symbol creator	Man as an actor; the symbol user	Man as an information processor	Man as an adaptor	Man as a responder
	Voluntarism					Determinism

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5.2 <u>Research Methodology</u>

The objective of this methodology chapter is to discuss the research methods utilised to investigate the research questions pursuant to this study. An overview of the main research methods is presented and in light of the key variables of this study, techniques are chosen and rationales for these choices provided therein. Having identified a philosophical stance to the study, it was decided to utilise a case research method using multiple sources of evidence and data collection methods so as to gain a detailed and in-depth account of all the stakeholder perspectives being researched. The benefit of using this approach is that it involves close contact between the researcher and the research participants while it also has the advantage of empowering the participants to share their views and hear their own voices while also minimising the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study (Creswell, 2007).

5.2.1 <u>Research Question and Objectives</u>

The main research question is exploratory and is centred on exploring and evaluating the proposition that strong stakeholder unity at a destination positively supports the ability to create quality experiences and enhance destination brand development. Therefore the aim of the study is to ascertain the degree of stakeholder unity at each destination and to examine the correlation between the level of that stakeholder unity and its impact on the ability of the stakeholders to create holistic tourists experiences, and thus destination brand development.

Three objectives were identified:
1. To investigate the degree of stakeholder unity at each urban destination
2. To examine the relationship between destination stakeholder unity and the quality of destination experience.
3. To examine the relationship between destination stakeholder unity and destination brand development.

This study attempts to evaluate the views from a comprehensive number of destination stakeholders on the key objectives pertaining to the overall aim. That is that strong stakeholder unity at a destination contributes to a quality experience and thus brand development. The rationale for taking the perspective of a diverse audience of stakeholders and tourists is that it is they who are best positioned to evaluate the level of unity and the overall quality of the destination experience.

5.2.2 <u>Overview of Research Process</u>

Gill and Johnson (2002) state that research design is a plan that guides a research study towards its objectives. Choosing appropriate research design and data collection methods depends, according to Peterson (1982), on the availability of resources and the extent to which relevant data can be collected. The researcher's experiences, understanding of philosophy and personal beliefs may also have some bearing on the methods adopted (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Research can be divided into three main categories: exploratory, descriptive, and causal. Exploratory research as Talaq (2004) notes aims to undercover the boundaries of the environment in which the problems, opportunities or situations of interest are likely to reside and to discover the important variables that may be found there that are relevant to the research project. Descriptive research aims to provide an accurate and valid representation of those variables discovered by exploratory research while causal research is used where the researcher wants to establish links between variables. This study in overall terms can be classed as exploratory and descriptive, utilising a social-interaction theory; that is where the researcher has regular contact with skilled and knowledgeable networks (Yin and Moore, 1988). The present study examines the connection that strong stakeholder unity at a destination has on positively influencing the quality of experience and brand development, therefore case research using a predominantly a qualitative approach with the aid of multiple data collection methods was deemed appropriate to address the research objectives set out. Such an approach is expected to provide more detailed information which is rich and extensive from a comprehensive number of destination stakeholders and tourists. Indeed Kaplin and Duchon, (1988: 575) suggest that

"collecting different kinds of data by different methods from different sources provides a wider range of coverage that may result in a fuller picture of the research problem…It provides a richer, contextual basis for interpreting and validating results". This allows for the analysis of the data received being open to emerging concepts and ideas and thus the identification of pattern associations and explanations. Niininen *et al*. (2007) adopted a similar approach in their study on the building a place brand at Surrey Hills in the United Kingdom.

Yin (2003) advocates the use of a case-study protocol (see appendix B) as part of a carefully designed research project. Aspects involved in designing a protocol entails developing an overview of the study taking into consideration project objectives and case study issues, field procedures concerning credentials and access to sites, questions taking into consideration specific questions that the researcher must keep in mind during data collection and a guide for report taking that considers the study's outline and format. The research design needs to effectively produce the required solutions for the research activities; clearly identifying what and how the data is to be collected. Figure 5.3 shows a road map outlining the order in which the present research took place.

Figure 5.3 **Research Overview Map**

Literature Review   Philosophical position

Identification of Research

Specific Research Objectives

Philosophical considerations   Evaluation of research

Secondary Research   methods

Primary Research Design

Protocol Development and
Pre-Testing

Case Research
Qualitative Approach

Data Collection Method s

Concurrent

Stakeholder Interviews   **Tourist Questionnaire**

Data Methodology & Analysis

Research Findings

Discussion

Secondary research was used to assist in gathering and analysing information relevant to the research objectives and involved reviewing existing literature on the topic extracted from academic texts, academic booklets, academic journals, industry publications, case studies, reports and minutes of meetings. A thorough review of the literature was carried out to enhance reliability through triangulation of data sources. The researcher has referenced the material to support the research. The advantages of secondary research are that of saving time and costs, allowing the researcher to learn more about the

research topic prior to embarking on the study (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 1997). Secondary research also enhances the opportunity of unforeseen discoveries to be made, because as data is re-analysed unexpected links and findings can be discovered. The disadvantages, however, include data which will have been collected for other reasons and thus may have different aggregations and definitions and of course may be somewhat dated (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 1997).

Primary research was essential to gather, analyse and present information on destination stakeholder unity; determining the presence of stakeholders and bringing clarity to their roles by identifying stakeholder involvement, participation, interest and contribution in relation to creating and branding a quality destination experience.

5.2.3 Qualitative vs. Quantitative Research

Neuman (2006) offers the most simplistic differentiation of the methodological approaches. He views quantitative data as '*expressed as numbers'* and qualitative data as '*expressed as words'*. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (1997) posit qualitative data collection and analysis can be approached from a deductive or an inductive perspective. Qualitative research tends to adopt a more open approach. Such approaches are rich and deep, and are concerned with individuals' own accounts, attitudes, motivations and behaviours (Hakim, 1987:26). The researcher's stance in relation to the subject adopts the posture of an outsider looking in on the social world. There is a strong urge to get close to the subject being investigated in order to become an insider, thereby viewing the world as a participant in that setting (Bryman, 1988).

Quantitative data is numerical or data that can be quantified and can be attributed to collecting sizeable quantities of data. Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill and Guppy (1997) believe quantifiable data is more precise and contend that the more precise the unit of measurement, the greater the techniques that can be used to analyse the process.

Bryman, (1998) contends that researchers may have a greater confidence in their findings when they draw from more than one method of investigation. The need for more than one research method is referred to as triangulation. Ali (1998), in agreement with Nachmias and Nachmias (1996), noted a shift within social sciences towards multi method approaches, rejecting narrow analytical paradigms in favour of a breath of information, to which the use of more than one data collection method may provide. By combining both qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches, Wright (1995) contends that results in the research will be more meaningful with a greater probability of being valid and reliable. To add strength to the present research study, in-depth secondary research was conducted prior to primary research. As identified the strategic selection of cases for this study involved taking into account a variation of cases to fill theoretical categories and provide exemplars of polar types. This enables the researcher obtain information on the significance of various circumstances, as the cases selected are very different in relation to the key differentiating variable being tested. Triangulation for the present study was based on the researcher conducting case research incorporating multiple sources of evidence using multiple data collection methods.

5.2.4 <u>Justification for the use of Case Research</u>

The benefit of using case research is that it can be exploratory, descriptive or explanatory by nature and it has the potential use of many different sources of evidence, commonly known as triangulation (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 1997). Case study research is particularly well received in situations where little is known about the phenomenon and in situations where current theories seem inadequate (Eisenhardt, 1989). Qualitative case research is an umbrella term covering an array of techniques used to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning not the frequency of phenomena in the social world. Yin (2003:13) states that *"the case study is method of choice when the phenomenon under study is not readily distinguishable from its context"*. Case research seeks to understand such phenomena within their own context and therefore the reality of qualitative research is what the subject says it is from his/her specific and is dependent on the individual or specific group perspectives.

Gomm, Hammersley and Foster (2000) contend that in one sense all research is a case study as there is always some unit or a set of units, in relation to which data is collected and analysed. Case studies are multi-perspective as the researcher considers the voices of the case participants as well as the interaction occurring between relevant groups within the study (Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg, 1991). The methodology of the case study is utilised to identify a definite form of inquiry and incorporates a range of dimensions. These dimensions relate to the number of cases investigated and the amount of detailed information the researcher collects about each case studied (Gomm *et al.*, 2000). Yin (2003) and Stake (1995) identify sources of evidence to include documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artefacts. Case study research can be based on single or multiple case studies (Yin, 2003). A single case study focuses on a single case only; multiple case studies include two or more cases within the same study. With regard to multiple cases the cases chosen should replicate each other either predicting similar or contrasting results. Exploratory case studies are aimed at defining questions and hypotheses of a subsequent study or determining the feasibility of desired research procedures. Descriptive case studies give a complete description of the phenomenon within its context. Explanatory (causal) case studies present data bearing on cause-effect relationships, explaining how events happened (Yin, 2003).

Case research is attractive to the purposes of this dissertation in that it is rich, full, holistic and offers thick descriptions nested in real context with a ring of truth about it that has a strong impact on the reader. In scrutinising a destination it is necessary to capture the experiences of the people within that destination. Experiences are complex and the subjective is best described by those experiencing them. The key task of this dissertation was to explore and evaluate the proposition that strong stakeholder unity at a destination positively supports the ability to create quality experiences and enhance destination brand development. It is for this reason a qualitative case study approach using interviews and a structured questionnaire was deemed the best method. Case research enables the researcher to secure the depth and detail of information required as it includes design flexibility (Hartley, 1994), the provision of deeper understanding, the

ability to collect further contextual information (Miles, 1979), and the facilitation of theory development (Yin, 1994).

Having emphasized the advantages of case study research Hamel, Dufour and Fortin (1993) highlighted its criticisms and faults. These criticisms include its lack of representativeness and lack of rigour in the collection, construction and the analysis of the empirical data that give rise to the study. Lack of rigour is linked with bias; such bias can be introduced by the subjectivity of the researcher as well as the sphere of informants on whom the researcher relies to get an understanding of the case under investigation. The current study attempts to overcome these fundamental criticisms of case research by making accountable design decisions on the research questions, identifying the unit of analysis, the sampling strategy, the strategy for data collection, management and analysis and conducting the research in a planned manner (Mason, 1996).

5.2.5 <u>Reliability and Validity</u>

For Yin (2003), a good data collection strategy should possess critical principles, and when used properly should help deal with problems establishing external validity and reliability of case evidence. These principles for data collection include the use of multiple sources of evidence and maintaining a chain of evidence. The data must be collected in close proximity to the specific situation and collected over a sustained period, thus greater detail can be gathered. With case study research the emphasis is on lived experiences, therefore people's meanings, perceptions, assumptions and prejudgements are identified. Flexibility and triangulation is also taken into consideration when accessing the information minimising subjectivity, the tendency for bias and poor interpretation and recording of data (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

 The findings originating from a case study should be based on several different sources of information (Yin, 2003). Sources of evidence used in this research include documentation, archival records, direct observations, qualitative interviews and a

structured questionnaire. The use of these multiple sources of evidence concur with work by Eisenhardt (1989) who promotes the use of multiple sources of evidence and the rigorous measuring of constructs and relationships. By doing so the chance of increasing validity which assesses how well the research tools selected measures what they set out to measure is greater. Reliability, which measures how reproducible the data is can also be enhanced. Every effort was made to adhere to these principles during the course of the research. Reliability in case studies is achieved in many ways; however one of the most important methods is the development of the case study protocol. A case study protocol contains more than the survey instrument, it also contains procedures and general rules that should be followed in using the instrument.

Yin (1994) presented the protocol as a major component in asserting the reliability of the case study research and suggested that a typical protocol should have the following sections:

- **An Overview of the case study project**
  The overview should communicate to the reader the general topic of inquiry and the purpose of the case study.

- **Field Procedures**
  Field procedures mostly involve data collection issues, access to sites and sources of information.

- **Case Study questions**
  This is specific questions that the investigator must keep in mind during data collection. Case study questions are posed to the investigator, and must serve to remind that person of the data to be collected and its possible sources.

- **A guide for case study report**
  Case outline and format for the narrative.

The researcher developed a protocol in accordance with Yin's guidelines and found it most beneficial in organising and in giving direction to the research project (see appendix B)

5.3 Choosing Cases

Carrying out case research involves making a set of wide-ranging choices, choices which entail deciding on the amount of cases to be used, the case selection and the sampling method. Flyvbjerg (2004) asserts that the generalisability of case studies can be increased through the strategic selection of cases. Cases can be single, multi, retrospective, or longitudinal. Table 5.1 identifies the different positives and negatives associated with each case type.

Table 5.1Choice of Number and Types of Cases
Source: Voss, Tsikriktsis, Frohlich, (2002:203)

Choice	Advantages	Disadvantages
Single Cases	Greater depth	Limits on the generalisability of conclusions drawn. Biases such as misjudging the representativeness of a single event and exaggerating easily available data.
Multiple Cases	Augment external validity, help guard against observer bias	More resource needed, less depth per case
Retrospective Cases	Allow collection of data on historical events	May be difficult to determine cause and effect, participants may not recall important events
Longitudinal Cases	Overcome the problems of retrospective cases	Have long elapsed time and thus may be difficult to do

By establishing the preferred and most suitable case selections, the research design is made more specific. The research design of the present study is centred on theory testing and is more deductive in nature. Eisenhardt (1989) states that *"the process of theory testing involves measuring constructs and verifying relationships"*. Miles and Huberman (1994) contend that case research can be characterised into representative, disconfirming, or discrepant studies. The present study can be categorised as discrepant, as the researcher is attempting to highlight a marked contrasting difference. Having consulted with key destination informants and verified a perceived contrasting difference in unity levels, Waterford and Kilkenny were chosen as two suitable urban tourism destinations. The cases selected for the present study were purposefully chosen as both are bounded in that both are urban destinations, positioned in the South East of Ireland, have similar profiles, structures and resources but have a marked contrasting characteristic that will highlight the variance being studied. Consequently an inconsistency regarding key variables which in the case of the present study is stakeholder unity becomes the key differentiator between the two locations.

Having considered the four options available as seen in Table 5.1, and examined the theoretical objectives, a multi-case approach using theoretical replication logic was deemed most appropriate as the researcher is testing propositions selecting cases that are likely to produce differing results but for foreseen reasons, examining such questions as 'why' and 'how' enhancing confidence in the propositions.

5.4 <u>Data Collection Methods</u>

As discussed at the beginning of the chapter research design can be described as the overall plan for a study and includes areas such as strategy, conceptual framework, the question of what will be studied, the sources of evidence and data collection methods best suited for collecting and analysing the information. Having identified the research strategy, conceptual framework and research question, the researcher has opted to use interviews to gain the key stakeholders' perceptions with the aid of a questionnaire to gain the tourists' perspectives as the main data collection methods for this study.

5.4.1 <u>Interview</u>

Burgess (1984) states that interviews are *"conversations with a purpose"*. According to Mason (1996), qualitative interviews are a uniquely sensitive and powerful method for capturing experiences and lived meanings. The interviewees are allowed convey their state of affairs and perspectives in their own words. The desirable quality of qualitative interviews is their openness and flexibility, with no set standard rules or techniques. This however puts stronger demands on advance preparation and interviewer competence. Interviewing skills required of the interviewer involves the ability to be able to ask good questions and interpret the answers, to be a good listener and not to be trapped by preconceptions, to be adaptable and flexible, to see newly encountered situations as opportunities not threats, to have a firm grasp of the issues being studied, and to be unbiased by pre-conceived notions, and thus receptive and sensitive to contradictory evidence (Yin, 1994). Mason (1996) identifies three objectives when carrying out interviews. These objectives include (i) discovering information being sought from the participants accurately and efficiently, (ii) to record information gathered so that it may be easily used as input to the next step in the project and (iii) to leave the participants confident that their understanding of the topic has been explored, listened to and valued (Mason, 1996).

Using qualitative in-depth interviews facilitates the researcher in achieving a number of different aims. Interviews allow for the participants to be used as *'meaning makers'* rather than *'passive conducts'* in the process of answer retrieval (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002: 83). There is also the assumption that the data is generated through interaction (Kaule, 1996), therefore the interviews allow for detailed information to be '*obtained about complex topics'* (Leary, 2004:101). Interviews permit participants to explain trends and analyse their own experiences (Silverman, 2001:114), allowing for the opportunity to capture the essence of the participants real world delving from the past into the future (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002). Riticie and Lewis, (2003:43) contend that interviews afford the researcher the chance to verify trends and issues prompted by questionnaires in a method of triangulation to '*check the integrity of, or extend*

inferences drawn from the data' (Riticie and Lewis, 2003:43). Interviews allow for a thematic, topic centred, biographical and narrative approach (Kaule, 1996). Denscombe (2003) recognises disadvantages of interviews to be the fact that they may be the subject of bias due to poorly constructed questions and also the factor of response bias may be high. Inaccuracies can arise due to poor recall and interviews may also be prone to reflexivity, this is where the interviewee answers in a manner they believe the interviewer wants. The current study overcame these recognised disadvantages by advanced preparation in terms of careful planning and structuring of the interview questions so as to ensure accuracy and efficiency while also the researcher enhancing his/her own interviewing competence.

5.4.2 <u>Structured Questionnaire</u>

Questionnaires concern two primary issues; the extent to which the questions asked in the questionnaire adequately covers the various aspects of the research problem(s), and that they do so with sufficient detail. To ensure these two issues are addressed four interrelated themes need to be taken into consideration when designing a questionnaire namely; questionnaire focus, questionnaire phraseology, the form of response and lastly question sequencing and overall presentation. Ryan (2000) supports this as she contends that a vital skill in designing and constructing a questionnaire is the ability to structure, focus, phrase and ask sets of questions in a manner that is intelligible to respondents. It is important then that the respondents provide data in a form that is suitable for the researcher to use statistical techniques. Converse and Presser (1982) contend that questionnaires which have a natural and logical order, combined with good overall presentation can improve the response rate. The pilot study is important in ensuring the issues mentioned are adhered to in an appropriate manner.

The design of the present questionnaire incorporated the aforementioned stages. In order to increase the response rate and gain greater levels of information the questionnaire design: (1) followed a simple format to ensure questions were not omitted, (2) included more closed-ended questions that are regarded as easy and quick to complete, (3)

provided open-ended questions which allowed respondents to add additional information that may give a deeper insight into data obtained (Tourangeau, Rips and Rasinski, 2000), and (4) aimed to avoid respondent fatigue by not being excessively long (Bryman, 2004).

Questionnaires are considered well suited to descriptive research (Bryman and Cramer, 1995). The use of questionnaires allow associations between variables to be mapped out and measured to show whether associations between variables were strong or weak.

Ryan (2000) contends that the use of questionnaires frequently involves obtaining less in-depth information than that of other methods such as interviews. This criticism is offset by the fact that measurement is consistent across all respondents, thus allowing comparisons to be carried out (Hakim, 1997). A second disadvantage is that confidence in the findings is dependent upon the quality of individual responses, thus there is some scepticism about whether questionnaire responses carry real meaning (Bryman *et al.*, 1995). As pointed out previously, this criticism is overcome in the current study with a mixed method approach. The mixed method approach enables the researcher to compare attitudes, thus clarifying the content of both. This is essential in order to highlight and get at the meaning behind the findings.

Conducting item analysis and examining for internal consistency allows those items with the highest internal consistencies to be selected for inclusion in the final scales. Reliability estimates for each scale ranged from .583 to .867 (see Appendix A). The selected items were then reassembled into the order envisaged for the final questionnaire (see Appendix A).

5.4.3 <u>Triangulation of Evidence</u>

There has been much criticism of interviews, especially concerning their subjectivity, the tendency for basis and poor interpretation and/or recording of information. Again, a reasonable approach is a corroborate interview data with information from a number of

sources. A major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence and the ability to use multiple sources of evidence which far exceeds that in other research strategies. The use of multiple sources of evidence in case studies allows the researcher to address a broader range of historical attitudinal and behavioural issues. However, the most important advantage of using multiple sources of evidence is the development of converging lines of inquiry, thus any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be much more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode.

Patton (1990) discusses four types of triangulation when conducting evaluations, and all these approaches to triangulation are regarded as appropriate for the present study and therefore were utilised within this dissertation. These approaches are:

- The triangulation of data sources.
- The triangulation among different evaluators (investigator triangulation).
- The triangulation of perspectives on the same data set (theory triangulation).
- The triangulation of methods (methodological triangulation).

With triangulation, the potential problems of construct validity also can be addressed, because the multiple sources of evidence essentially provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon. Not surprisingly, analysis of case study methods found that those cases using multiple sources of evidence were rated highly, in terms of their overall quality, than those that relied only on single sources of information.

5.5 Description of Case Research Process

This section describes the field procedures employed for the present case study. It takes into consideration the sampling design used, control factors, the pilot study, pre visit preparation, on-site data collection and post visit analysis.

5.5.1 <u>Sampling Design</u>

It is incumbent on the researcher to clearly define the target population. In general, the population is too large for the researcher to attempt to investigate all of its members. Having consulted a senior academic in the field of research it was considered that because the researcher was using multiple data collection methods, a small but carefully chosen sample may be used to represent the population of both the stakeholders and the tourists. Using the destination stakeholder map concept (figure 4.2) the researcher highlighted the most relevant destination stakeholders for the study. Within this destination stakeholder map tourists are seen as primary stakeholders. However, the practicality in interviewing the tourist population is very challenging. Therefore, a more appropriate data collection method is to obtain a sample of the tourist perceptions through a structured questionnaire. Yin (1994) believes the sample should reflect in some way the characteristic of the population from which it is drawn, selected according to different criteria. Sampling not only saves time, but the collection and organisation of the data is more manageable as there are fewer people involved (Saunders *et al.*, 1997). There are two main types of sampling techniques, probability or representative sampling and non-probability or judgmental sampling (Saunders *et al.*, 1997). In probability samples the chance of each case being selected is known and is usually equal, whereas the opposite occurs in the case of non-probability samples. Therefore a non-probability sampling technique in the form of a convenience sample was selected. Fink (1995:18) states that *"a convenience sample consists of a group of individuals that is ready and available*. To ensure a broad diversified sample, it is important to specifically target the most appropriate audience. In relation to the tourist questionnaire, the tourists were targeted from those visiting local visitor attractions and amenities at both destinations. For the interviews, the researcher identified key informants and senior management from a variety of sectors within the tourism industry using the destination stakeholder map as a guide (see figure 4.2). Five senior management personnel from each different sector were contacted with the anticipation of hearing back from one from each sector. The ability of the stakeholders to serve as key informants in terms of their position and knowledge about the content of inquiry was assessed. As noted by numerous studies, the

key informant approach allows researchers to gain access to rich information by collecting it from those who are highly knowledgeable about the phenomenon under investigation (Li and Calantone, 1998; Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

The sampling equation utilised in this study is from Moser and Kalton (1979) and is presented below. This equation identified a sample size of 60, which is required for the present study.

$$n = \frac{pq}{s^2/p} (1-f)^2$$

Where p is equal to the proportion of the sample processing the attribute being measured and q is the proportion which does not possess that attribute, so $p + q = 1$. For the present study purposes, p and q were set at .5 respectively. The researcher chose to calculate a sample size with a standard error of not greater than .5% (s^2/p). Standard error is used as it gives an indication of the likely accuracy of the sample mean as compared with the population mean. The smaller the standard error, the less the spread and the more likely it is that any sample mean is close to the population mean. A small standard error is thus a good thing. The standard error margin chosen for the present study was done so on the basis that the improvement in precision was not worth the extra cost associated with the larger sample. The assumption was made that f (the sample fraction) was small enough to ignore (that is, less that 1 in 5). The sample size calculations are as follows:

$$n = \frac{0.5 * 0.5}{\frac{(6.41)^2}{100}} \qquad n = \frac{0.25}{(.0641)^2} \qquad n = 60$$

Control Factors

The study purposefully included two urban tourism destinations. The reasons for this selection is that the destinations chosen are comparable and measurable in terms of (1) Location: relating to infrastructure, target markets and facilities, (2) Urban Profile: in terms of size and population, and (3) Structures and Resources: as both are under the one umbrella of Failte Ireland South East tourism, helping to reduce resource variables that may impact on the destination experience and destination branding. Consequently an inconsistency regarding the key variable, which in the case of the present study is stakeholder unity, becomes a key differentiator between the two. This sampling technique is widely practised and although it is acknowledged that it may be prone to bias, it is still an effective sampling technique especially if there is little variation in the population, as is the case with this investigation.

5.5.2 **Pilot Study**

A pilot study was undertaken prior to distribution of the interview schedule and the questionnaire to ascertain any difficulties respondents may encounter in answering the questions. A pilot study aims to determine the efficiency of the layout, clarity of the definitions, adequacy of the questions, efficiency of the instructions and codes chosen for pre-coded questions and finally the probable cost and duration of the study. The pilot study was conducted on a convenience sample of four participants for the interview and fifteen participants for the questionnaire consisting of academics and industry practitioners. The pilot study was conducted to find answers to the following questions:

- Were the questions easily understood?
- Was there difficulty answering the questions?
- Were there any irrelevant questions?
- Did the questions follow a logical sequence?
- Could the questionnaire be completed within a reasonable amount of time?
- Were there any issues associated with the layout and overall presentation?

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- Was the terminology/phraseology intelligible?

Modifications implemented from the feedback from the pilot study included reducing the content of the interview schedule by merging and omitting questions, maintaining consistency among response areas, as well as some structural and aesthetic changes to the interview layout. The pilot study helped to identify the clarity of the definitions, the adequacy of the questions, the length of time taken to administer and the efficiency of the instructions used in the interview.

Similarly, the aim of the pilot study conducted for the questionnaire was to ascertain any difficulties the respondents may encounter during the administration of the questionnaire. Modifications implemented from feedback from the pilot study consisted of the inclusion of additional questions and additional information as well as phrasing alterations to the evaluation statement.

5.5.3 Visit Preparation

Firstly, as mentioned in designing the sample the researcher identified the relevant stakeholder groups from different tourism sectors at two urban destinations using a stakeholder map as an identification mechanism. A number of key informants were then established from these groups and contributions from other key business, tourism and community sectors were sought. These key informant stakeholders were the unit of analysis for the interviews. A letter was sent out (see Appendix E) with a description of the study to senior management from the different stakeholder groups who were identified as the most suitable link between the stakeholder group and the researcher soliciting their participation. Information was sought from prominent key members from both Waterford and Kilkenny to identify persons most knowledgeable in the areas addressed by the study with whom the interviews will be conducted. In advance of the visit, background information on each of the stakeholder participants was attained through archival sources and the internet. Correspondence was undertaken with the various stakeholders who agreed to participate in the study; this included arrangements

such as meeting times convenient to the participant to carry out the interview schedules. In relation to the questionnaire in order to encompass a variety of tourists in a variety of settings, permission was sought from management at local leisure amenities and attractions to administer the questionnaire at their properties while also questionnaires were also administered in public areas around the city centre.

5.5.4 <u>Data Collection</u>

The main areas to which the study is centred were identified using a case study protocol (see appendix B) and the subsequent data collection methods customised. The data from the stakeholder interviews was collected using tape recordings and were subsequently transcribed into written form so that the information could be edited. The questionnaires were distributed among tourists - the primary unit of analysis.

The main areas of the study included:

- <u>Stakeholder Unity</u>   <u>(Interview)</u>

  In this area questions focused on attaining information and stakeholder views in order to make a judgement on the levels of stakeholder unity at the destinations. Stakeholders were questioned on their perception of how effective the destination management practices were at present and what they saw as the main challenges in managing the tourist destination. The stakeholders were asked if they played a participative role in the managing of the destination and to what degree they worked most closely with stakeholders, and the frequency, level and formality of this contact. Reasons for communicating were also probed as well as the potential benefits they believed could be sought from enhanced unity among its destination stakeholders. Stakeholder views in relation to whom they saw as the destination manager and their perceptions on who they felt should be managing the destination were explored. The salience levels of various destination stakeholders were investigated. Stakeholders were also asked if they

felt adequately involved. The stakeholders were quizzed on their opinion on whether they believed there is an association between increased stakeholder communication and collaboration and the ability to deliver quality tourist experiences. Finally the stakeholders were given a chance to express any additional thoughts or recommendations they wanted to contribute with regards the levels of stakeholder unity at their destination.

- Destination Differentiation (Interview)

The initial aim was to investigate the stakeholders' understanding of what they understood by the term differentiation. The stakeholders were asked their perception on what they believed the function of differentiation at their destination is. Each stakeholder was questioned on their individual differentiation objectives for their own sector and organisation and how they felt that contributed to the destination as a whole. The stakeholders were asked if they had structures in place to measure the success of their differentiation objectives and strategies and if so what were those structures. The stakeholders were questioned on what they believed to be the destinations most unique selling proposition. The stakeholders were also asked to identify who they considered the destinations main target markets and market segments were. The opinion of the stakeholders on how well an understanding of their target markets needs, wants, attitudes and preferences they had was posed. The researcher questioned the degree to which specific and in-depth research on those markets had been carried out. The stakeholders were asked if they were aware of all the activities available in the destination product and service portfolio and if they were in a position to participate with other sectors to combine and amalgamate resource and themes. Finally, the stakeholders were encouraged to give their opinion on whether they believed there was adequate scope for tourists to interact and participate in many of the activities available in the destination's product and service portfolio.

- <u>Brand Evidence</u>   (Interview)

The researcher initially wanted to establish if the stakeholders were aware if their destination had a logo and slogan and if they could identify it. The stakeholders were questioned on whether they used either the logo or slogan on any of their promotional material and were queried on the potential benefits they perceived of their use. The stakeholders were probed on what factors they believed were important in building a recognised destination brand and what they perceived to be the main challenges. The stakeholders were asked whether they considered the destination's identity was clearly in the minds of the target markets, and who they regarded if anyone, as in charge of managing the destinations brand. Opinions on constraints in appointing a management structure to manage the destination brand were sought from the stakeholders. To conclude the stakeholders were asked to state who they felt they worked most closely with in developing and managing the destination's brand.

- <u>Quality of Tourist Experience</u>   (Questionnaire)

The tourists' destination evaluation was segmented into five areas and under these areas various variables were evaluated. The variables were evaluated using the Likert scale to obtain the mean scores comparing both destinations. The areas and variables in the questionnaire included:

1. Destination leisure activities available for various age groups at the destination.
   - Children, Teenagers, Young Adults (20-30), Adults and those aged 60 and over.

2. The quality of destination leisure amenities available at the destination.
   - Variety of quality accommodation stock, Variety of quality food and beverage outlets.

3. The overall quality of the destination experience.

- Quantity of tourist information outlets, quality of signage, opportunities for tourists to participate in leisure activities, opportunities for tourists to combine leisure activities, opportunities for tourists to shape their own use of the environment in order to make their experience more meaningful to their overall quality of destination experience.

4. The overall level of quality of destination satisfaction.

- Quality of transportation and access links, destination safety and security, disability access, friendliness of the host community, value for money, and overall level of destination satisfaction.

5. Likelihood to recommend or return to the destination.

- Likelihood to recommend the destination, likelihood to re-visit the destination

5.6 <u>Data Analysis</u>

The findings from the stakeholder interviews and the tourist questionnaire are produced in chapters six and seven of the study and are organised into a coherent text under each category. The data was analysed using two data analysis packages, NVivo7 and SPSS version 15. NVivo7 was used as a research management tool to amass the findings of the qualitative aspect of the research which incorporated the stakeholder interviews whereas SPSS was used in relation to the quantitative aspect of the research, the tourist questionnaire. The findings from both data collection methods reflect the case study propositions attempt to integrate the evidence received and converge upon the facts and issues leading to the discussion chapter.

Data processing routines begin with encoding the questions. If the data collection method consists of 'closed' or pre-coded questions and have numerical scales, then the

data entry can take place almost immediately. If, however, the data collection method has a number of 'open' ended questions, these are more difficult to quantify and must be categorised or encoded. Coding is a process of going through each participant's responses and looking for variations from desired pre-established sets of responses, as a decision must be made on how to organise and categorise the answers. Once all the questions have been coded data analysis can begin (Oppenheim, 1992). Data analysis consists of the examination, categorisation, tabulation and otherwise re-combing the evidence gathered in order to address the initial propositions of the study.

5.6.1 <u>Analysing and Interpreting the Data</u>

Prior to statistical analysis of the tourist questionnaire a series of checks were carried out on the data (Oppenheim, 1992). Data cleaning such as frequency distributions, range checks and other internal consistency checks were also carried out. The quantitative data was analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). This is a powerful software package for microcomputer data management and analysis. This statistical package was used to conduct analysis on the raw data to supply results that aided in the examination of the aims and objectives of the study. Essentially SPSS involves the creation of values to represent the information received. This information then provided the basis for the presentation of the findings. Each statement in relation to the variable evaluated in the tourist questionnaire was scored using the Likert scale. SPPS was used to obtain the mean value, standard deviation value and levels of significant difference in relation to the variables evaluated by the tourists at both destinations. Level of significance is a measure which indicates the extent to which the findings of the study are significant. The level of statistical significance value "P" most commonly accepted by social researchers and used in the present study is 0.05 (Sarantakos, 2005:392). The statistical test chosen to obtain this significant difference value is the Independent T-Test. T-Tests are the most common and popular parametric tests of significance (Sarantakos, 2005) and are used predominantly for small samples (Argyrous, 1996). The Independent T-Test is the preferred statistical assessment for the present study as the data is interval and there are multiple samples, two in total, which

are independent. Carrying out this test enables the researcher ascertain whether or not the findings of the sample based study are significant, that is, also valid for the target population. T-Tests also allow the researcher check the degree of generalisability of the findings in the study (Sarantakos, 2005). A number of assumptions occur when carrying out Independent T-Tests. They are that the dependent variable is normally distributed, the two groups have approximately equal variance on the dependent variable which can be checked by looking at Levene's Test and the two groups are independent of one another. Levene's Test for Equality of Variances highlights whether the two groups have approximately equal variance on the dependent variable. If Levene's Test is significant (the value under "Sig" is less than .05), thus the two variances are significantly different. If it is not significant (Sig. is greater than .05), the two variances are not significantly different; that is, the two variances are approximately equal. It is important to note when reading the results of the Independent T-Test, that in order to determine the level of significant difference, one should read the top line to check whether the variances are approximately equal and the bottom line to check if the variances are not equal.

Two basic processes are used when analysing qualitative data as outlined by Sekaran (1992). These two processes usually run concurrently rather than consecutively.

- A systematic analysis of the conversations is undertaken which involves subsequent transcription and ensuing organisation of the data.
- A conceptual analysis: this occurs throughout the process, primarily when one is conducting the work, transcribing the conversations and when drawing together material in order to explain the data.

Both these processes were utilised in this research.

Qualitative research uses unstructured information like field notes, videos, transcripts and audio recordings, instead of numbers to arrive at conclusions. The software package NVivo 7 was used as a comprehensive tool in support of managing and structuring the

findings obtained from the stakeholder interviews. NVivo 7 is a computer program for qualitative data analysis that allows one to import and code textual data, edit the text, retrieve, review and recode coded data, search for combinations of words in the text or patterns in the coding and import from or export data. NVivo enables the researcher manage, shape and make sense of this information quickly and easily while also having the advantage of a data audit trial to track changes. Although using NVivo was essential in managing the collected data, it was no substitute for the interpretative skills of the researcher when it came to analysing the data (Easterby-Smith, 2001). NVivo is only a tool, it was up the researcher to *"reduce the volume of the information, identify significant patterns and construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveals"* (Patton, 1980:371-72). Table 5.2 below details where NVivo was used in the present study.

Table 5.2 Where NVivo was used in the study

Study Phase	How NVivo was applied in the study
Case Interviews	• To assist in analysing the open ended qualitative data • To code data collected • To compare patterns across nodes

All data in NVivo was created around the interview transcripts and arranged into documents and nodes. Documents are simply data one analyses in the study. Nodes are physical locations where one stores the groups of ideas that can be coded. Nodes can be further segmented into free and tree nodes. Free nodes were initially used to openly code the transcripts. These free nodes were then assigned into a hierarchical structure of a tree node. The coding process for the present study incorporated three phases (see Appendix F).

1.) *Structuring of Responses by Question, Guided by Literature Review*

Initially the stakeholder interviews for both destinations were recorded using a dictaphone. Once recorded the findings were then transcribed and edited into a word document and transferred into NVivo under the framework of two separate files; Waterford and Kilkenny. Applying NVivo to the stakeholder interviews, all the interviewees' responses were grouped under each question chronologically.

2.) *Analysis of Responses into Sub Themes*

Free nodes were created from the interviewees' responses which were centred on the key themes of the study: stakeholder unity, destination differentiation, and destination brand evidence.

3.) *Thematic Analysis.*

Following the creation of these free nodes the responses were coded and tree nodes were created. Coding the data in such a way enabled the researcher better detect patterns, thus highlighting similarities and differences between responses allowing for the detection of relationship links. This aided the identification, analysis and matching of the findings. See Table 5.3 below for an overview of when NVivo was used for coding purposes and categorising free nodes and creating tree nodes.

Table 5.3 Where NVivo was applied to support the analysis of the interview data

Construct under Investigation	Interview Question	Created Free Nodes	Linked Tree Nodes
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Destination Stakeholder Unity	Perception of destination image? Perception of effective management? Main challenges perceived in managing a tourism destination? Stakeholders to whom you work most closely? Frequency and formality of contact?	• Diverse • Mixed Bag • Multiple sectors • Togetherness • Cooperation • Continuity • Relationships • Aid • Assist • Involvement • Collectiveness • Leadership • Teamwork Support • Management	Commonality Structure Operational Assistance Goal Congruence
Destination Differentiation	Understanding of the term differentiation? Destinations most USP? Main target markets? Awareness of product and service portfolio? Scope to combine activities? Scope for adequate tourist participation and interaction?	• Quality • Service Quality • Add-Value • Mishmash • Mixed • Diverse • Feedback • Marketing • Participation	Differentiation Objectives Differing Opinions Research Scope to Exploit
Destination Brand Evidence	Awareness of destination brand slogan/logo? Understanding of destination identity? Awareness of brand management structure? Stakeholder groups working together towards destination brand development?	• Memorable • Good Impression • Meaningful • Empathy • Experience • Quality • Image • Add-Value • Impression	Delivering on Promise Exposure Emotional Association Mental Image Reputation

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5.7 <u>Research Limitations</u>

The inclusion of a statement concerning the limitations of the study is encouraged (Rudestam and Newton, 1992). As with all research, some constraints did become evident as the dissertation progressed. Within this particular study the following constraints emerged:

- As the research and its findings are mostly qualitative in nature, they are prone to subjective interpretation by the researcher. This can lead to difficulties, but the researcher has attempted to be as objective as possible in the analysis of the findings.

- Key participants were extremely helpful in the divulgence of internal documentation for research perusal. However as many of the documents were voluminous and not intended for public consumption, it was not possible to discuss them in their entirety or to include copies in the appendices.

- The timing of data collection for the tourist questionnaire posed some difficulties, given that it was off peak tourist season when the primary research was conducted. This made the time frame for data collection longer than anticipated.

- The non-probability sampling approach limits the generalisability of the research findings. Although the questionnaire was quantitative it was still highly subjective in nature.

5.8 <u>Conclusion</u>

This chapter described the researcher's philosophical stance to the study and, resulting from that stance, the most suitable methodology chosen. An overview of the research process was presented including the researcher's justification for using case research. In order to garner information from a comprehensive range of sources, a predominantly qualitative research approach was utilised, but as the practicalities of interviewing the number of tourists required in the study was too demanding in the time frame allowed, the researcher chose to use a structured questionnaire to obtain their destination evaluations. The data collection methods adopted to investigate the aims and objectives of the present study were described. A description of the case study process was outlined detailing the sampling design, control factors, pilot study, visit preparation, and on-site data collection used in the study. Finally the data analysis tools were identified and detailed as well as a number of their limitations highlighted. The next two chapters will present the findings obtained from the stakeholder interviews and tourist questionnaire and will lend to the final discussion chapter.

Chapter Six

Interview Findings

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the predominant methodological element of the research, which incorporated a qualitative approach. The findings of the interviews are presented; these results identify and describe the levels of stakeholder unity, destination differentiation and brand evidence from the stakeholders' perspective. These stakeholders are key product and service providers at the chosen destinations. The results of each destination are dealt with separately and relate to and address the main objectives of the study. A brief introduction and overview of each destination will be offered as well as a profile of the stakeholder groups and participants. A discussion based on the findings of the interviews will be presented in the penultimate chapter.

6.2 Destination Overview and Participant Profile

Urban Destination A: Waterford City

Waterford City is the oldest city in Ireland and offers an exciting medieval flavor. Waterford has a Viking history dating back over 1200 years. The city is also famous for its hand-crafted crystal. Waterford lies at the estuary to the River Suir near the South East of Ireland and offers a choice of city breaks, family holidays and activity breaks. Today Waterford is the cultural, economic, educational, technological and industrial capital of the South East region.

Table 6.1 Interview Participants' Profile: Waterford

Stakeholder Group	Interviewee
Food and Beverage	Local Food and Beverage Proprietor
Accommodation	Local Hotelier
Media	Local Representative Media Sector
Special Interest Group	Key Informant Special Interest Marketing Group
Leisure Amenity	Manager Local Leisure Amenity
Infrastructure/Transport	Local Representative Transport Sector
Government Body	Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority
Retail	Local Retailer
Local Authority	Key Informant City Council
Business	Key Informant Chamber of Commerce

6.3 <u>Waterford Interview Findings</u>

6.3.1 <u>Stakeholder Unity</u>

This section will present a sample of the perceptions of the interviewees regarding the levels of stakeholder unity in Waterford. These perceptions are identified on the basis of the dimensions used in the stakeholder interview schedule.

- Perception of Destination Image

The predominant view of Waterford's image was *"it is not too bad but it could be better",* and more work still needs to be carried out to improve it. There is an agreement that Waterford has an image problem and the aim of its stakeholders must be to counter this. Interestingly one participant contended that Waterford was not going in the right direction in relation to creating a positive city experience for its visitors. He also stated that if Waterford was to be rated as a tourist destination 'to visit' it would only score five or six out of a possible ten points. Two participants believed the image was negative with certain elements,

such as the city centre, requiring improvement and development while anti-social behaviour around the city needed to be curtailed. One participant stated that the perception of Waterford was much more favourable among international visitors than that of domestic while another participant blamed negative press reports for its adverse image:

"I would say there is a lot of work being done on the image, it is improving but a lot of work still needs to be done"

(Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

"There is a perception out there of grey old Waterford"

(Key Informant Special Interest Marketing Group)

"It has a good image in one scale and a bad on the other. The image of Waterford that tourists bring with them to the city is a positive image… but we fail to build on it" (Manager local Leisure Amenity)

"No, you only have to read what the travel writer's first impressions are of coming into Waterford…it needs to be tidied and freshened up"

(Local Hotelier)

- Perception on whether Waterford is Managed Effectively by Public and Private sectors

Effective destination management by both public and private sectors in Waterford was perceived to be incoherent among the majority of participants, with the exception of one, who believed there was good cooperation between the two sectors; a cooperation that could be seen in the Discover Waterford initiative. However, it must be noted that the Discover Waterford initiative is entirely voluntary-based. One participant believed that Waterford was managed better than a lot of other places but agreed it could be improved

upon. The principle view was that Waterford could be better managed and much work still needs to be done. Going forward, it is contended that every stakeholder needs to work together towards a common vision in relation to tourism while working towards a greater unity between the private and public sectors:

"I do not think there is very good cooperation between public and private sectors; it is adequate" (Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

"The public sector in the last few years has lacked a bit of dynamism, it has lacked dynamic leadership. I think the private sector could be more dynamic as well" (Local representative Transport sector)

"I feel it could be much better managed in the sense of there are a lot of people out there really looking for someone to take the lead with it but I'm not sure if anybody really does" (Local Hotelier)

"I believe the city is let down badly by public sector in particular, I think the private sectors have being absent in certain areas"
(Manager local Leisure Amenity)

- Perception of Main Challenges Involved in Managing Waterford as a Tourism Destination

The participants' regarded the goals of getting people to work together and the lack of facilities in delivering quality tourism experiences as the main challenges. One participant was particularly vocal on these points, while also stating the importance of growing the awareness of Waterford as a tourism destination brand. Another participant highlighted revenue issues. A further view was that tourism needs to be taken more seriously; it needs to be seen

and recognised as a main economic driver of the city and only when this is realised will Waterford become a catalyst for tourist activity:

> *"I think first of all you have to have a quality place for people to stay, I don't think there is enough of that"*   (Local Media representative)

> *"Getting people to work together in order to create a product that can be sold…I think it needs unity, it needs leadership, creativity ,and people who can actually pull together and devise a product that can actually be offered"*   *(*Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

> *"Effective communication between the different sectors, lack of quality accommodation"*   *(*Local Retailer)

> *"It is getting all the sectors together, but I feel there is probably an awful lot of over lapping"*   *(*Local representative Transport sector)

- <u>Do you take a Participative Role in the Managing of Waterford as a Tourism Destination</u>

The prevalent response from the participants was that they do not take a leading role in the management of Waterford as a tourism destination but see themselves more as enablers or facilitators. One participant stated that they represent their sector a lot in relation to maintaining Waterford's attractiveness. Another spoke of his involvement but voiced his frustration at this voluntary contribution. That is, he believed his contributions to generating new ideas are needed, yet he contended that it was not necessarily his role to do so:

> *"In terms of encouragement and lobbying yes …we are not looking for ownership; we act as a catalyst"*   *(*Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

"I see us in the group of enablers for tourism"

*(*Local representative Transport sector)

"Not now, but have been, I think it is sometimes good with these committees to let new blood in, I think its good to have fresh people come in with fresh ideas" *(*Local Retailer)

- Stakeholder Groups you Work Most Closely in Relation to Tourism

The consensus is that the participants worked with stakeholders from those sectors that they interact with most often. The majority of stakeholders also created relationships with Failte Ireland, City Council and the Chamber of Commerce. One participant, however, did not regard himself to be involved in the tourism industry and thus did not work closely with other tourism stakeholders:

"Failte Ireland….we would have a lot of interaction with the Chamber of Commerce some interaction with the Irish Hotel Federation"

*(*Local representative Transport sector)

"I work closely with tour operators, coach drivers and guides, hotel receptions, hotel management…so I would be in contact with the operations side of things daily" (Manager local Leisure Amenity)

- Level of Contact and Perception Regarding Developing Greater Stakeholder Unity

The most common answer was that contact was improvised and more informal, be it daily or weekly with the sectors they worked most closely. The main reasons for this limited contact centred on the lack of availability of stakeholders, lack of structured meeting schedules, stakeholders having other

business commitments and voluntary requirement of such contact. However, one participant admitted that her sector would not have regular contact with other tourism sectors; rather only limited contact within the tourist season. The perception of those participants who have more regular contact was that stakeholder unity can be increased, as impetus can be built upon as the different sectors can deliberate on important issues:

"In regards tourism I would say the contact is pretty ad hoc… I think our interaction with Failte Ireland is very effective, but I am not sure our interaction with other sectors is" (Local representative Transport sector)

"Our contact wouldn't be that regular" (Local Food and Beverage Proprietor)

- <u>Main Reasons for Communicating with other Destination Stakeholder Sectors</u>

The participants' views are that communicating with other stakeholders helps provide and acquire information, enhance coordination and communication and build stronger relationships to maximise opportunities for Waterford's tourism industry. One participant focused on the concept of leadership and noted that communication between sectors is too divided and questioned whether Waterford's tourism product is clearly identified:

"Promote Waterford number one and also to keep our members and people updated on Waterford's progression …offer our opinion on different projects and compromise to maximise opportunities for our tourism industry" (Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

"To work on new initiatives, setting structures, communicating and really airing issues and views between us" (Local representative Service sector)

"I think it's leadership, it is all too fragmented and ad hoc, there is nobody taking this issue on, there is nobody really addressing the real problem" (Key Informant Special Interest Marketing Group)

- Perception of Potential Benefits Resulting from Effective Communication between Destination Stakeholders

The participants' observation was that stakeholders who communicate are more pro-active rather than reactive. Their perception was that by working as a unit, developing a common goal, sharing resources and pooling knowledge there is greater capability in identifying and dealing with problematic situations in advance, thus increasing visitor satisfaction:

"It pools resources and everyone works together"
(Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

"Focuses on a common vision, develops a road map so to speak"
(Key Informant Special Interest Marketing Group)

"Business opportunities are increased by working together"
(Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

- Opinion on Waterford's Chief Experience Officer

The foremost view was that Waterford does not formally have a dedicated person, or group of personnel in a full-time position to manage the tourism destination. The participants felt they were not aware of who was in charge. However, two participants suggested a leading member of Failte Ireland South East is the Chief Experience Officer. Conversely, another participant regarded the Chief Experience Officer as an individual who works closely with a key member of the voluntary initiative Discover Waterford. It was

suggested that a great number of key people are involved, but, as such, there is no one individual in place to mediate.

> *"Well I am not sure if there is anybody there but I believe there needs to be somebody or assigned group almost formally giving that post. You need somebody actually dedicated formally assigned to driving the process"*   (Local Retailer)

> *"I don't think there is a Chief Experience Officer or an assigned manager of the destination…there is nobody really in charge at all"*
> *(*Manager local Leisure Amenity)

> *"That is the one thing I would like to know is who the Mr or Mrs person of Waterford tourism, and that seems to be a very difficult thing to find out who really makes the decisions"*   (Local Hotelier)

- Perception on Stakeholders who should be Involved in the Management of Waterford as a Tourism Destination

The views varied on who should be involved in the management of Waterford as a tourist destination. Three participants believed a mix of representatives from a cross section of tourism sectors need to be involved, but interestingly agreed the structure would not work if it was too large. One participant believed that the structure should comprise those stakeholders who had the most to gain financially, while another participant regarded international best practice strategies and structures as the best approach to undertake:

> *"At least a member from each sector because you have to have 360 thinking and a representative from each sector is essential, you are going nowhere without it"*   (*Local Food and Beverage Proprietor)

"I really think somebody needs to be appointed with the backing of all the stakeholders and somebody giving the remit to go and shake it up and it needs to be someone that is politically astute, has the weigh to get the job done in finding, creating and managing the destinations product and then to market it" (Local representative Transport sector*)*

- Salience Levels of Stakeholders

Stakeholder salience was an issue that the participants where unsure of. The responses lacked clarity and gave a general sense of confusion in relation to stakeholder power and influence:

"Well I suppose the tourist board and a certain amount of the private sector, but I don't think we work together enough, I have to say that I don't know of anyone that has much power or influence"

*(*Local Media representative)

- Opinion on Own Sectors Involvement

The participants' outlook on whether they felt that their sector was adequately involved differed; two felt their sector was not satisfactorily represented with one commenting on the need for a structured body to be set up to help join together sectors. A further two participants thought that their sectors were adequately involved. Interestingly the reason provided was because they pro-actively seek involvement. However, some participants were unsure and were less inclined to comment:

"Yes, I do because again we make ourselves involved" (Local Hotelier)

"I feel they are, the information is there, it is up to them to go get it, make themselves aware, some people don't bother they expect it to just come in the door to them and land on their lap" (Local Retailer)

- Perception on Association between Effective Destination Stakeholder Collaboration and the Creation of a Quality Tourist Experience

The predominant view was yes and there was a general agreement that the stakeholders are the tourism providers and by working as a team and combining resources and efforts that the creation of a positive experience for tourists can be achieved. Hence, the principle view was that developing a synergy between destination stakeholders based on good working relationships is crucial to the creation of a quality tourist experience. One participant noted the need for significant investment in the destination's product portfolio to develop product bundling opportunities in addition to enhanced stakeholder collaboration.

"we are all involved, it only takes one link to break the chain of a positive tourist experience, it's about understanding that the little things are the big things" (Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

"If people actually pooled together and said hang on we actually have a problem here, a bad image of Waterford is being sent out, the streets are not clean, not safe, and we need it sorted, then the powers to be might do something" (Manger local Leisure Amenity)

"It has to come from the product providers working together, and these stakeholders also include the people and locals on the street, the host community" (Key Informant Special Interest Marketing Group)

"I think tourism and [my sector] need to be more connected" (Local Food and Beverage Proprietor)

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- Final Thoughts on Level of Stakeholder Unity in Waterford

Stakeholder unity was acknowledged and perceived to be a significant factor in driving the tourism industry forward in Waterford. Three participants believed the stakeholders could be better linked, while one participant stated that there was no unity. Interestingly, one participant contended that there is a need for a full-time paid central figure to provide leadership and direction, while another mentioned a representative from each sector is required. It was believed that unless one of these measures were in place, which is not the case at present, unity between sectors will be difficult to ascertain:

"I think we could be better connected, I think we need an umbrella committee specifically for tourism with a designated senior representative" (Local Hotelier)

"We must get people talking Waterford up, and we will only develop this positive experience and get people to talk positively about us if all sectors work together" (Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

"I don't think there is a sense of unity in Waterford as a tourism destination. There is very little communication even between the stakeholders"

*(*Key Informant Special Interest Marketing Group)

6.3.2 Destination Differentiation

This section presents the perceptions of the interviewees in relation to destination differentiation.

- Understanding of Term Differentiation

  The understanding of destination differentiation was very comparable among the participants. The principle view was that differentiation was about uniqueness; having a stand out quality and offering something different than other destinations. One response compared it to branding, whereas another linked differentiation to personality. A further participant questioned Waterford's differentiation standing in relation to other destinations in Ireland:

  "What makes you identifiable, unique…I think it has got to include what you are about as a destination" *(*Local representative Transport sector)

  "Offering someone something different from other cities and towns, offering a better tourist experience, offering more amenities"
  *(*Local Media representative)

- Perception of the Function of Differentiation in Relation to the Branding of Waterford

  The function of differentiation was perceived as very important in relation to branding Waterford. One participant emphasised its importance, while another stated that it was to make Waterford stand out in tourists' minds:

"It achieves stand out and memorability"   *(*Manager local _{Leisure Amenity})

"I believe it can be an added value to the city"

(Key Informant Special Interest Marketing Group)

- Differentiation Objectives in Relation to Own Sector

The participants' views vary in relation to their efforts but all link back to the fact that they are all aiming to make the tourists experience a positive one. Each participant's objectives are based on different themes centred on creating a quality experience for the tourist. Objectives such as service quality, positively promoting the city, delivering convenience, making the tourists stay informative and fun, personalisation and establishing individuality were all noted:

"To get an appropriate mix between the brand name stores and your independent stores, as it is the independent stores that give the city an individuality"   (Local Retailer)

"We want to offer a quality service and good value for money, and just reliability as well as good service"   *(*Local Food and Beverage Proprietor)

"Just to personalise our service more, interact with the tourist, just be more polite, courteous and helpful"   (Local Hotelier)

- Assessment of Differentiation Strategy Success

Differentiation strategy success was measured predominately by the majority of participants as the level of visitor satisfaction with regards return visitors. One participant stated success was measured according to the many national tourism awards won based on offering the best tourism product experience, while another participant stated that they did not have an assessment method

in place to monitor how successful its outcome is, but hoped to have one in place in the near future:

> *"Well you see it purely in the tourist numbers how successful you are"*
>
> *(*Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

> *"At the moment there is nothing in place but we hope to devise call backs to make sure all our customers are happy"*   *(*Manger local Leisure Amenity)

- <u>Perception of Waterford's Most Unique Selling Proposition and Existing Gaps</u>

The perceptions of Waterford's most unique selling proposition centred on its historical past. Others noted, however, that the location and the quality of life provided by Waterford is its principal offering. Interestingly, only one participant mentioned Waterford Crystal. The participants' views in relation to existing gaps in Waterford's tourism product mainly corresponded with their opinion on their unique selling proposition and the manner in which it can be exploited and made more attractive to potential tourists. Two participants highlighted the need for better structures to be formed between destination stakeholders so that combining resources and efforts are maximised to form superior packages for Waterford's tourists:

> *"I think it's a combination of things; Waterford for me is like a microcosm of activities, we have it all, the rugged coast line, all the natural elements, the sea, rivers and mountains"*
>
> (Manger local Leisure Amenity)

"I think there is a lifestyle in Waterford that is good its easy going there is not a huge amount of hassle about Waterford like there may be in other cities…Waterford's history"

*(*Key Informant Special Interest Marketing Group)

"Waterford Crystal is still the main attraction"

*(*Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

- <u>Target Markets, Market Segments and Understanding of their Needs and Wants</u>

The predominant viewpoint was of the domestic market being their main target, with specific reference to Dublin. The United Kingdom was rated as the second main market sought, while North America was third. Interestingly, in relation to market segmentation, the participants' responses varied. Some saw families as the most important market, others week-end breaks, others still regarded tour groups as the most important, while one participant stated their segmentation involved *"a little bit of everything"*. The most recurrent segment to arise was weekend breaks with one participant making reference to it as being a *"huge growing market"*. The participants' viewed their understanding of their target markets' needs and wants as less than good with one participant contending that there was no real specific research carried out in Dublin, which is Waterford's main domestic market. Interestingly one participant believed that the evolving nature of tourist needs and wants is a limitation, but believed Waterford needed to be pro-active and learn about different sectors and how to best cater to them. The exception to these responses was one participant who stated that *"I'd say I'd know it as well as anyone in the country":*

- Awareness of Activities Available in Waterford's Product Portfolio

The participants' awareness levels again varied, some stated that they were aware; some stated they were unaware while still two others believed they were aware of certain activities, but not all. Those who asserted that they were not aware of all the activities Waterford had to offer questioned the supply of information available in order to retrieve such information. One participant stated that a person, or group of personnel, should be assigned to provide such information to the relevant tourism sectors:

"No not really because I don't think it is desperately well publicised"

*(*Local Retailer)

"No I'm not, there is nobody really there to inform the different sectors of what's out there" *(*Local Food and Beverage Proprietor)

"We would have created our own information pack for our team to give to tourists" *(*Local Hotelier)

- Availability to Participate with other Sectors to Combine Activities in order to Deliver more Holistic Experiences to Tourists

Availability to participate with other sectors to combine activities to create more holistic experiences for tourists was perceived to be a significant factor in contributing to Waterford's success. Thus most were supportive of the concept, with one participant making reference to the fact that they are continuously trying to work with other sectors. Another participant spoke of the need for all stakeholders to be involved and knowledgeable. However, one participant perceived his sector not to be a leading sector, but stated that they would offer expertise if required while another participant expressed caution towards the process of combining activities due to conflicting interests:

"We are constantly trying to figure out ways to create packages with others, networking and combining efforts is the way forward, but I think there could be a more cohesive pulling together"

<div align="right">(Manager local Leisure Amenity)</div>

"We are not a major player, the reality of it is we have our own business to do....we are not the front line players here in this and it is not our business" (Local Media representative)

- <u>Adequate Scope for Tourist Participation and Interaction in Activities Offered in Waterford</u>

The predominant view was that although there were adequate opportunities for tourists to participate and interact in various activities in Waterford this was not the case; such opportunities were not being utilised and exploited fully. The reasons mentioned included a deficiency in offerings to multiple demographics and a lack of development:

"I think there is scope but it is just not being implemented to its full potential" (Manager local Leisure Amenity)

"We need more interaction with tourists and get them to participate more in our attractions and activities to make it more memorable, our core people skills and our unwittingness to sell is our hidden advantage"

<div align="right">(Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)</div>

6.3.3 <u>Brand Evidence</u>

This section will present the perceptions of the participants regarding brand evidence in Waterford.

- <u>Awareness of Brand Logo and Slogan for Waterford</u>

The awareness level among participants was that Waterford had numerous logos and slogans. The prevailing view was that the logo and slogan needed to be updated. Interestingly, two participants spoke of the need for the development of a specific brand logo and slogan for the tourism industry in general. Participants mentioned stakeholder fragmentation, geo-politics and limited funds as restrictions to developing brand awareness. One participant contended that there is a need for a united brand; planned and developed with the assistance of professional designers:

> *"Emm I should do, when we were marketing Waterford we were trying to promote this great place to work, live and do business, and there is a certain amount of that has hung on, but I think it probably needs to be tweaked"* (Local Media representative)

> *"Yes, I think it has a few but I believe it needs to be changed, a specific logo and slogan for the tourism industry needs to be established and stakeholders can not buy into it unless they meet certain standards"*
> *(*Local Retailer)

- <u>Perception of the Function a Recognised Destination Brand can Play</u>

The perceptions in relation to the function of a destination brand is that it represents an empathy with the destination in the minds of the tourist. It is noteworthy that two participants mentioned the need for all destination stakeholders to be involved and associate themselves to the brand if it is to function to its full potential. However, one participant believed brands do not work and contended that if the experience is delivered effectively in an operational sense, that was the best form of branding:

"It portrays a sense of meaningfulness and a sense of belonging"

*(*Local Hotelier)

"It strengthens links between us and other stakeholders and that would be good for the city in general, in that it would strengthen its image"

*(*Key Informant Chamber of Commerce*)*

"It enhances the destinations reputation"

*(*Key Informant Special Interest Marketing Group)

- Perception of Potential Benefits of Brand Use

The participants' view was that having a recognised brand for the destination acted as a mark of commitment and would allow Waterford gain greater exposure to potential tourists. Participants believed brands play a reinforcing role and is assisted by word of mouth, but contended that it is essential the brand mirrors reality at the destination. One participant believed that there were no potential benefits to be sought:

"Its shows a sign of commitment from the destination, a stamp of trust in a way" *(*Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

"Probably the likes of greater exposure I guess exposure of the city and create greater links" (Local representative Transport sector)

- Perception of Most Important Factors in Building a Recognised Brand for Waterford

The participants believed that in order to build a recognised brand for Waterford, skilled people working within the industry would need to be involved. It is necessary to have a quality product to deliver and to have strong unity between all stakeholders working towards a common goal. A

number of participants noted that delivering on what you say is the most important factor:

> *"Well it is all about people…the development of core skills…I think that is a major factoring in establishing a brand for a destination"*
>> *(* Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

> *"We have to have people who can rap up that product into a package and actually create, manage and go and sell it"*
>> *(*Local representative Transport sector)

> *"A greater togetherness between all the sectors, promoting the city as a unit rather than just for our business's individual needs"*
>> (Key Informant Special Interest Marketing Group)

- <u>Perception on Whether Branding a Destination Poses Greater Challenges than that of a Product or Service</u>

The predominant view was that attempting to brand a destination posed much greater challenges than branding a product or service. The majority of participants highlighted facts such as a destinations' heterogeneous product and service range, the fact that a destination had to appeal to a variety of tourists with different cultural values and a lack of structured organisation and continuity between destination stakeholders. One participant regarded the failure of stakeholders to see the holistic picture of Waterford as a tourist destination, and their preoccupation with their own self interests as being the biggest challenge:

> *"Yes because with a destination you got a lot of stakeholders, and you are trying to marry multiple business strategies and interests"*
>> *(*Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

"Oh definitely yes, the number of sectors involved and trying to bring those together is an enormous challenge, and also there are multiple target markets and segments"

<div align="right">(Key Informant Special Interest Marketing Group)</div>

"I would say it is far more difficult, because again you need to be a little bit of everything to everyone, and there are so many sectors that need to work together and there is the issue of conflicting interests"

<div align="right">(Local representative Services sector)</div>

- <u>Perception on whether Waterford's Identity is Clearly Identified in the Minds of its Target Market</u>

The principle belief was that Waterford's identity was not clear to its target and segmented markets. One participant noted, however, that Waterford was not utilising its tourism offering to its maximum potential:

"Well not at the moment...I think people need to come together and invest further and show support"   (Local representative Transport sector)

"No its not, they wouldn't have a clear image of Waterford"

<div align="right">(Manager local Leisure Amenity)</div>

- <u>Responsibility for Managing Branding Activities of Waterford</u>

A wide range of opinions emerged with regard the responsibility for managing the branding activities for Waterford as a tourism destination. Two participants believed it was the City Council's responsibility, while one participant deemed it to be a special interest marketing group's responsibility, namely that of Discover Waterford. However, three participants were unsure and did not believe there was anybody in place. Interestingly, however, these three participants believed there needed to be an assigned person or persons

in place in a full time paid capacity. One participant believed Waterford was in danger of succumbing to generic national branding and contended that there is a need for stakeholders within Waterford to take ownership through further refinement, collaboration and unity:

"The Discover Waterford group are doing their best, but again its voluntary"   *(*Local Hotelier)

"I suppose somebody in the tourist office but who I don't know, whether they have anyone particular identified, a person for Waterford I don't know"   *(*Local Media representative)

"I don't think there is anybody there at the moment but I think there needs to be, and it needs to be well organised, structured and funded"
                                                    *(*Local representative Transport sector)

- <u>Constraints in the Appointment of Stakeholders to Manage the Destination Brand</u>

Three participants stated that conflicting interests between various stakeholders within Waterford was the main difficulty and noted that many stakeholders are caught up in their own business schedules and consequently fail to see the holistic picture of Waterford as a tourism destination. Two participants identified monetary issues highlighting budgeting and funding as major issues. One participant contended that the main limitation was the lack of professionalism and code of practice between Waterford's stakeholders:

"Their own agendas, conflicting interests"
                                                    *(*Local representative Services sector)

"I think it would be conflicting interests, and lack of professional expertise…there just is not the professionalism"

*(*Local representative Transport sector)

"Well each stakeholder has to manage their own brand, and their own business, and that is their primary concern"

*(*Local Media representative)

- <u>Consideration in Playing a Role in the Branding of Waterford</u>

The predominant reaction was of a willingness to contribute in some way to the branding of Waterford. One participant declared he would be happy to assist but would not be committed to the role on a full-time basis. Another participant believed it was time for new people to get involved to add creative and innovate dimensions to the process. Although one participant was unsure, he stated that if the correct product was in place he would consider further involvement.

"Yes because I think it would help our sector as well as everybody else"

*(*Local Food and Beverage proprietor)

"Yes but again I believe new people need to be getting involved again for their freshness, like bringing new ideas, creativity and innovation to the table" *(*Local representative Transport sector)

"I don't know, I would have to think about that, I think if the product was there, yes if the product was there but if it wasn't you would be wasting your time and everybody else's" *(*Local Media representative)

- How does your Stakeholder Assist or Facilitate the Branding of Waterford at Present?

A wide range of responses emerged all of which are important to Waterford attaining brand status. However, the principle consensus was that stakeholders assisted in promoting a positive image of Waterford to potential tourists. Three participants stated that they endorsed the use of current best practice, while two participants believed that they promoted and helped give Waterford exposure, where the opportunity arose. One participant contributed in a consultancy role to marketing initiatives:

"We assist by giving people pride in their town and city and encourage the community to keep their place well and to be welcoming to people"
*(*Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

"We try and keep our product and service to the highest standards; I think that is all we can do" *(*Local Hotelier)

- Stakeholder Groups you Work most Closely with in Relation to Branding Waterford as a Tourism Destination

The participants mainly worked with the sectors they would be in most regular contact with on an operational basis. One participant did not see himself as part of the tourism industry and therefore believed he did not work closely with any sectors but stated he would be happy to help if required. Interestingly one participant only realised, resulting from the interview the prospects available from working more closely with other sectors:

"Well you see we are not, we're not really part of the tourist business so we don't get involved…we are only happy tough to help if need be"
(Local Media representative)

"I suppose Failte Ireland South East and the City Council"

*(*Local representative Services sector)

"Mostly the hotels and the tourist boards, there is a massive opportunity to work with other sectors, your probably after opening up my eyes to it now" (Local Food and Beverage proprietor)

6.4 <u>Kilkenny Interview Findings</u>

Urban Destination B: Kilkenny City

Kilkenny is a medieval city, acclaimed for its craft and design and is known as the creative heart of Ireland. The city was named after a 6th Century monk called St Canice. Kilkenny is characterised by its compactness and its many beautifully restored buildings and winding slipways.

Table 6.2 Interview Participants' Profile: Kilkenny

Stakeholder Group	Interviewee
Food and Beverage	Local Food and Beverage Proprietor
Accommodation	Local Hotelier
Media	Local Representative Media Sector
Special Interest Group	Key Informant Special Interest Marketing Group
Leisure Amenity	Manager Local Leisure Amenity
Infrastructure/Transport	Local Representative Transport Sector
Government Body	Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority
Retail	Local Retailer
Local Authority	Key Informant City Council
Business	Key Informant Chamber of Commerce

6.4.1 <u>Stakeholder Unity</u>

This section will present the perceptions of the interviewees regarding the levels of stakeholder unity in Kilkenny. These perceptions are identified on the basis of the dimensions used in the stakeholder interview schedule.

- <u>Perception of Destination Image</u>

    The predominant view of Kilkenny's image was positive, with the majority of the participants believing the city's image was good. However, a number of participants contended that the image was blemished in recent times from negative press. A common trend throughout the interviewees was that they saw the image of Kilkenny on two fronts; on a positive note its medieval history and on a more negative observation of its stag and hen image.

    "Overall I would say it has, the reason why I think historically it is bringing a good image with it"

    *(*Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

    "Overall I think yes but I think Kilkenny has two images, I am going to be a bit awkward here, The first one is a one of a medieval tourist centre and then the second one is that of hen and stag nights and they both do not go together very well" *(*Local Media representative)

    "At present it is gone down, a few years ago it was very good but I would say in the last eight years the image has deteriorated"

    *(*Local representative Services sector)

- Perception on Whether Kilkenny is Managed Effectively by Public and Private Sectors

There was mixed feeling from the participants in relation to this question. A number believed the city was well managed while others believed it was not managed effectively. Those who contended that it was well managed pointed to the effective collaboration in relation to the city's management. The main basis for participants believing that the city was not being managed effectively by both sectors was because of sectoral interests and a lack of strategic vision between stakeholders:

"I think it is but you know there are always things that are not manageable…We started an initiative called "Kilkenny Cares"; it is a code of practice for clubs, pubs and late bars, and it involves the Chamber of Commerce, Kilkenny city vintners, an Garda Siochana, the Health Service Executive (HSE), Kilkenny Borough Council, Kilkenny County Council, Kilkenny Tourism, Kilkenny festivals, the Small Firms Association and Failte Ireland"

(Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

"I'd say public yes, all public sector stakeholders involved in running the destination are doing their best however some of the private sector I feel could do a lot more" (Key Informant Marketing Organisation)

- Perception of Main Challenges Involved Managing Kilkenny as a Tourism Destination

The principle outlook from the participants was that managing the large volume of tourist numbers was the main challenge whilst ensuring Kilkenny remains a desirable and attractive place for tourists to visit. One participant

mentioned ridding the image of stag and hen parties as the main challenge while another participant saw bringing all stakeholders together to work as a unified group towards a common goal and actually delivering on promises as the key challenge:

> *"Maintaining its uniqueness which is its medieval structure whilst adapting the town to modern circumstances"*
>
> *(*Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

> *"It would be an internal challenge; it would be about bringing the various stakeholder groups together to get a unified network"*
>
> *(*Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

- Do you take a Participative Role in the Managing of Kilkenny as a Tourism Destination?

The predominant response was of stakeholders who do take a participative role in the city's management. One participant stated that he works with a number of other destination stakeholders in relation to tourism, while other participants mentioned their specific functions in relation to their own sector. However, one participant asserted that he did not play any role in the city management:

> *"Yes, I am sure the county manager would be happier if I was saying no, but no we would meet with the elective members, the local authorities, Failte Ireland , its very open and frank discussions, just like ok we have an issue here we need to resolve it"*   (Local Media representative)

> *"Yes feel through the initiative Kilkenny Cares"*
>
> *(*Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

- Stakeholder Groups you Work most Closely in Relation to Tourism

  Most participants stated that they work with a number of different sectors regarding tourism issues and there is an adequate mix of public and private sector collaboration. These sectors vary from the health service to local special interest groups:

  > *"Failte Ireland, Kilkenny Tourism, the Gardai, the HSE"*
  >
  > (Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

  > *"Chamber of Commerce, Kilkenny city vintners, an Garda Siochana, the Health Service Executive, Kilkenny Borough Council, Kilkenny County Council, Kilkenny Tourism, Kilkenny festivals, the Small Firms Association"* (Local Food and Beverage Proprietor)

  > *"Well we work very closely with the hotel industry for instance, environmental groups"* (Key Informant Marketing Organisation)

- Level of Contact and Perception in Regards Developing Greater Stakeholder Unity

  Levels of contact between stakeholders and other sectors within Kilkenny in relation to tourism are formal and well planned. Each of the participants stated that they had regular contact with other destination stakeholders. One participant viewed these contacts as very advantageous in terms of developing a greater cohesiveness between stakeholders:

  > *"They would be fairly regular…we would meet three or four times every month…we also pick up the phone and be in contact with each other on a weekly basis"* (Local representative Services sector)

"Oh absolutely I think the actual value added of these groups sitting at a table can't be quantified it helps us generate ideas and pool resources"

*(*Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

- Main Reasons for Communicating with Other Destination Stakeholder Sectors

The main reasons for communicating were to retrieve and dispatch information as a group, in order to manage the destination more effectively and maintain a competitive advantage:

"To try retain our competitive advantage and to build on that and increase the brand and see where we can improve ourselves and drive the whole thing forward" *(*Local Hotelier)

"All the other sectors and bodies have a role to play sharing the responsibility" *(*Local representative Services sector)

- Perception of Potential Benefits Resulting from Effective Communication between Destination Stakeholders

The participants' views in relation to potential benefits centred on greater connectability, enhancing increased levels of consistency and thus the delivery of a superior quality product for the tourist. One participant spoke of yielding a more unified image of the destination, while another spoke about the development of a greater structured approach:

"More positive and unified image of Kilkenny"

*(*Key Informant Borough Council)

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"A co-ordinated approach and the standard will hopefully rise because of greater communication and collaboration, leading to a better quality service for the tourist"

<div align="right">

*(*Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

</div>

"Things are discussed...we can come to some sort of agreement on how to prevent these problems from happening and how to ensure that things are put in place for the future"   *(*Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

- <u>Opinion on Kilkenny's Chief Experience Officer</u>

A wide range of names and opinions emerged as who was believed to be the city's Chief Experience Officer. A key member of Kilkenny Tourism was mentioned on a number of occasions and other key figures known locally were put forward. Interestingly, however, one participant stated that there was no one person in command but favoured a group as he felt it was a post that should be occupied by a collective group:

"[Key member] of Kilkenny Tourism works on a part time basis and then we also have [key member of marketing company] who comes down once a month and works as a marketing consultant"

<div align="right">

*(*Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

</div>

"I don't think there is an overall person...we have ten groups around the table, because we recognise that no one agency can control it"

<div align="right">

*(*Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

</div>

- Perception on Stakeholders who Should be Involved in the Management of Kilkenny as a Tourism Destination

There was general consensus that there needs to be a management structure in place if tourism in Kilkenny is to remain sustainable. One participant commented that to large a working group may not be as productive. Three participants stated that at least one designated representative from each sector should be involved, while another participant noted that greater harmony between both public and private sectors is vital:

> *"I think having too big a committee is not going to work"*
>
> *(*Key Informant Borough Council)

> *"I believe there should be a representative at least from each sector"*
>
> *(*Local Hotelier)

> *"I think there needs to be commercial involvement like private sector, local authority and then from tourism itself, again greater unity between both sectors"*   *(*Local Media representative)

- Salience Levels of Stakeholders

The predominant response was of an overwhelming belief that the vintners had the most salience. One participant felt the local authority had the least salience:

> *"Oh most definitely the vintners"*   *(*Local Media representative)

> *"I would say the borough council have the least, with the vintners having the most"*   *(*Local representative Services sector*)*

- Opinion on Own Sectors Involvement

The participants believed their sectors were adequately involved in the destinations tourism activity. The responses varied from being involved a lot to participating when asked to contribute. One participant stated that they were involved because they wished so.

"We are involved in a lot of the festivals that happen in Kilkenny"

*(*Key Informant Borough Council)

"Yes because we pro actively go and get involved"

*(*Local Food and Beverage Proprietor Beverage)

- Perception on Association between Effective Destination Stakeholder Collaboration and the Creation of a Quality Tourist Experience

The principle view was that in order to deliver a quality experience for tourists there is a need for an association between effective collaboration and different stakeholders within Kilkenny. A number of participants stated that there is a need for a greater *"coming together", "communication"* and *combining of efforts"*. However, one participant felt that there was not enough collaboration between the various stakeholders, nothing, however, that could not be developed with a greater combined effort:

"I don't think things happen by accident…if you look under the surface it takes an awful lot of hard work to make something look simple"

*(*Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

"Yes absolutely because it is not about each individual sector doing their job, it is how you bring all these people together to do one thing and then

you get an elevation of effect and experience, and you need collaboration
and effective communication to reach that elevation"

<div align="right">*(*Key Informant Borough Council)</div>

- Final Thoughts on Level of Stakeholder Unity in Kilkenny

The level of unity amongst stakeholders in Kilkenny was perceived to be good. The participants believed that Kilkenny is in a better position in relation to tourism because of increased unity. Interestingly, however, the participants agreed that they cannot stand on their laurels, but need to continue progressing and combining efforts to make Kilkenny a superior tourist destination:

"I think we are much better at it than we would of being a year ago, but
again like everywhere else we have a lot of challenges and a lot more
work to be done"   *(*Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

"I think the best thing you can do is use best practice…I think that is the
difference, you should not just set your sights on being just as good you
should always strive to be best"

<div align="right">*(*Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)</div>

6.4.2 **Destination Differentiation**

This section presents the perceptions of the interviewees in relation to destination differentiation.

- Understanding of the Term Differentiation

The comprehension of differentiation among the participants was very similar. Each spoke of it in a positive light, regarding it as a way to strive for

uniqueness and individuality. One participant spoke of differentiation with regards positioning, while another saw it as a way of creating favourable lasting thoughts in tourists' minds, post visitation. Notably, one participant made specific reference to achieving differentiation was centred on the destination's ability to provide a memorable experience for the tourist:

> *"It is what one destination would have preferable to another and it might be that of a cost comparison, extra amenities, it might be something of specific interest to that person"*
>
> *(*Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

> *"A favourable imprint remains in their mind of the place"*
>
> *(*Local Media representative)

- <u>Perception of the Function of Differentiation in Relation to the Branding of Kilkenny</u>

The function of differentiation in relation to branding Kilkenny was perceived very important amongst the participants. They felt that its function was to promote Kilkenny as a quality destination and fun place to visit, while one participant saw it as a means of conveying positive impressions of the city to potential tourists. Interestingly, one participant stated that it was more of an emotional issue and the concept of emotion needed to be developed further.

> *"To put across the impression if you are selling an experience that that experience is going to be so much better here in Kilkenny, whether it be accommodation, food, craic, activities and so on"*
>
> *(*Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

"See for me differentiation is an emotional thing…I think the actual experience of Kilkenny is more of an emotional thing than the actual branding is"

<div align="right">

*(*Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

</div>

- Differentiation Objectives in Relation to Own Sector

Each participant had his/her own objectives in relation to their own sector, but importantly, all of which related back to holistically making Kilkenny a better tourism destination. Some participants mentioned marketing objectives, while others made reference to the fact that they tried to always meet and exceed tourist expectations in areas such as service quality and products available:

"I think it is marketing the quality products available…the accommodation stock Kilkenny boasts"   *(*Local Hotelier)

"Trying to put across the tag line the creative heart of Ireland and Kilkenny open your heart… it's a small city so you can get the perks of the city without losing that impersonal aspect that other cities have"

<div align="right">

(Local Retailer)

</div>

- Assessment of Differentiation Strategy Success

Success levels were predominantly measured against tourist numbers arriving into the city, revenue generated and in terms of occupancy levels of accommodation stock. However, one participant noted that there was scope for more in depth and detailed research and analysis on a more local level:

"Well we do not exactly do direct qualitative feedback, obviously everything in tourism is based on numbers but more so on revenue and in

terms of the extra accommodation stock we provided, and investment in the different products" (Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

"It all comes down to pounds, shillings and pence in the end, but I suppose there is room for us to do some qualitative or even quantitative research which is done by Failte Ireland nationally but not as detailed on a local level" (Local Hotelier)

- <u>Perception of Kilkenny's most Unique Selling Proposition and Existing Gaps</u>

Kilkenny's built heritage and medieval history were regarded as its most unique selling proposition. However, other propositions were highlighted, such as the quality of the city's infrastructure and the compactness of the city. Interestingly one participant made reference to empathy for the city held in the tourist's minds, but cautioned effective management is paramount to maintaining this unique empathy:

"I suppose it is the built heritage… it is again all about the creativity side of things and the fact that the city is so compact" (Local Media representative)

"It's the medieval city, it's the architecture, ambiance, the history that you feel when you walk around the city" (Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

"Tourist have a very strong empathy towards Kilkenny and you could not buy that, and the other then is the compact nature of the city and its heritage" (Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

- <u>Target Markets, Market Segments and Understanding of their Needs and Wants</u>

The most referred to market by the participants was the domestic market with the majority of participants highlighting Dublin as the principle market. The United Kingdom was deemed next popular especially in the main tourist season because of the city's close proximity to a variety of access routes. In relation to market segmentation week end breakers were judged to be the main market segment with tour groups coming in a close second. Interestingly, however, one participant stated that he did not believe Kilkenny targeted families but regarded it as a mix between middle-aged couples and young adults interested in hen and stag parities. The participants' views regarding the level of understanding of their market's needs and wants were innovative, in that a number of participants proactively meet with representatives from other markets promoting Kilkenny but also to enquire as to what the respective markets expect them to deliver. One participant was unsure if research was conducted but believed it would be beneficial.

- <u>Awareness of Activities Available in Kilkenny's Product Portfolio</u>

All the participants were confident of a good awareness of the bulk of activities available to tourists in Kilkenny. One participant, however, believed his understanding and awareness of Kilkenny's tourism product portfolio was associated with his position in the city. Thus, he believed that were he not a resident he would be not aware of his portfolio.

> *"I would be aware of them, I would definitely be aware of the main bulk of them"*   *(*Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

> *"Yes, I would have a fairly good understanding"*
>   *(*Local Media representative)

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- Availability to Participate with other Sectors to Combine Activities in Order to Deliver more Holistic Experiences to Tourists

All the participants declared that they were available and willing to participate in the combination of activities and efforts to create more holistic experiences for tourists in Kilkenny. One participant saw their sector as a catalyst for uniting sectors, while a number of participants noted that combining activities and efforts is essential for development. One participant stated that he was available but he did not think it should be a requirement:

> *"Yes, we work with the different sectors and see about combining activities"* (Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

> *"Oh absolutely yes… like no person or group is an island in terms of development and there are some things best done through other sectors that will impact tourism"*
> (Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

- Adequate Scope for Tourist Participation and Interaction in Activities Offered in Kilkenny

The predominant view was of sufficient opportunity to participate and interact in activities although there is always possibility of more. One participant believed that there is a certain degree of passiveness involved and contended that tourists need to be afforded additional ownership and be allowed discover and personalise their experience to a greater extent:

> *"We have a good variety of things to offer that involves tourists, we do some research in that area and much of the feedback relates to Kilkenny being very customer service focused, friendly and personalised"*
> (Manager local Leisure Amenity)

"Kilkenny has been quiet good in developing a number of festivals, the arts week, the Celtic weekend and I would say on those occasions that is the time you can get the most participation and interaction from the public and tourists" *(*Key Informant Marketing Organisation)

6.4.3 <u>Brand Evidence</u>

This selection presents the perceptions of the interviewees regarding brand evidence in Kilkenny.

- <u>Awareness of Brand Logo and Slogan for Kilkenny</u>

  Awareness levels of a recognised brand logo and slogan for Kilkenny varied. The majority of participants stated that they were aware and used them on much of their promotional material. However, two participants interviewed felt they were not aware. One participant contended awareness was more for an outside audience, while another stated that he would have no hesitation in using them but was unsure if there were any produced:

  "Yes I am, we use it on everything outside our own [organisation] brand, but anything we do on a collaborative basis we use it as a tourism brand" *(*Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

  "Yes not so much a logo, the word Kilkenny is written in a distinctive brush type font, and I suppose the name Kilkenny is a brand in itself, unlike other destinations we use the word Kilkenny as distinct from a graphic" *(*Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

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- Perception Function a Recognised Destination Brand can Play

The participants believed a brand acts as an influencer to differentiation, initiating constructive images and enhancing a destination's reputation. Interestingly one participant commented on the need for passionate work to be carried out in order to achieve a recognised brand for the destination. Another participant felt it extremely important that the destination deliverers on what it promotes itself.

"A brand like anything else is really to make yourself more recognisable, familiar, strike up positive images in people's heads, a form of a warm feeling and enhance the reputation"

*(*Local Food and Beverage Proprietor)

"It is your control mechanism for differentiation and for creating emotional attachments with people" (Manger local Leisure Amenity)

- Perception of Potential Benefits of Brand Use

The predominant view was that a recognised brand has many benefits. The principle benefits expressed was that a brand for Kilkenny acted as a 'reinforcer', a further identifier: it conjures up a quality unified image and perception and shows a cohesive effort from its stakeholders. One participant noted the cost advantages attributed to the use of a destination brand. Interestingly one participant drew attention to the fact that an emotional attachment towards the brand from the entire stakeholders involved was required:

"Well it's a further identification of quality and a unified effort"

*(*Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

"Potential benefits are that it can assist in creating a unified image and perception"   (Manager local Leisure Amenity)

"Now that we have a brand for tourism here in Kilkenny it is making life a lot easier and it cuts backs on individual costs, we have this brand to use for all events and it is established"

*(*Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

- <u>Perception of the Most Important Factors in Building a Recognised Brand for Kilkenny</u>

The most important factors identified included the creation of a common vision, delivering on what you say you will through appropriate allocation of resources and a unified assembly of the destination's stakeholders:

"Oh definitely the link between what the branding says and the reality of what you are marketing"

*(*Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

"For me it would be a unified vision on where we want to go and how we want to be perceived and the allocation of resources to differ that"

*(*Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

- <u>Perception on Whether Branding a Destination Poses Greater Challenges than that of a Product or Service</u>

All participants were in agreement that attempting to brand a destination posed greater challenges than branding a product or a service. Although the participants' responses varied three principle areas emerged. These included the expansive and diverse mix of stakeholders involved, difficultly of coordinating stakeholders and lack of control and organisation:

"Yes because it is a mixed bag really… with a destination you are relying on people who might not even realise they are part of the tourism industry" (Local Hotelier)

"Yes absolutely because I feel that with leisure some products and services, that idea of expectation can be more controlled, whereas tourism is more diverse" (Local representative Transport sector)

- <u>Perception on Whether Kilkenny's Identity is Clearly Identified in the Minds of its Target Market</u>

The majority of participants interviewed were unsure of whether Kilkenny's identity is clearly identified for its target market. The principle reasons given comprised of a deficiency in research carried out on Kilkenny tourism, an inadequacy in dispersing relevant tourism information among destination stakeholders and conveying mixed messages to tourists:

"Very good question, I suppose again we would have to do a bit more research, but I hope and feel that people do have a positive perception of Kilkenny"

(Local representative Media sector)

"I'm unsure because there are so many mixed messages out there at the moment... tourists perceptions are very fickle and are easily influenced"

(Local Food and Beverage proprietor)

- <u>Responsibility for Managing the Branding Activities of Kilkenny</u>

The predominant response was Kilkenny Tourism. Two participants viewed Failte Ireland as responsible, while one participant regarded Kilkenny Tourism but agreed he was really unsure as to who was responsible:

"Kilkenny tourism would be the marketing body, at the moment there is one part-time person and I think that position needs to go to full-time"

(Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

"Well again going back to destination management, Failte Ireland and Kilkenny tourism play lead roles and everyone else kind of hangs off that then"

(Local Retailer)

- Constraints in the Appointment of Stakeholders to Manage the Destination Brand

The main constraints expressed included a lack of funding, contrasting opinions between stakeholders, and the lack of a leader to drive the process forward:

"Finances, Tourism is Kilkenny's largest industry by far and we should have someone there full time but it is difficult to resource that, funding is key"

(Local representative Media sector)

"Well I suppose one of the constraints is that everyone has different perspectives so it is difficult to hammer those out into one unified approach"

(Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

- Consideration in Playing a Role in the Branding of Kilkenny

The predominant response was that all stakeholders would be willing to play a participative role in the branding of Kilkenny. One participant mentioned the importance of the tourism industry to Kilkenny as her main motivator, while another participant looked at the situation holistically; viewing what is beneficial for Kilkenny will have a positive knock on effect on their business. However, one participant, because of the line of business they were involved

in would have to treat the area with caution but stated he would welcome any opportunity for involvement:

"Yes I think from [my organisations] point of view we would because tourism is such a vital industry to us; it would be an area we would be happy to be involved in" (Local Hotelier)

"I would say [my sector] would like to be asked but again [my sector] has to tread a very delicate balance, in that we have to maintain a freedom to report , and reflect without prejudice , so that could be tricky" (Local representative Media sector)

"Yes I mean of course we would get involved, what is good for Kilkenny will be good for us" (Manager local Leisure Amenity)

- <u>How does your Stakeholder Assist or Facilitate the Branding of Kilkenny at Present?</u>

This question heralded a broad range of responses. Again much of the feedback was positive and showed there was a willingness to contribute. One participant stated that they lend their facilities for meetings when required; others claimed they carried out market research, while two participants assisted primarily on a consultancy basis:

"We offer our expertise in dealing in the area" (Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

"We do a lot of research in terms of marketing abroad and identifying what the markets want and what they are saying, I suppose we try and plug into these ideas and information" (Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority)

> *"Help develop eye catching experiential images and act as more of a consultancy role"*   *(*Key Informant Marketing Organisation)

- Stakeholder Groups you Work most Closely with in Relation to Branding Kilkenny as a Tourism Destination

   The local authority was regarded as the group with whom the stakeholders work most closely with. Other groups mentioned included the Kilkenny Cares initiative, environmental groups and Kilkenny Tourism. Interestingly, it was noted that some stakeholder groups were excluded because they did not have representatives:

   > *"The local authority would be the absolute key because we can talk all we want about it for forever and a day but they are the ones that get on the ground in an operational sense and get things done"*
   >
   > *(*Key Informant Chamber of Commerce)

   > *"Mainly the people within the Kilkenny Cares initiative"*
   >
   > *(*Local representative Services sector)

6.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a detailed account of the findings of the stakeholder interviews. The interview focused on three areas; stakeholder unity, destination differentiation and brand evidence. The goal of the interviews was to ascertain the stakeholders' views in relation to these three areas at their respective destinations, therefore leaving the reader make up their own mind and judgment. In general, it was concluded that a sound structured interview was designed and implemented and that the findings emanating from the questions are robust. The tables below are presented so as to enable the reader to attain a concise synopsis of the overall interview findings.

Table 6. 3 Overview of Stakeholder Unity

Dimension Questions	Waterford	Kilkenny
Stakeholder Unity		
Effective management and collaboration between public and private sectors	**Low**	**Moderate**
Perception of challenges involved in attaining unity	**Good**	**Good**
Participative roles	**Minimal**	**Satisfactory**
Number of stakeholder groups working together	**Limited**	**Many**
Level of contact between stakeholder groups	**Low**	**Moderate**
Frequency of contact between stakeholder groups	**Ad-Hoc**	**Regular**
Formality of contact	**Unstructured**	**Structured**
Assignment of leader specific to tourism Industry	**Poor**	**Adequate**
Overall levels Stakeholder Unity	**Low**	**Moderate**

Table 6. 4 Overview of Destination Differentiation

Dimension Questions	Waterford	Kilkenny
Destination Differentiation		
Awareness of term	**Good**	**Good**
Agreement of destinations most unique selling proposition	**Varied**	**Specific**
Understanding of target markets needs and wants	**Vague**	**Moderate**
Awareness levels of activities available in product and service portfolio	**Low**	**Moderate**
Ability to combine resources and amalgamate themes	**Adequate**	**Adequate**
Potential scope for increased tourist participation and interaction	**Yes**	**Yes**
Overall levels of Destination Differentiation	**Low, scope for significant improvement**	**Good, scope for improvement**

Table 6.5 **Overview of Destination Brand Evidence**

Dimension Questions	Waterford	Kilkenny
Destination Brand Evidence		
Destination logo/slogan	**Many**	**One**
Perception of factors important in building a destination brand	**Adequate**	**Adequate**
Awareness of challenges involved in building a destination brand	**Good**	**Good**
Destination identity clearly defined in tourist's minds	**Vague**	**Vague**
Destination brand manager	**No Official person**	**Part-time position**
Consideration of brand management involvement	**Willingness**	**Willingness**
Number of stakeholder groups working together in relation to branding the destination	**Limited number**	**Many**
Overall levels of Destination Brand Evidence	**Low**	**Moderate**

Chapter Seven

Questionnaire Findings

7.1 <u>Introduction</u>

This chapter presents the findings of the quantitative aspect of the study which incorporated a questionnaire to identify and present the tourists evaluations of Kilkenny and Waterford. The sample population n=60 and number of respondents n=30 at each destination are identified. An overview of the respondents' demographic profile as well as their responses to various questions such as to transport, accommodation, and length of stay are detailed. A five point Likert Scale was adopted to distinguish the degree to which the respondents felt positively or negatively towards various statements regarding the different areas outlined in the case protocol. The overall mean values, standard deviation values and "P" values were determined to highlight significant differences between the variables evaluated. The areas in which the tourists have to evaluate the destinations is divided and presented into five individual areas: the variety of quality leisure activities available for various age groups, the variety and quality of leisure amenities available, the overall quality of destination experience, the overall satisfaction level and the likelihood to re-visit.

7.2 <u>Sample Size and Number of Respondents</u>

The sample includes an equal weighting of respondents from the urban areas of Waterford and Kilkenny (See table 7.1).

Table 7.1 Sample Population and Respondents

	Sample Size	No. of Respondents
Waterford	30	30
Kilkenny	30	30
Total	60	60

7.3 <u>Profile of Questionnaire Respondents</u>

Table 7.2 presents the findings of the demographic variables from Waterford and Table 7.3 presents the findings of the demographic variables from Kilkenny. The demographic variables evaluated in these tables are identical and include: gender, age, nationally, transport, mode of travel, purpose of visit, stay upon arrival, number of previous visits to destination, length of stay at the destination and a comparison with other destinations visited.

Table 7.2 Demographic Variables Waterford

WATERFORD						
Gender	Male 53.3%			Female 46.7%		
Age	20-24 10%	25-30 13.3%	31-34 3.3%	35-40 6.7%	41-50 20%	50+ 46.7%
Nationality	Irish 43.3%	U.K. 10%	EU 6.7%	U.S.A. 30%	Other 10%	
Transport	Air 20%	Rail 30%	Bus 23.3%	Car Hire 6.7%	Own Car 20%	
Mode of Travel	Independent Traveller 83.3%			Package Coach Tour 16.7%		
Purpose of Visit	Main Holiday 36.7%		Short Break 60%		Visit Family /Friends 3.3%	
Stay upon Arrival	Family 3.3%		Friends 10%	Hotel 73.3%	Self-Catering 13.3%	
Number previous Visits	Never 53.3%	One 20%	Two 3.3%	Three 10%	Four 10%	Five+ 3.3%
Length of Stay	Overnight 23.3%		Weekend 60%		One Week 16.7%	
Comparison with other destinations visited	Higher 53.3%		Equal 46.7%		Lower 0%	

Table 7.3 Demographic Variables Kilkenny

KILKENNY					
Gender	Male 33.3%			Female 66.7%	
Age	20-24 3.3%	25-30 10%	31-34 16.7%	35-40 0%	41-50 23.3%	50+ 46.7%
Nationality	Irish 43.3%	U.K. 13.3%	EU 16.7%	U.S.A. 26.7%	Other 0%
Transport	Air 0%	Rail 33.3%	Bus 26.7%	Car Hire 16.7%	Own Car 23.3%
Mode of Travel	Independent Traveller 73.3%			Package Coach Tour 26.7%	
Purpose of Visit	Main Holiday 31%		Short Break 55.2%		Visit Family/Friends 13.8%
Stay upon Arrival	Family 3.4%	Friends 6.9%	Hotel 69%	Self-Catering 20.7%	
Number previous Visits	Never 40%	One 20%	Two 10%	Three 13.3%	Four 0%	Five+ 16.7%
Length of Stay	Overnight 30%		Weekend 66.7%		One Week 3.3%
Comparison with other destinations visited	Higher 63.3%		Equal 36.7%		Lower 0%

As seen in Tables 7.2 and 7.3 there is a good mix of both male and female respondents at both destinations. Various age groups are represented, with the fifty and over age group representing the majority of respondents at both destinations. A diverse array of nationalities participated in the questionnaire, with the predominant nationality being Irish, that is, the domestic market. A wide selection of transport modes were used by the respondents when travelling to the destination. Each mode was popular but was very much dictated by the market segment. The main rail users included the Irish domestic market on short breaks, the main bus users included packaged tours who where on a set tour itinerary, while many of the respondents using their own car where again Irish.

Interestingly, Waterford has a higher percentage of visitors using air transport mainly due to its air access facility. Car hire was most popular with visitors staying a week or longer and among those who were mainly visiting from North America and Mainland Europe. The majority of tourists visiting both destinations were independent travellers, with a reduced number on packaged coach tours. The purpose of the tourists' visits was very similar across both destinations, with short break holidays being the most popular, followed by main holiday trips. The Irish domestic market predominantly stated short breaks as their main purpose of visit while those respondents who stated main holiday as their purpose were North American visitors on set tour itineraries. Hotels were the most popular source of accommodation for the respondents at both destinations, with self catering the second most popular. The respondents were asked to highlight the number of previous visits they had made to the destination. Tables 7.2 and 7.3 show the main response at both destinations was that they had never before visited the destination in which they were being questioned, that is, Kilkenny and Waterford The majority of respondents questioned, who had never previously visited the destination, were North American on a packaged tour and on their main holiday. Visitors who had visited the destination twice or more were mainly Irish, repeat visitors and on short break holidays. In relation to the length of stay at the destination a diverse range of answers ensued. The most predominant answer at both destinations was week-end i.e Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, followed by one night stays. Weekend visitors mainly consisted of the domestic market while visitors staying overnight were primarily on packaged tours and on specific tour itineraries. Respondents were asked to rate their stay at the destination in comparison to other destinations in which they had visited in Ireland. Tables 7.2 and 7.3 illustrate that at both destinations the respondents rated their stay higher or equal than other destinations visited. Interestingly, no respondent rated both Waterford and Kilkenny lower which bodes very positive for both destinations.

7.3.1 <u>Significance of Variables</u>

The information gathered in Tables 7.2 and 7.3 is important as it assists the destinations to identify their target markets by the nationalities represented and relevant market segments through the age groups. It also provides the destinations with information on the most popular modes of transport used by tourists arriving at their destination. The purpose of their visit is also determined by their accommodation preferences upon arrival. Finally it enables the destinations to ascertain how their destination is rated in comparison to other destinations. By gathering such information the destinations can cultivate more in-depth information on their tourists' needs, wants, attitudes and preferences, which can be used for market research purposes. This information will therefore enable the destinations to highlight tourist trends and areas of the destination that are performing well and areas that need increased attention. By doing research and attaining such in-depth information the destinations become more focused, specific, better skilled, and capable of delivering enhanced quality products and services. In effect, experiences will become easier to create and the overall quality levels of the destinations will be enhanced.

7.4 <u>Tourist Evaluations</u>

The following section presents the respondents' views in relation to how they perceive the variety and quality of destination leisure activities, the variety and quality of destination leisure amenities, the quality of experience, destination satisfaction levels and their likelihood to return to both destinations; Waterford and Kilkenny. The findings of these destinations are presented by highlighting the overall mean values and standard deviation values, while a more descriptive presentation of the statistical findings highlighting the levels of significant difference between the variables evaluated at both destinations are confirmed using Independent T-Tests.

<u>Destination Leisure Activities for Various Age Groups</u>

The following section represents the respondents' views in relation to how they perceive the variety and quality of leisure activities available for different age groups at Waterford and Kilkenny. Respondents were asked to indicate what they thought of the degree to which leisure activities at the destination satisfied children, teenagers, young adults, adults, and those sixty years and over. As shown in Table 7.4a, having collated the responses and obtained the mean values for all the various age groups in relation to the quality and variety of leisure activities available, Kilkenny scored higher than Waterford in all but one, the 'children' age group.

Table 7.4a Destination Leisure Activities for Various Age Groups

	County	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Children	Waterford	18	3.50	.707	.167
	Kilkenny	16	3.25	.447	.112
Teenagers	Waterford	19	3.26	.562	.129
	Kilkenny	16	3.38	.500	.125
Young Adults (20-30)	Waterford	20	3.65	.671	.150
	Kilkenny	29	4.55	.572	.106
Adults	Waterford	30	3.93	.740	.135
	Kilkenny	30	4.30	.466	.085
60+	Waterford	25	3.96	.889	.178
	Kilkenny	29	4.03	.186	.034

Further statistical assessments using Independent T-Tests were carried out in order to obtain the level of significant difference between the two destinations in relation to the variables under evaluation.

Table 7.4 b Destination Leisure Activities for Various Age Groups

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Children	Equal variances assumed	5.978	.020	1.214	32	.234	.250	.206	-.170	.670
	Equal variances not assumed			1.246	29.071	.223	.250	.201	-.160	.660
Teenagers	Equal variances assumed	.308	.583	-.616	33	.542	-.112	.181	-.481	.257
	Equal variances not assumed			-.623	32.880	.538	-.112	.180	-.477	.254
Young Adults (20-30)	Equal variances assumed	.685	.412	-5.052	47	.000	-.902	.178	-1.261	-.543
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.905	36.606	.000	-.902	.184	-1.274	-.529
Adults	Equal variances assumed	.632	.430	-2.297	58	.025	-.367	.160	-.686	-.047
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.297	48.893	.026	-.367	.160	-.687	-.046
60+	Equal variances assumed	12.834	.001	-.441	52	.661	-.074	.169	-.413	.265
	Equal variances not assumed			-.411	25.809	.684	-.074	.181	-.447	.298

As shown in Table 7.4b, Kilkenny has a positive significant difference to that of Waterford for Young Adults (Sig .000) and Adults (Sig .025) in relation to the variety and quality of destination leisure activities available. No significant difference emerged between the two destinations in relation to Children (Sig .223), Teenagers (Sig .542) and Adults 60+ (Sig .684).

Destination Leisure Amenities

The following section presents the respondents' perceptions on the variety and quality of leisure amenities available at both destinations. Respondents were asked their view in relation to the variety of different grades of accommodation and the quality food and beverage outlets available at that destination.

As shown in Table 7.5a, when the responses were collated to obtain the mean values of the respondents in relation to the quality and variety of leisure amenities available, Kilkenny was rated higher than Waterford in relation to variety of accommodation stock. Waterford, however, rated higher than Kilkenny in relation to the quality of food and beverage outlets available.

Table 7. 5a Destination Leisure Amenities

	County	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Variety Accommodation Stock	Waterford	30	3.97	.765	.140
	Kilkenny	30	4.57	.504	.092
Quality F & B Outlets	Waterford	29	4.00	.756	.140
	Kilkenny	30	3.77	.568	.104

Table 7. 5b Destination Leisure Amenities

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower
Variety Accommodation Stock	Equal variances assumed	.068	.795	-3.588	58	.001	-.600	.167	-.935	-.265
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.588	50.188	.001	-.600	.167	-.936	-.264
Quality F & B Outlets	Equal variances assumed	.036	.851	1.343	57	.185	.233	.174	-.115	.581
	Equal variances not assumed			1.337	51.975	.187	.233	.175	-.117	.584

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As shown in Table 7.5b, further statistical analysis on the variety of accommodation stock and the quality of food and beverage outlets available, Kilkenny has a positive significant difference to that of Waterford in relation variety of accommodation stock available (Sig .001), while there was no significant difference detected between the two destinations for the quality of food and beverage outlets available (Sig .185).

Quality of Destination Experience

The following findings present the respondents views in relation to the quality of their overall destination experience at both destinations. Respondents were asked their views in relation to the quantity of tourist information outlets available, signage and directions around the city, opportunities to participate in tourist activities, opportunities to combine leisure activities and opportunities to shape own use of environment. Having collated the responses to obtain the mean values of the respondents in relation to the quality of destination experience, Kilkenny scored higher than Waterford in all aspects.

Table 7.6a Quality of Destination Experience

	County	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Quantity of Information Outlets	Waterford	30	3.63	.964	.176
	Kilkenny	29	3.97	.499	.093
Signage	Waterford	30	3.37	1.033	.189
	Kilkenny	30	3.90	.403	.074
Opportunities to participate in activities	Waterford	28	3.57	.742	.140
	Kilkenny	30	3.90	.481	.088
Opportunities to shape own use of environment	Waterford	29	3.48	.785	.146
	Kilkenny	30	3.73	.450	.082
Opportunities to combine leisure activities	Waterford	29	3.69	.761	.141
	Kilkenny	30	4.20	.484	.088
Overall destination Experience Quality	Waterford	30	3.97	.669	.122
	Kilkenny	30	4.23	.430	.079

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Table 7.6b Quality of Destination Experience

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
QuantityInformation Outlets	Equal variances assumed	21.267	.000	-1.653	57	.104	-.332	.201	-.735	.070
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.670	43.798	.102	-.332	.199	-.733	.069
Signage	Equal variances assumed	27.984	.000	-2.634	58	.011	-.533	.202	-.939	-.128
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.634	37.605	.012	-.533	.202	-.943	-.123
Opportunities to particpate in activities	Equal variances assumed	11.731	.001	-2.015	56	.049	-.329	.163	-.655	-.002
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.987	45.764	.053	-.329	.165	-.662	.004
Opportunities to shape own use of environment	Equal variances assumed	12.406	.001	-1.511	57	.136	-.251	.166	-.583	.081
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.498	44.295	.141	-.251	.167	-.588	.086
Opportunities to combine leisure activities	Equal variances assumed	8.572	.005	-3.085	57	.003	-.510	.165	-.842	-.179
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.062	47.230	.004	-.510	.167	-.846	-.175
Overall destination Experience Quality	Equal variances assumed	.903	.346	-1.837	58	.071	-.267	.145	-.557	.024
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.837	49.494	.072	-.267	.145	-.558	.025

As shown in Table 7.6b, further statistical assessment in relation to the quality of destination experience illustrated that Kilkenny has a positive significant difference to that of Waterford in relation to opportunities to participate in leisure activities (Sig .053), signage (Sig.012) and opportunities to combine leisure activities (Sig .004). There was no significant difference detected between the two destinations for the quantity of tourist information outlets available (Sig .102), opportunities to shape one's use of own environment (Sig .1.41) and the quality of destination experience (Sig .071).

Destination Satisfaction

The following section presents the respondents views in relation to their overall satisfaction levels. The variables used to determine the respondents' destination satisfaction level include, the quality of transportation access and links, the feeling of safety and security, levels of disability access, the friendliness of the host community and overall value for money. As illustrated in Table 7.7a, the responses in relation to satisfaction levels with the destination, Kilkenny scored higher than Waterford in every aspect but one, namely safety and security.

Table 7.7a Destination Satisfaction

	County	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Transportation Access and Links	Waterford	30	3.50	.777	.142
	Kilkenny	30	4.13	.346	.063
Safety	Waterford	30	4.37	.890	.162
	Kilkenny	30	4.33	.479	.088
Disability	Waterford	24	3.46	.932	.190
	Kilkenny	18	3.67	.594	.140
Friendliness of Host Community	Waterford	30	4.57	.568	.104
	Kilkenny	30	4.83	.379	.069
Value for Money	Waterford	30	4.00	.643	.117
	Kilkenny	30	4.07	.254	.046
Overall Destination Satisfaction	Waterford	30	4.17	.531	.097
	Kilkenny	30	4.43	.504	.092

Table 7.7b Destination Satisfaction

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower
Transportation Access and Links	Equal variances assumed	19.200	.000	-4.080	58	.000	-.633	.155	-.944	-.323
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.080	40.056	.000	-.633	.155	-.947	-.320
Safety	Equal variances assumed	4.639	.035	.181	58	.857	.033	.185	-.336	.403
	Equal variances not assumed			.181	44.528	.857	.033	.185	-.338	.405
Disability	Equal variances assumed	4.599	.038	-.829	40	.412	-.208	.251	-.716	.299
	Equal variances not assumed			-.882	39.138	.383	-.208	.236	-.686	.269
Friendliness of Host Community	Equal variances assumed	16.431	.000	-2.138	58	.037	-.267	.125	-.516	-.017
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.138	50.539	.037	-.267	.125	-.517	-.016
Value for Money	Equal variances assumed	7.680	.007	-.528	58	.599	-.067	.126	-.319	.186
	Equal variances not assumed			-.528	37.809	.601	-.067	.126	-.322	.189
Overall Destination Satisfaction	Equal variances assumed	2.417	.125	-1.996	58	.051	-.267	.134	-.534	.001
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.996	57.847	.051	-.267	.134	-.534	.001

As shown in Table 7.7b, having carried out further statistical analysis regarding destination satisfaction levels, a positive significant difference was observed between Kilkenny and Waterford in relation to transport and access links (Sig .000), and friendliness of host community (Sig .037). There was no significant difference detected in relation to safety (Sig .857), disability facilities (Sig .383), and value for money (Sig .601).

Likelihood to Re-Visit

The following section represents the respondents' attitudes in relation to their likelihood of returning to the destination visited. The variables used to determine the respondents' views on their likelihood to re-visit the destination include likelihood to recommend and likelihood to return. As shown in Table 7.8a, the mean values in relation to whether tourists were likely to recommend or return, Kilkenny scored higher than Waterford in both contexts.

Table 7.8a Likelihood to Re-visit

	County	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Likelihood to recommend	Waterford	30	4.33	.606	.111
	Kilkenny	30	4.43	.504	.092
Likelihood to return	Waterford	30	4.23	.568	.104
	Kilkenny	30	4.40	.498	.091

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Table 7.8b *Likelihood to Re-visit*

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Likelihood to recommend	Equal variances assumed	.685	.411	-.695	58	.490	-.100	.144	-.388	.188
	Equal variances not assumed			-.695	56.121	.490	-.100	.144	-.388	.188
Likelihood to return	Equal variances assumed	.105	.747	-1.208	58	.232	-.167	.138	-.443	.110
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.208	57.025	.232	-.167	.138	-.443	.110

As shown in Table 7.8b, following further statistical assessment regarding the likelihood of tourists to return and recommend the destination, there was no significant difference detected for likelihood to return (Sig .490) for likelihood to recommend (Sig .232)

7.5 Chapter Conclusion

Having completed the primary research, the resulting findings clearly indicate significant and non significant differences between both destinations. An overview of the questionnaire primary research findings are presented in the Tables 7.9 through 7.13. The tourist questionnaire findings are presented under the following dimensions: quality of destination leisure activities, quality of destination amenities, quality of overall experience, overall satisfaction levels and likelihood to re-visit the destination. The tables below are presented so as to enable the reader to attain a concise synopsis of the overall questionnaire findings. The findings are presented without bias or judgment and entirely on the facts amassed.

Table 7.9 Overview of Destination Leisure Activities for Various Age Groups

Dimension Questions	Waterford	Kilkenny
Destination Leisure Activities for Various Age Groups		
Children	**Fair**	**Fair**
Teenagers	Fair	Fair
Young Adults	Satisfactory	Very Satisfactory
Adults	Satisfactory	Very Satisfactory
60+	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Table 7. 10 *Overview of Destination Leisure Amenities*

Dimension Questions	Waterford	Kilkenny
Destination Leisure Amenities		
Variety of accommodation stock	**Satisfactory**	**Very satisfactory**
Quality of food and beverage outlets	**Satisfactory**	**Satisfactory**

Table 7.11 Overview of Quality of Destination Experience

Dimension Questions	Waterford	Kilkenny
Quality of Destination Experience		
Quantity of tourist information outlets	**Good**	**Good**
Signage	**Fair**	**Good**
Opportunities to participate in leisure activities	**Fair**	**Good**
Opportunities to combine leisure activities	**Fair**	**Good**
Opportunities to shape own use of environment	**Good**	**Good**
Overall Levels of Destination Quality	Fair/Good	Good

Table 7.12 Overview of Destination Satisfaction

Dimension Questions	Waterford	Kilkenny
Destination Satisfaction		
Transportation access and links	**Fair**	**Satisfactory**
Safety and security	**Satisfactory**	**Satisfactory**
Disability access	**Fair**	**Fair**
Friendliness of host community	**Satisfactory**	**Very Satisfactory**
Value for money	**Satisfactory**	**Satisfactory**
Overall Destination Satisfaction	**Fair/Satisfactory**	**Satisfactory**

Table 7.13 Overview of Likelihood to Re-Visit

Dimension Questions	Waterford	Kilkenny
Likelihood to Re-visit		
Likelihood to recommend	**Likely**	**Likely**
Likelihood to return	**Likely**	**Likely**

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Chapter Eight

Discussion

8.1 <u>Introduction</u>

This chapter discusses the contribution of stakeholders in the processes of creating and branding a destination experience and how the degree of stakeholder unity can impact on the creation and branding of tourism destination experiences. The findings of both data collection methods presented in Chapters Six and Seven are discussed. The consequences of the research findings for the urban tourism destinations, Waterford and Kilkenny, are examined and discussed.

8.2 <u>Aims and Objectives</u>

Many challenges are faced in developing memorable tourist experiences and branding tourism destinations. Growing competition coupled with the need for enhanced customer value makes this process even more arduous and testing to deliver. There are relatively few articles to be found in academic literature with regard to the promotion of locations as brands (Pike, 2005) and there is a recognised need for empirical research into this area (Caldwell *et al.*, 2004). This research has sought to respond to this call and in addition proposed that there is a need for the development and amalgamation of destination branding and destination management research with the emerging area of experience management. To achieve this it is imperative that greater stakeholder cohesion is developed at destination level with destination stakeholders working together as a unified team to create and manage holistic tourist experiences in order to deliver customer value, build competitive advantage and develop a recognisable tourist destination brand.

Three research objectives were developed in order to test the importance of strong stakeholder unity as being a key success factor in building and branding urban destination experiences. These objectives are:

- To investigate the degree of stakeholder unity at each urban destination
- To examine the relationship between destination stakeholder unity and the quality of destination experience.
- To examine the relationship between destination stakeholder unity and destination brand development.

These objectives were developed in order to test three propositions, outlined below:

P.1. Strong stakeholder unity has a positive relationship with the quality of destination experience.

P.2. Strong stakeholder unity positively increases the prospect of creating holistic tourist experiences, thus achieving destination differentiation.

P.3. Strong stakeholder unity positively enhances the potential to create differentiation at a destination and thus the development of a recognised destination brand.

8.3 Discussion of Main Findings

The findings from the case investigations into the destination management and destination branding activities of Waterford and Kilkenny were presented in the previous chapter. This chapter will discuss these findings based on the five dimensions which were explored in each destination:

1. The Levels of Destination Stakeholder Unity.
2. The Levels of Destination Differentiation.
3. The Levels of Destination Brand Evidence.

4. The Quality of Tourist Destination Experience.
5. Research Propositions Tested.

The discussion of these dimensions will then be culminated with an analysis of the findings to see if the results support or reject the propositions offered.

8.3.1 Levels of Destination Stakeholder Unity

The various stakeholders were chosen by means of utilising a stakeholder mapping process and all were asked a number of questions derived from the case protocol in relation to stakeholder unity at their destination. Questions focused on areas such as Destination Image, Stakeholder Collaboration, Intensity and frequency of Stakeholder Contact, Destination Management practices, Perceived Benefits of Collaboration and perceived levels of relative Salience. All respondents were also given the opportunity to articulate their own thoughts regarding the relationship between stakeholder unity and the delivery of quality tourist experiences. A synopsis of the findings regarding the level of stakeholder unity at each destination is shown in Figure 6.3.

8.3.1.1 Destination Image

The initial aim was to ascertain the stakeholders' viewpoint on whether they believed their destination had a good image or not. This question was asked to determine if the stakeholders were in agreement in relation to the image of their destination or whether their perceptions varied. If perceptions vary this can often be an indicator of low levels of consensus and may indicate that destination stakeholder unity may be low. In Waterford the question of destination image was met with quite divergent views, a number believing it was positive while others believing further work is required. Although it is unlikely that all stakeholders will ever be in complete agreement as to the quality or nature of the destination

image, a significant disparity in views is the first sign of poor stakeholder unity. In Kilkenny there was a much greater sense of consensus from the majority of stakeholders. There was general agreement that the destinations image was appropriate and positive. This unity of thought is in a marked contrast to the situation in Waterford and is the first indicator that levels of stakeholder unity in Kilkenny is likely to be higher.

8.3.1.2 <u>Stakeholder Collaboration</u>

Collaboration between stakeholders is a key indicator of stakeholder unity and shared endeavour. Both destinations acknowledged that improvement in collaboration could be enhanced particularly between public and private sectors. Notwithstanding this general need for improved collaboration there was a marked difference between current levels of collaboration in the respective destinations. In Waterford collaboration among stakeholders was seen by the majority to be lacking, thus having a directly negative effect on attempts to establish unified relationships and effectively managing the destination. Lack of a common vision, leadership and mediation in order to unite sectors within the destination were deemed the must hindering factors in achieving effective tourism management. Accumulation of such hindering factors can result in a lack of organisation, direction and an inability to react to the evolving milieu. In Kilkenny there was greater evidence of collaboration. However, there was a lack of consensus in relation to whether the destination was effectively managed through a collaborative effort from both public and private sectors. Sectoral interests and an unclear strategic vision in relation to tourism were also regarded as a major hindrance. It is only when these problems are addressed and rectified, by viewing the scene holistically and not through any one self-interested agenda that the possibility of successfully building cohesive

structures to develop stronger stakeholder unity may be established, a view supported by Preble (2005).

8.3.1.3 Stakeholder Contact

The responses from the various stakeholders at both destinations in relation to contact levels addressing aspects such as the number of stakeholder groups working together, formality and frequency of contact, stakeholder contact in Waterford was rated as low, while levels of contact in Kilkenny were deemed moderate. Although this finding was to some extent anticipated due to the choice of cases being determined by divergent levels of unity, the findings did give clues as to the reasons for the disparate levels of stakeholder unity. Management between public and private sectors in Waterford was found to be partial and disjointed, with stakeholder contact informal and lacking in structure. The main reasons put forward for this low level of stakeholder contact included lack of structured meeting schedules, other business commitments taking priority and the fact that much of the work was done on a voluntary basis. Many of the stakeholders in Waterford are cognisant of the serious impact poor levels of contact are having on stakeholder unity and are aware that the time has come for the stakeholders to take steps to rectify these issues and develop stronger stakeholder unity. Offering a sub-standard tourism product is one such example of the possible impact of poor stakeholder unity. In Kilkenny stakeholder contact was found to be more advanced with exchanges more regular, more formal and better structured. This increased contact both in terms of frequency, formality and intensity is found to give rise to reciprocal increases in perceived unity and shared endeavour. Subsequent findings will give a clearer picture of the impact of this increased contact and will provide support for the research propositions and Van Gelder's (2005) assertion that broadening stakeholder relationships and contact strengthens unity and

allows for a greater ability to share and enhance such issues as destination strategising, destination tourism development and management.

8.3.1.4 Collaboration Benefits

Despite variances in unity and contact levels, participants at both case destinations were unanimous in their agreement that the main reasons for communicating with other stakeholders was to provide and acquire information, enhance communication and collaboration and to build stronger relationships. Other potential benefits of effective communication asserted by stakeholders in Waterford included a greater ability to be pro-active rather than reactive, work as a team, pool knowledge, share resources, identify a common vision, thus improving the likelihood of increased customer satisfaction. Similarly, in Kilkenny stakeholders put forward such benefits as enhancing greater connectability, increasing consistency in value delivery, thereby leading to the delivery of a superior product. These responses validate the importance of strong stakeholder unity and work by Gnoth, (2004), Aas *et al*., (2005), Van Gelder (2005) and Taylor *et al.* (2006). Amazingly the stakeholders were aware of the potential benefits of greater stakeholder collaboration, yet remarkably very little was being implemented in order to go about realising these benefits. This gives rise to some serious questions regarding leadership and coordination mechanisms at both destinations: Why are stakeholders not formalising collaboration amongst themselves?, What are the factors preventing such a collaboration?

8.3.1.5 Destination Management

In destination management terms it is a cause for concern that neither destination had a specific person in a full-time paid formal position whose role it is to specifically direct, mediate and bring together the

expertise of those stakeholders involved in the destination and the wider tourism industry. Kilkenny did have a part-time person with some responsibility for stakeholder coordination and hoped to make this position full time in the near future. In Waterford the stakeholders articulated that they wished to have a permanent person in such a position within the next three to five years. However, the proposed time frame of this important appointment must be questioned given that Kilkenny and indeed many other competing destinations are likely to have filled similar positions within one year. Both destinations stated that they favoured a group structure to manage the destination, but contended that such structures must be kept tight as too large a group would not be as productive and may hinder output. The findings show that stakeholders would value the presence of a designated destination manager, thus validating previous work by Voss (2004) as to the need for a person or group of personnel to fill this important position within tourist destinations. The present findings reiterate the necessity, and stakeholder desire, for both destinations to address current deficiencies in areas such as leadership and organisation, which are seen as prohibiting stakeholder unity from developing.

8.3.1.6 <u>Stakeholder Salience</u>

The issue of salience levels among destination stakeholders was met with varied response. In Waterford the majority of stakeholders were unsure of who the most influential stakeholders were. In Kilkenny it was perceived that profit-making private sector stakeholders were the group with the most power. This perception may be due to stakeholders undertaking a more profit-driven avenue. Questioned on their own individual contribution, the majority of stakeholders at both destinations felt that they contribute in their own small way. The evidence would however suggest that these contributions are very disjointed; each stakeholder

making their own individual contribution but with no linkage between them, highlighting again the issue of leadership and the absence of procedures to bring stakeholders together or inform people of their importance and the potential impact collaborative participation could make to the management of the destination.

The pattern of findings at both destinations show that the respondents are in total agreement that there is a definite association between strong stakeholder unity and the creation of a quality tourist experience, thus supporting the first research proposition. The findings established that all the stakeholders interviewed were in agreement that strong levels of stakeholder unity positively enhances the ability to deliver quality tourist experiences, yet amazingly varying levels of effort is being made to build stakeholder relationships and improve unity levels. Stakeholders in Waterford believed better structures and greater linkages between destination stakeholders with a designated person or group of personnel in place is needed to drive the process forward. Management structures at both destinations needs to shift from being freely assembled to having more vertically integrated management structures where destinations have chains of command, good control levels, a common vision and shared objectives, thereby adding strength to work carried out by Gnoth (2004). This would help bring the stakeholders together but it was contended that this was not happening at present and until it comes about strong destination stakeholder unity will be difficult to attain. Kilkenny stakeholders, on the other hand, perceived their levels of unity to be adequate and believed they were in a better position because of increased structured collaboration and unity. However, all respondents agreed that Kilkenny cannot stand on its laurels but needed to keep driving forward in seeking greater levels of unity and destination success. It is evident from the findings in both destinations that there is a great willingness from the stakeholders to get involved but in Waterford a number of stakeholders stated they would only involve themselves if the product was in place first. This is problematic as a number of stakeholders in Waterford believe the product is not in place and the product cannot be put in place without structures and shared involvement and this is unlikely until structures were put in place. Indeed, there is a

belief in Waterford that tourism will never progress; such a negative mentality, however, if not addressed, is a barrier to building these structures and shared involvement. Kilkenny has the advantage of tourism being perceived as its number one industry, whereas Waterford on the other hand is more fragmented in terms of its commercial portfolio thereby making it difficult for the stakeholders to grow the tourism industry. This is a real issue for tourism stakeholders in Waterford and it needs to be looked at and addressed if Waterford is to achieve stronger levels of stakeholder unity and continued tourism growth.

8.3.2 <u>Levels of Destination Differentiation</u>

The stakeholders were asked a number of questions in relation to differentiation at their destination. Questions focused on areas such as Understanding Differentiation, Differentiation Function, Unique Selling Proposition, Target Markets, Destination Product and Service Portfolio. A synopsis of the findings regarding the level of destination differentiation at each destination is seen in Figure 6.4.

8.3.2.1 <u>Understanding Differentiation</u>

The stakeholders were asked their understanding of the term differentiation. It is only by determining their understanding and establishing consensus among all stakeholders that the pursuit of differentiation can really begin. The pattern of findings suggested that the stakeholders at both destinations have a competent knowledge of the concept of differentiation. General agreement can be concluded in their understanding with words such as uniqueness, offering something different; individuality and creating favourable lasting thoughts being the most common explanatory phrases offered. The commonality of responses among all stakeholders at both destinations demonstrates a unified understanding of differentiation and this is a positive foundation on which the effort to achieve differentiation can be built.

8.3.2.2 <u>Differentiation Function</u>

Stakeholders at each destination see differentiation as crucial to building a successful tourism destination and all agreed that there must be a unified effort to the process if a differentiated destination is to be successfully achieved. In Waterford all stakeholders claimed to have their own individual business differentiation objectives. This may be the case given that there is no one person, or group, in place to unit efforts. Similarly in Kilkenny each stakeholder had their own individual differentiation objectives for their own businesses, but crucially stakeholders in Kilkenny sought to closely align their individual differentiation objectives with the objective of achieving destination differentiation. This was not the case in Waterford. In the management of a destination the creation of a productive stakeholder unity must stem from a shared appreciation of the need for both organisational and destination differentiation and the need for these objectives to feed into one another.

8.3.2.3 <u>Differentiation in Practice</u>

In Waterford there was very poor agreement among stakeholders as to the unique selling point (USP) of Waterford as a tourism destination, essentially equating to an admission that the destination stakeholders were not united as to the primary source of added value the destination presents to its target market. In fact there was little or no agreement as to which categories of tourist were in fact the main target markets of the destination. The level of awareness of the features and opportunities to combine activities at the destination was also poor with a number of stakeholders admitting to being unaware of the wider product and service portfolios of the destination. There is no doubt that a lack of consensus as to the destination USP, ill-defined target markets and poor product

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knowledge are key indicators of poor stakeholder unity and are likely to hinder any attempts to differentiate the destination and would make it very difficult for stakeholders to combine and bundle activities to make for more meaningful and holistic tourist experiences. This validates work by Keller (2003), Berthon *et al.* (1999) and Baloglu *et al.* (1998) in relation to the importance of target marketing, market segmentation and positioning. The stakeholders interviewed were clear in their admission that these serious destination management problems are in considerable part resultant from a deficiency in stakeholder collaboration and contact. In contrast stakeholders in Kilkenny were considerably more certain in their view of the city's most USP; they had a better understanding and knowledge of their target markets and correspondingly felt they were in a better position to create quality experiences. This may be due to advanced stakeholder collaboration, communication and effort. The increased unity also gave rise to a greater ability to combine resources and amalgamate themes due to a higher level of awareness as to the activities available in the destination's product and service portfolio. The findings show that even a small variance in the degree of unity between the two destinations clearly has an influence on the ability of the destinations stakeholders to achieve destination differentiation. The more unified the team of stakeholders, the greater the opportunities and capabilities of achieving and delivering unique and differentiated tourist experiences, thus giving clear support for proposition two.

8.3.3 <u>Levels of Destination Brand Evidence</u>

Levels of brand evidence at both destinations was sought to ascertain what phase the destination's brand is presently at and to identify areas where it needs to be managed more effectively in order to enhance and greater develop the destination's brand. Stakeholders were asked a number of questions in relation to brand evidence at their destination. Questions focused on such areas as

Awareness of Destination Logo/Slogan, Brand Management and Brand Unity. A synopsis of the findings regarding the level of brand evidence at each destination is seen in Figure 6.5.

8.3.3.1 Synopsis Destination Stakeholder Brand Management

With regard to destination brand evidence, the difference once again in stakeholder unity was mirrored by a difference in destination brand evidence. The low levels of stakeholder unity in Waterford has resulted in the presence of many divergent destination logos and slogans and the resultant admission by destination stakeholders that they believed tourists had only a vague appreciation of Waterford's brand identity. Having too many logos/slogans reduces the ability of tourists to relate to any one in particular. The numbers of stakeholder groups working together with regard to the establishment of a destination brand was also significantly lower in Waterford than in Kilkenny. The presence of a destination brand manager to coordinate and communicate a unified brand identity was believed to be a critical factor in the success of Kilkenny in achieving higher levels of unified brand evidence, thus validating the work of Blumenthal *et al.* (2003). The findings show a competent understanding from stakeholders at both destinations as to the importance of a destination brand and the role such brands play for both the service provider in the form of facilitation and the tourist in the form of reduction. However, it seems that the lack of leadership and stakeholder unity, rather than an inability or unwillingness to create a brand, were the key factors that prohibited Waterford from pursuing such a strategy; a fact highlighted in work by Van Gelder (2005). Stakeholders at both destinations articulated a belief that creating quality tourist experiences is the first priority and that once quality experiences are created, differentiation will ensue, which in turn will lead to tourist loyalty thus culminating in brand development. All stakeholders were in agreement

that strong stakeholder unity underpins this process. The comparative study of both destinations Waterford and Kilkenny clearly highlights the palpable relationship between the degree of stakeholder unity and the direct effect on the stakeholders' ability to deliver quality experiences, achieve destination differentiation and develop a recognised destination brand, thus giving clear support to all three propositions.

8.3.4 <u>Quality of Tourist Experience</u>

At any tourism destination it is the tourist that is the principal and perhaps the most important evaluator of the quality of destination experience. The propositions proposed were that increased levels of stakeholder unity would give rise to improved destination experiences. In order to obtain the tourists' evaluations, small, but a carefully chosen sample of tourists at each destination was asked a number of questions in relation to their evaluation of the destination. The responses were rated on a Likert type scale and collated to attain the mean values, standard deviation values and levels of significant difference. The statements focused on such areas as those factors influencing Choice of destination, Quality of Destination Experience, Destination Satisfaction, and Likelihood to Recommend or Return.

With regard to the impact of destination stakeholder unity on the quality of destination experience, the findings give some, albeit limited support for the proposition that stakeholder unity is positively related to the quality of destination experience. Although the mean scores for quality of destination experience and overall destination satisfaction were broadly similar, Kilkenny with its higher levels of unity did score slightly better on all counts. The tourist questionnaire findings in association with the results of the stakeholder interviews do seem to support the assertion that higher levels of unity will allow for a greater ability to combine resources and amalgamate themes and increase the scope for increased tourist participation and interaction thereby augmenting

the quality of destination experience. The sample population (N=60) was deemed adequate given the use of multiple data collection methods incorporating both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. A random assortment of male and female respondents participated in the study. A wide range of age groups participated but the most predominant age groups in the study, as illustrated in Tables 7.2 and 7.3 were those aged 41-50 years and those aged 51 and over. Although the majority of activities and amenities for the various age segments were deemed satisfactory, the question arises as to whether enough is being done to attain higher satisfaction ratings for all segments at both destinations and would greater levels of stakeholder collaboration and unity enable stakeholders to build more holistic and meaningful tourist experiences? This reasoning of greater cohesion and unity among destination stakeholders affords greater leverage and capabilities to stakeholders to build and deliver enhanced quality tourist experiences, building on previous work by Hankinson (2001) and supporting the first proposition which proposed that stronger stakeholder unity has a positive relationship with the quality of destination experience. A synopsis of the findings regarding the tourists' overall experience and satisfaction evaluations of each destination are seen in Figures 7.9 through to 7.13.

8.3.4.1 <u>Overall Experience</u>

The tourists were asked their views on a range of issues that add value or detract from their overall experience. In general a varied response emerged with the majority of tourists at both destinations feeling these areas to be fair to satisfactory. These average evaluation ratings correspond to the low to moderate levels of stakeholder unity found. The research contends that if unity levels were stronger among stakeholders at the destinations, these tourists' responses and ratings may be more positive. Thus, it is important that there be stronger unity levels among stakeholders. This suggestion is supported by the interview data.

8.3.4.2 <u>Destination Satisfaction</u>

Overall destination satisfaction level was encouraging for both destinations, although both destinations had some scope for improvement. Kilkenny scored marginally higher than Waterford in terms of the tourist's surveyed who rated very positively their overall satisfaction level with the destination. This is down to the fact that Kilkenny scored higher than Waterford in all but one of the variables set out to measure destination satisfaction levels. Greater stakeholder effort needs to be implemented at both destinations if satisfaction levels are to be positive. As illustrated in Table 7.13, the responses are very positive with the majority of tourists at both destinations stating they were likely or very likely to recommend the destination. This bodes well for the future visitation numbers to both destinations, but as previously emphasised, the destinations cannot stand on their laurels and must strive for continuous improvement. Similarly, when asked their likelihood to return to the destination, the responses where yet again very positive with the majority of tourists stating that they would be likely or very likely to return. Although positive results were attained there is scope for improvement in the number of tourists stating that they would be very likely to return. Destination stakeholders must therefore work constantly to develop and improve the quality of their destinations through stronger cohesive unity.

8.3.5 <u>Research Propositions Tested</u>

Arising from the literature review, three propositions were developed that seek to understand the relationship between levels of stakeholder unity and the quality of destination experience and destination branding. Based on the preceding discussion of the primary research findings, it is now appropriate to conclude with an analysis of whether the research propositions were supported or rejected.

P 1. *Strong stakeholder unity has a positive relationship with the quality of destination experience*

The perception of the quality of experience at each destination was measured by acquiring two views, from the destination stakeholders' and the tourists'. Both in the stakeholder interviews and the tourist questionnaire participants were questioned as to the quality of destination experience and on those factors which they felt enhanced or detracted from the quality of destination experience.

With regard to tourist perceptions on the quality of destination experience Kilkenny scored marginally higher than Waterford. However, the difference was not significant enough to draw any conclusions. The destination stakeholders' perceptions of destination quality at the respective locations, however, were much clearer and illustrated a significant difference between the two locations. In Waterford stakeholder perceptions with regard to the quality of experience offered were quite low, while in Kilkenny stakeholders perceived the experience they offered in a much more favourable light. In Waterford destination stakeholders recognised that the potential to create and deliver quality tourist experiences was there but at present it was not being utilised to its full potential; lack of structured stakeholder communication and collaboration were identified as the primary factors preventing Waterford reaching its potential in delivering quality experiences. This sub-optimal quality of experience offered in Waterford correlates with the low levels of stakeholder unity identified in the present research.

In contrast, stakeholder perceptions of the quality of destination experience in Kilkenny were much higher. Stakeholders in Kilkenny acknowledged strong stakeholder unity as underpinning their success in creating and delivering quality experiences and identified that it is through this greater unity among stakeholders that trust, knowledge sharing and cohesion has been developed and enhanced,

supporting the work of Taylor *et al.* (2006). A greater ability to define and measure their destinations product and service portfolio, while also combining resources was found to be a key outcome of increased unity that had contributed directly to the quality of experience delivered. Kilkenny's higher ratings in relation to quality of experience correspond with the more advanced levels of stakeholder unity found at the destination. In conclusion, although no significant support for the proposition could be taken from the tourists' views, the responses from destination stakeholders strongly supported the proposition that unity among stakeholders was the key to delivering quality tourist experiences. The finding has given some empirical credence to the assertion that low levels of unity can undermine a destination's potential in relation to creating and delivering quality tourist experiences.

P 2. *Strong stakeholder unity positively increases the prospect of creating holistic tourist experiences, thus achieving destination differentiation.*

Destination differentiation at both locations was measured by examining such areas as stakeholder clarity in relation to their target markets, degree of understanding as to target markets' needs and their ability to facilitate tourist participation and interaction in destination activities contained within their product and service portfolio. In Waterford those aspects necessary to achieving destination differentiation were found to be low, while in Kilkenny clarity and implementation of these aspects was much more evident. Factors hindering Waterford achieving differentiation included a lack of clarity regarding its USP, mixed views regarding target markets and an inadequate understanding of their target market's needs, inferior knowledge of the destinations product and service portfolios and an inability on the stakeholders' part to combine tourist activities to create more holistic enhanced tourist itineraries. Low levels of destination differentiation correlated positively with low levels of stakeholder unity. In Kilkenny stakeholders were found to be more organised in their pursuit of

differentiation. Indeed there is greater evidence that of the destination's USP, and target markets have being clearly identified and research is being undertaking to further understand its target market's preferences. In addition, there is greater evidence of stakeholder groups coming together in order to combine resources and amalgamate themes to create more holistic tourist itineraries. The strong destination differentiation competence among stakeholders in Kilkenny correlated positively with the higher levels of stakeholder unity. Stakeholders in Kilkenny recognised that if combining resources and activities is to be maximised, bundling and packaging products and services must be implemented by those stakeholders with an ability to work across all levels of the tourism industry collectively, a view supported by Foley *et al*. (2004). Stakeholders in Kilkenny again acknowledged that strong levels of stakeholder unity underpins the success of this goal as it is from strong stakeholder unity that trust, knowledge sharing, expertise, shared control, flexibility and capabilities are enhanced, adding strength to the work of Gnoth (2004) and Aas *et al*. (2005). The research findings highlighted that both destinations have equal potential to achieve differentiation. It is recognised that the products and activities are in place, but it is a lack of unity that is hindering the stakeholders in Waterford in bringing together the various products and activities. The reality is that the low level of unity found among destination stakeholders in Waterford is undermining the destination's potential of delivering differentiated destinations. The findings give support to the assertion that where unity among destination stakeholders is stronger, destinations are better positioned to create and deliver quality tourist experiences, thus achieving uniqueness and differentiation.

P 3. *Strong stakeholder unity positively enhances the potential to create differentiation at a destination and thus aid the development of a recognised destination brand.*

Levels of brand evidence at both urban destinations was assessed by analysing the stakeholders' perceptions in relation to what they deemed important factors

when building a destination brand, identification of the destination logo/slogan and stakeholder clarity as to the destination's brand identity. The findings showed brand evidence in Waterford to be low, illustrated by the fact that the destination has a variety of brand slogans and logos, and the destination's identity is not clearly defined, in part due to the lack of stakeholder unity or shared endeavour in brand development. There is a lack of understanding relating to the factors involved in building a destination brand among destination stakeholders, and there is no structure or formal person or group assigned specifically to manage the destination's branding. In marked contrast to the situation in Waterford, Kilkenny had higher levels of destination brand evidence and this correlated positively with its higher levels of stakeholder unity. Evidence of more advanced levels of brand management in Kilkenny can be seen in the establishment of a single brand slogan and logo. The destinations brand identity, therefore, is clearly defined and commonly agreed to and a formal cross-representative team to manage the branding activities of the destination was in place; this supports work the work of Blumenthal *et al*. (2003). The stakeholders in Kilkenny identified strong cross-sectoral unity in the form of improved collaboration and communication as central to the attainment of their brand objectives. There was broad consensus that stakeholder unity is the foundation that underpins the destination's progression towards a unified brand identity. Kilkenny stakeholders acknowledged that if a recognised destination brand is to be developed they need to work together at making the move away from broad based market communications and become more focused in positioning and customising, tailoring their destination and market communications to more individualistic tourist needs. This finding supports work that of Poon (1993) and King (2002). Strong stakeholder unity is pivotal to this branding objective, as it enables a greater stakeholder capacity to collectively monitor, control and evaluate branding performance. It is acknowledged, among the stakeholders in Kilkenny, that unified structures better equips stakeholders to be more pro-active, innovative, and creative in adapting to new branding challenges; strengthening work by Van Gelder (2005) and Taylor *et al.* (2006).

These findings support the proposition that when unity among destination stakeholders is strong, the stakeholders are better positioned to work collectively in the creation and delivery of quality tourist experiences; are more likely to have a unified perspective of the route to achieving differentiation and in turn are better able to define, develop and communicate a cohesive destination brand.

It is evident from both the literature review and research findings that stakeholder unity is pivotal to effective destination management, the creation of quality destination experiences and to destination brand development. It can, therefore, be contended that the level of stakeholder unity at a destination has a clear and direct impact on the quality of experience delivered and the destination's capability to build a brand. Low stakeholder unity has been shown to result in dis-jointed destination management, which leads to inferior experiences with non-differentiated characteristics and low levels of brand evidence. The results show that even moderate differences in levels of stakeholder unity, as shown in the case examples, can have important repercussions for destination's performance, experience quality and levels of brand evidence. Strong stakeholder unity, as put forth in the propositions has the potential to deliver more cohesive destination management, builds the capability to create and deliver quality destination experiences, and help in achieving differentiation, thereby significantly improving the chances of developing a recognised destination brand.

8.4 Conclusion

The findings of the study have shown that the attainment of strong levels of stakeholder unity at tourism destinations is difficult to attain and requires formalised leadership, organisation and management. The findings have satisfied all three of the main aims and objectives: that the degree of stakeholder unity at each destination was ascertained and the relationship between stakeholder unity, the quality of destination experience and destination brand development was examined. The low to moderate levels of stakeholder unity showed that formalised leadership, organisation and management are somewhat lacking at both destinations in relation to creating quality customer experiences and

developing a destination brand. Indeed, while most stakeholders understood the need and potential benefits of strong stakeholder unity, they, were, however, not doing enough to improve levels of unity. Despite the complexity involved, the hesitation on both destinations part to address aspects such as leadership, organisation and management, in lieu of the benefits that can be gained is in itself a surprising occurrence, especially considering the competitiveness between tourism destinations and the constant need for destinations to think of new ways to increase visitor numbers. In truth the present state of practice among the destination stakeholders has some way to progress before corresponding to the performance models referred to in Chapter Three and Four (see Figure 3.2 and 4.1). These models built upon existing literature and the adoption of such processes can greatly improve the ability to enhance destination management, levels of stakeholder unity and subsequently the creation of quality tourist experiences and thus overall destination brand development.

Chapter Nine

Conclusions

9.1 <u>Introduction</u>

This chapter concludes this study on branding urban tourism destinations through a stakeholder approach. Overall recommendations resulting from the study are proposed and opportunities for future research are offered as well as the limitations of the study.

9.2 <u>Overall Recommendations</u>

It is widely accepted in the literature that effective management and branding of tourism destinations pose demanding challenges (Pike *et al.*, 2004; Pike, 2005). Management at tourism destinations need to, with the help of all destination stakeholders adopt, and indeed adapt, strategies that are tailored to the needs of their target markets. Many suggestions have been provided in the above discussion, each of which are appropriate to the dimension at hand. The forthcoming recommendations are not prescriptive actions that will guarantee experience creation and brand development at tourism destinations; rather they are suggested courses of action that may help to focus stakeholders at a destination in the process and adoption of strategies in order to improve aspects such as leadership, organisation, management and subsequently enhanced unity.

- A major contribution of this study is that it seeks to build stakeholder awareness and interest in the concept of destination experience management, destination branding and stakeholder theory. Although recent literature has discussed and examined certain aspects of experience (Carbone and Haeckel, 1994; Voss, 2004), branding (Keller, 2003) and stakeholder management (Preble, 2005), little of this previous work has dealt specifically with tourism contexts. This work has sought to bring together these three areas and in doing so has developed an integrated model for destination management and

branding. It is recommended that utilising the model framework for branding a tourism destination, as described in Figure 3.2, which incorporates all three elements and adapts them to the context of a tourism destination will help realise real and positive destination management and branding outcomes.

- The challenges associated with destination stakeholder management are very complex. The holistic destination stakeholder management process therefore, (see Figure 4.1), can provide destination managers with a template for employing stakeholder management concepts and practices at their destination. It is recommended that adopting such an approach should ultimately increase the ability and operating performance of the destination as it gives clear guidelines on stakeholder identification, helps ascertain relationship links, reduces stakeholder performance gaps and forges a tighter fix with demands and expectations of the various destination stakeholders, thus increasing overall levels of unity.

- The present findings demonstrate the need for more focus and effort at both destinations in areas such as leadership, organisation and positioning in relation to experience creation and destination brand development. It is recommended, therefore, that the appointment be made of a designated leader or team, within each destination. The role would consist of looking after the experience portfolio within the destination, facilitating and connecting functional areas such as operations, marketing and human resources, thereby bringing all the expertise together. The role of this experience leader would also include driving the experience cycle, setting objectives, developing initiatives, over-viewing operations, designing activities, exploiting innovative opportunities and measuring experience results and impacts. In addition, it is recommended the appointment of a skilled leader or team be made who would protect and cultivate the destination brand and whose role it would be to integrate social responsibility and leadership through strategic brand management, therefore having the potential to combine all activities of

the destination under their control and manage the destination's branding more effectively.

9.3 <u>Recommendations for Future Research</u>

As this research draws on a number of areas, several important opportunities for future research are suggested:

- There has been little research carried out in the area of branding destination experiences, therefore it is recommended the study could be grown further in an Irish context. Additional research would be desirable to investigate differences and similarities between destinations within different regions domestically. A multi-national study could provide insights into stakeholder unity and the impact this has on destination experience management and branding in each region.

- Secondly, a further logical research step might be to undertake a comparative study internationally. A multi-international study could provide insights into stakeholder unity and the impact this has on destination experience management and branding in each destination.

- Thirdly, following both domestic and international studies a comparative study between both would be desirable to investigate differences and similarities and potentially widen the research encompassing destinations both domestically and internationally. A domestic and international study could provide insights into stakeholder unity and the impact it has on destination experience management and branding in each destination within varying countries.

- There is also further scope to develop and amalgamate the areas of destination branding and destination management research with the emerging area of experience management.

- An additional research opportunity would be to develop the concept of stakeholder unity further in the context of managing a tourism destination by examining implementation models and structures in relation to partnerships and networks and comparing them with international best practice approaches.

- Finally, it has become evident from the present findings that an examination of the overall dynamic styles of the various stakeholder groups, while completing a more in-depth analysis of their roles, responsibilities and actions in relation to experience creation and destination brand development would be beneficial to successful destination management and branding.

9.4 <u>Limitations</u>

Although this study furthers our understanding of the role of stakeholders in creating and branding destination experiences, the preceding conclusions must be viewed with some caution for a number of reasons:

- Due to the physical limitations associated with a lone researcher and the labour intensity of primary research, this document presents the results from a relatively small number of cases (N=2). Although the sample size of the empirical research was deemed adequate (N=20) for the stakeholder interviews and (N=60) for the tourist questionnaire, it is likely that a larger sample would have made a more valuable contribution to the area as more ideas and concepts may have been highlighted and there would have been greater potential for generalisability of findings.

- Limitations are also present in the methodology employed. The stakeholders and tourists originated from two destinations chosen by the researcher. This non-probability sampling approach limits the generalisability of the research findings. However, undertaking a completely random sample would have been beyond the scope of a single researcher, both temporally and financially, thus convenience sampling was identified as the most logical methodological approach

9.5 Conclusion

This research has examined the creation of a tourist experience and destination brand development and sought to highlight the importance of destination stakeholder unity to their success. A destination may have a vision, a strong product portfolio, yet if it is not able to convey that vision and portfolio into a quality tourist experience and thus a recognised brand for the destination it will ultimately fail. This research sought to enhance an understanding of managing and branding a tourism destination through cohesive stakeholder unity. As indicated in the sequence of propositions, the stronger the unity among destination stakeholders the greater the chance of creating a destination experience brand. It is surprising that, to date, there is very little research which attempts to analyse and match the quality of cohesive stakeholder networks with the creation of more holistic tourist experiences so that a brand for the destination can be established. The propositions herein are hoped to provide a basis for further development and research in the area. It would be erroneous to draw from the discussion of findings that the researcher could find no positive aspects to the management of both destinations, more precisely the destination management process was critiqued in order to offer suggestions as to how management efforts at each location might be improved by drawing upon the guidance offered in the literature review. The researcher's coupling of emerging areas through the propositions devised was with the view of indicating to the reader how the adoption of a more cohesive unified stakeholder approach might assist both Waterford and Kilkenny in achieving their goals and enable their stakeholders to

manage their destinations more effectively, create more holistic tourist experiences and strive towards destination brand development.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire Scales and Reliabilities

Leisure Activities Scale

Q8 a. Children

Q8 b. Teenagers

Q8c. Young Adults (20-30)

Q8d. Adults

Q8e. 60+

Quality of Experience Scale

Q9a. The quantity of tourist information outlets is

Q9b. Signage and directions around the City are

Q9c. The opportunities to participate/ interact in leisure activities are

Q9d. The opportunity for tourists to play an active role in creating and shaping their own use of the environment is

Q9e. The opportunities to combine leisure activities are

Q9f. Overall destination experience quality is

Leisure Amenities Scale

Q10d. The variety of different grades of accommodation stock is sufficient

Q10e. There are a good variety of high quality Food & Beverage outlets in the city

Destination Satisfaction Scale

Q10a. Transportation facilities and access links are satisfactory

Q10b.In Waterford City I feel safe

Q10c. Disability access is in the City is good

Q10f. The destination is good value for money

Q11a. Friendliness of Host Community

Q11b. Overall destination satisfaction

Likelihood to Return Scale

Q12a. Intent or likelihood to recommend

Q12b. Intent or likelihood to return

Table A.1 Dimensions Relating to Protocol

Dimension	Questionnaire	Interview Schedule
Stakeholder Unity		Part1
Destination Differentiation		Part 2
Brand Evidence		Part 3
Leisure activities	8a,8b,8c,8d, and 8e	
Quality of Destination experience	9a,9b,9c,9d, 9e and 9f	
Leisure amenities	10d,10e	
Destination Satisfaction	10a,10b,10c, 10f,11a and 11b	
Likelihood to return	12a and 12 b	

Table A.2 Tourist Destination Experience Scale Reliabilities

Scale	Number of items in Scale	Cronbach's Alpha Reliability	Lowest Possible Score	Highest Possible Score
Destination Leisure activities	3	.738	3	15
Quality of Destination Experience	6	.867	6	30
Destination Leisure Amenities	5	.694	5	25
Destination Satisfaction	2	.583	2	10
Likelihood to Revisit	2	.758	2	10

Appendix B

Case Study Protocol

Table B.1 Case Study Protocol

Context Area	Unit of Measurement	Questions	Field Procedures/
Waterford/ Kilkenny	Stakeholder Unity	• Perception of Destination Image • Perception of Effective Management • Main Challenges in Managing Destination • Participative Role • Work Most Closely with • Level of Contact • Reasons for Communicating • Benefits of Communication • Chief Experience Officer • Perception of who it should be • Salience Levels • Feel Adequately Involved • Association/Collaboration and quality experience • Other thoughts on Stakeholder Unity	Interview
	Destination Differentiation	• Understanding of Term Differentiation • Perception of Differentiation's function • Differentiation Objects for own Sector • Assessment of Differentiation Success • Most Unique Selling Proposition • Main Market Segments • Understanding Segments Needs/Wants • Aware of Activities Available • Position to Combine Activities • Scope for Tourist Participation/Interaction	Interview
	Brand Evidence	• Aware Logo/Slogan • Function of Recognised Logo/Slogan • Benefits Potentially of use • Factors Involved in Building Recognisable • Challenges to Branding Destinations • Identity Clearly Defined • Responsibility for Managing Brand • Constraints in Appointing Management Structure • Consider Playing a Role • Assist: How do you assist at present • Work Most Closely with	Interview
	Tourists' Evaluation	• Influencing Factors for Choosing Destination • How it relates in relation to other destination visited • Leisure Activities Available • Leisure Amenities Available • Quality of Destination Experience • Destination Satisfaction • Likelihood to Returns	Questionnaire

Appendix C

Stakeholder Interview

Part 1

The questions in the first part of the interview are designed to obtain information in relation to the area of stakeholder unity at your destination.

You will be presented with a series of open ended questions and the decision to answer each question is your own. However, your contribution to answering as many questions as possible so as to provide important information would be greatly appreciated.

Q1- Do you believe Waterford/Kilkenny has a good Image? Yes/ No   Reason?

_____

_____

Q2- Do you believe Waterford/Kilkenny is managed effectively by both public and private sectors?   Yes/ No   Reasons?

_____

_____

Q3- What do you perceive as the main challenges involved in managing Waterford/Kilkenny as a tourism destination?

_____

_____

Q4 Do you take a participative role in the managing of Waterford/Kilkenny? Yes / No
       If Yes, to what extent are you involved?

_____

_____

If no Q5- <u>Do you believe your role could be extended to participate more</u> or do you believe your role should constitute taking a reduced participative approach?

_____

_____

Q6- Please list stakeholder groups that you work most closely with?

Q7- How often do you meet or be in contact?

Q8- Is there set agendas for these meetings/contact or do they vary?

Q9- Do you believe these meetings are satisfactory in relation to developing stakeholder unity? Yes/No

  If Yes, in what way?
  If No, how can these meetings be made more productive?

Q10- What would be the main reasons for communication with other destination stakeholders?

Q11- How would you best describe the contact arrangements with these others stakeholders

_____

_____

Q12 –What potential beneficial outcomes do you perceive from such meetings?

_____

_____

Q13- Who do you believe is the "Chief Experience Officer" of the destination?

_____

_____

Q14- Who do you believe should be the key stakeholders involved in the management of the destination?
Do you feel they are adequately involved?

_____

_____

Q15- Which Stakeholders do you deem to have the most salience (power, influence) at the   destination? Reason for choice?

_____

_____

Q16- Which Stakeholders do you consider having the least salience (power, influence) at the destination?
Reason for choice?

Q17-Being in the ….stakeholder group, do you feel all stakeholders within your sector are adequately involved? Yes/No
Please identify their contribution?

Q18- Being in the….stakeholder group, are there meetings held between different sub groups within your sector? Yes/ No
If Yes, who are they between and what topics are mainly discussed?

Q19- Do you think there is an association between effective destination stakeholder collaboration and the creation of quality tourist experiences? Yes/ No

If yes, in what way?
If no, please state how this can be improved and implemented?

Q20-In your opinion who do you believe the prominent destination stakeholder relationships are between?

Q21-Why do you think these relationships are the most prominent?

_____

_____

Q22- Do you have any other comments/thoughts/ recommendations regarding the level of stakeholder unity in Waterford/Kilkenny?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Part 2

The questions in the second part of the interview are concerned with the area of destination differentiation and the aim is to obtain information in relation to differentiation at your destination.

You will be presented with a series of open ended questions and the decision to answer each question is your own. However, your contribution to answering as many questions as possible so as to provide important information would be greatly appreciated.

Q1- What does the term "differentiation" in relation to a tourist destination mean to you?

Q2- In your opinion what function does differentiation play in the branding of Waterford/Kilkenny? If none, why is this?

Q3- What are your differentiation objectives in relation to your sector?

Q4- What factors affect the outcomes of your differentiation objectives?

Q5- How do you access how successful your differentiation strategy is?

Q6- What do you feel is Waterford's/Kilkenny's most unique selling proposition?

_____

_____

Q7- Can you identify any potential existing gaps in Waterford's/Kilenny's tourism product?

_____

_____

Q8- Who do you perceive as the city's main target markets?
    1.   Domestic
    2.   UK
    3.   Mainland Europe
    4.   N America
    5.   Other (please specify)………………………………

Q9- Who do you perceive as the city's main market segments?
    1.   Families
    2.   Sightseers & Culture lists
    3.   Week-end breaks,
    4.   Tour groups
    5.   Other (please specify)………………………….

Q10- How deep an understanding of the target and segmented markets, needs and wants do you believe there is?

_____

_____

Q11- Are you aware of all the activities available in Waterford's/Kilkenny's product portfolio?
Yes/ No

If Yes, what do feel are the main product themes (eg) soft adventure, gastronomy, heritage,

---

Q12- Are you in a position to participate with other sectors to combine activities and efforts to make more holistic tourist experiences?

Q13- Do you believe Waterford/Kilkenny has been themed (Giving an identity)?
Yes/ No
      If yes, what do consider this theme to be?
      If no, what theme would you consider giving the destination?

Q14- Is there adequate scope for tourist participation and interaction in activities Waterford/Kilkenny? Yes/ No

      If Yes, please provide examples?
      If No, would you encourage it?

Part 3

The questions in the final part of the interview concerns the area of brand evidence and the aim is to obtain information in relation to branding at your destination.

You will be presented with a series of open ended questions and the decision to answer each question is your own. However, your contribution to answering as many questions as possible so as to provide important information would be greatly appreciated.

Q1- Are you aware if Waterford/Kileknny has a recognised brand logo or slogan?
Yes / No
    Do you use the destination logo? (e.g.) for promotional purposes) Yes / No

      If Yes, in what way?
      If No, reason for not using it?

Q2- What potential benefits do you feel the use of the destination brand logo and slogan can offer?

Q3- What do you perceive the function of a recognised brand play?

Q4-What do you perceive to be the most important factors in building a recognisable brand for Waterford/Kilkenny?

Q5- Do you believe branding a destination poses greater challenges to that of branding a product or a service? YES / NO

     If yes, what do you feel are the main differences?

_____

_____

Q6- Do you perceive the destinations Identity (Individually, distinctiveness) is clearly identified in the minds of your target market?
If Yes, how do you believe is it formed?
If No, how do you think the image can be formed

_____

_____

Q7- Who do you see responsible for managing the branding activities of Waterford/Kilkenny?

_____

_____

     (i)   Have they been assigned a specific title?

_____

_____

     (ii)   What qualities do you perceive required to fulfil this position?

_____

_____

(iii)   What are their roles and responsibilities?

_____

_____

If **NO**, do you believe there should be one in place?

_____

_____

Q8 What constraints do see in the appointment of stakeholders to manage the destination brand?

_____

_____

Q9- Would you consider playing a role in the management structure of branding the destination? Yes/ No

If Yes, what contribution do you believe you can offer?

_____

_____

If No, why?

_____

_____

Q10 How does your stakeholder group assist or facilitate branding of the destination?

_____

_____

Q11 What other stakeholder groups are you working most closely with in relation to branding the destination?

_____

_____

Appendix D

Tourist Questionnaire

Part 1

The first part of the questionnaire is designed to obtain basic demographic information.

The decision to answer each question is your own. However, we would greatly appreciate your help in providing us with this important information.

Please respond to each of the following questions by writing your answer in the space provided or by circling the appropriate response alternative.

1.   Sex?   **1**. Male   **2**. Female

2.   Into which age group do you fall?
        1. 20 to24
        2. 25 to30
        3. 31 to34
        4. 35 to40
        5. 41 to 50
        6. 51 and over

3.   What nationality are you?
        1. Irish
        2. UK
        3. Mainland Europe (please specify)…………………
        4. North America
        5. Other (please specify)…………………………

4.   How many times a year do you holiday?
        1. One
        2. Two
        3. Three
        4. Four
        5. More than four

5.   Mode of Transport?
        1. Air   **2.** Rail   **3.** Bus   **4.** Car Hire   **5.** Ferry   **6.** Own Car

6.   Purpose of visit to Waterford/Kilkenny?
        1. Main Holiday
        2. Short Break
        3. Visit Friends/Family
        4. Business
        5. Other (please specify)

7.   With whom do you stay when you arrive?
        1. Family
        2. Friends
        3. Hotel
        4. Self Catering
        5. Other (please specify)……………………………

Part 2

The questions in this part of the questionnaire are concerned with what factors that contribute to destination attributes, destination activities available, product/service quality and overall destination satisfaction.

Please respond to each of the following questions by writing your answer in the space provided or by circling the appropriate response alternative.

You will also be presented with a series of statements, you should indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of them.

Please tick the box that best describes the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements

Previous travel experience/trip characteristics

Q1 Number of counties visited in Ireland on this visit?

Q2 Previous visits to Waterford/Kilkenny?

     1. Never
     2. One
     3. Two
     4. Three
     5. Four
     6. Five
     7. More than Five

Q3 What was your average length of stay in Ireland?

     1. Overnight
     2. Weekend
     3. One Week
     4. Two weeks
     5. Longer than two weeks
     6. Other (please specify)……………………

Q4 What was your average length of stay in Waterford/Kilkenny?

1. Overnight
2. Weekend
3. One Week
4. Two weeks
5. Longer than two weeks
6. Other (please specify)……………………

Q5 What was the main factor (s) influencing you choice to visit Waterford/Kilkenny?

_____

_____

_____

Q6 What was your mode of travel?

1. Independent Traveller
2. Packaged Coach Tour
3. Other (please specify)……………………

Q7 On the following scale, how did your stay in Waterford/Kilkenny rate in comparison to other destinations in Ireland?

1. Higher
2. Equal
3. Lower

Destination Evaluation

Q8 Please rate on the following scale the degree to which the leisure amenities in Waterford/Kilkenny City satisfy the following age groups

		Very Satisfactory			Very Unsatisfactory	
		5	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
a	Children					
b	Teenagers					
c	Young Adults (20-30)					
d	Adults					
e	60+					

Q9- Please indicate on the following scale whether you think positively or negatively with each of the respective statements in relation to Waterford/Kilkenny City.

		Very Good				Very Poor
		5	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
a	The quantity of tourist information outlets is					
b	Signage and directions around the City are					
c	The opportunities to participate/ interact in leisure activities are					
d	The opportunity for tourists to play an active role in creating and shaping their own use of the environment is					
e	The opportunities to combine leisure activities are					
f	Overall destination experience quality is					

Q10- Please indicate on the following scale whether you think agree or disagree with each of the respective statements in relation to Waterford/Kilkenny City.

		Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
		5	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
a	Transportation facilities and access links are satisfactory					
b	In Waterford City I feel safe					
c	Disability access is in the City is good					
d	The variety of different grades of accommodation stock is sufficient					
e	There are a good variety of high quality Food & Beverage outlets in the city					
f	The destination is good value for money					

Q11- Please indicate on the following scale whether you think positively of negatively with each of the respective statements in relation to Waterford/Kilkenny City.

		Very Positive				Very Negative
		5	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
a	Friendliness of Host Community					
b	Overall destination satisfaction					

Q12- Please indicate on the following scale whether you think positively of negatively with each of the respective statements in relation to Waterford/Kilkenny City.

		Very Likely				Very Un-Likely
		5	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
a	Intent or likelihood to recommend					
b	Intent or likelihood to return					

Q13 Is there any aspect of Waterford/Kilkenny city as a tourist destination that you feel needs attention?

_____

_____

_____

Q14 What aspect of Waterford/Kilkenny City as a tourist destination do you find most appealing?

_____

_____

_____

Appendix E

Letters to Respondents

18th January 2008

Dear…………..,

My name is Tony Quinlan and I am an assistant lecturer and postgraduate researcher in the Department of Languages, Tourism and Hospitality at Waterford Institute of Technology. I am currently undertaking research into the contribution of stakeholders to the management of Waterford city as a tourist destination. The objective of the research is to develop a greater understanding of the role of stakeholders in the management and branding of urban destinations

I am seeking contributions from key business, tourism and community stakeholders within the City so that I can build a complete picture of the management of Waterford as an urban destination. It is very important to the research that I have input from all stakeholder groups and therefore I would like to request your input as a member of the …sector. ***It is important to note that all responses will be treated with complete confidentiality and respondents will not be identified in the final report.*** In order to gather the information I am proposing to hold informal interviews that should take up not more than 30 minutes of your time. I appreciate that you are likely to be very busy and therefore I am available to call to your business at a time of your convenience.

This study seeks to build a comprehensive picture of stakeholder involvement in destination management in Waterford and your input is very important and of great value to the study. If you are willing to take part or alternatively wish to nominate a member of your management team to participate on your behalf, you can contact me at ……………. or alternatively via email to ……………….to schedule a meeting.

Should you require any additional information please do not hesitate to contact me. I take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time to consider my request and I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours Sincerely

_____

Tony Quinlan

1ˢᵗ February 2008

Dear…………..,

You might remember that two weeks ago I sent you a letter asking for your participation as part of my primary research for my masters by research. My name is Tony Quinlan and I am an assistant lecturer and postgraduate researcher in the Department of Languages, Tourism and Hospitality at Waterford Institute of Technology. I am currently undertaking research into the contribution of stakeholders to the management of Waterford city as a tourist destination. The objective of the research is to develop a greater understanding of the role of stakeholders in the management and branding of urban destinations

I am seeking contributions from key business, tourism and community stakeholders within the City so that I can build a complete picture of the management of Waterford as an urban destination. It is very important to the research that I have input from all stakeholder groups and therefore I would like to request your input as a member of the …sector. ***It is important to note that all responses will be treated with complete confidentiality and respondents will not be identified in the final report.*** In order to gather the information I am proposing to hold informal interviews that should take up not more than 30 minutes of your time. I appreciate that you are likely to be very busy and therefore I am available to call to your business at a time of your convenience.

This study seeks to build a comprehensive picture of stakeholder involvement in destination management in Waterford and your input is very important and of great value to the study. I would greatly appreciate your contribution and if you are willing to take part or alternatively wish to nominate a member of your management team to participate on your behalf, you can contact me at ……………. or alternatively via email at …………….. to schedule a meeting.

Should you require any additional information please do not hesitate to contact me. I take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time to consider my request and I hope to hear from you soon.

Thank you for your time and co-operation, I greatly appreciate it

Yours Sincerely

_____

Tony Quinlan

Appendix F

Use of N-Vivo

Phase 1

Structuring of Responses by Question, Guided by Literature Review (Example Question 4 Stakeholder Unity Section)

Destination A : Waterford

Question 4-
Do you believe Waterford is managed effectively by both public and private sectors?
Yes/ No   Reasons?

<Documents\Interviewee 1> Key Informant Chamber of Commerce- § 1 reference coded [4.15% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 4.15% Coverage

> At present I do not think there is very good cooperation between public and private sectors, a lot of work has been done on the whole discover Waterford brand but communication, or lack of it is hindering progress. The main problem I think within any tourism offering, board or management is that you are trying to cater for somebody but the product and service range that is offered is so diverse and there is a huge gap, and we would actually need all layers of that contributing and that is a real challenge, you are trying to be all   things to all people, but I think a start has been made.

<Documents\Interviewee 2> Local Representative Transport Sector- § 1 reference coded [2.14% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.14% Coverage

> The public sector in the last few years has lacked a bit of dynamism, it has lacked dynamic leadership. I think the private sector could be more dynamic as well, I think there is a severe lack of indigenous business in Waterford to bring both sectors together

<Documents\Interviewee 3> - Local Hotelier § 1 reference coded [1.29% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.29% Coverage

> I feel it could be much better managed in the sense of there are a lot of people out there   really looking for someone to take the lead with it but I'm not sure if anybody really does

<Documents\Interviewee 4> Manager Local Leisure Amenity - § 1 reference coded [3.44% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.44% Coverage

No I don't, I believe the city is let down badly by public sector in particular, a city hall that doesn't even keep its own public buildings in proper condition, never mind the streets and I think the private sectors have being absent in certain areas, we badly need a four star hotel in the city centre, and we are losing tourism sectors because of that. There is business leaving the city, avoiding Waterford because we don't have a four star product to offer in the city centre.

<Documents\Interviewee 5> - Key Informant Special Interest Group § 1 reference coded [1.61% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.61% Coverage

I think it is managed better than a lot of places but to answer your question I believe it could managed a lot better by enhancing public/private relations

<Documents\Interview 6> - Local Food and Beverage Proprietor § 1 reference coded [1.28% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.28% Coverage

No because I do not think everyone works together

<Documents\Interviewee 7> - Local Retailer § 1 reference coded [1.59% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.59% Coverage

No, I don't know if there is enough unity between everything, there is no body pulling the whole lot together

<Documents\Interview 8> - Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority § 1 reference coded [2.10 % Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.10% Coverage

I think it is adequately managed, but is adequate good enough? I think not in today's competitive environment. Waterford requires all stakeholders involved in tourism to come together with the specific intention of growing tourism in the area.

<Documents\Interview 9> - Key Informant City Council § 1 reference coded [1.55% Coverage]

Reference 1 – 1.55% Coverage

I feel its lacking in certain areas, continuity among public and private sectors is diminishing in my opinion.

<Documents\Interviewee 10> - Local Representative Media Sector Media § 1 reference coded [1.95% Coverage]

Reference 1 – 1.95% Coverage

Managed effectively?? Good question….I would say not. A lot of effort and cooperation is needed by all sectors and I am not sure if that is happening…I'd say not.

Destination : Kilkenny

Question 4-
Do you believe Waterford is managed effectively by both public and private sectors?
Yes/ No   Reasons?

<Documents\Interviewee 1> Key Informant Chamber of Commerce> - § 1 reference coded [4.28% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 4.28% Coverage

Oh that's a tuff a question, is there an in between!!!! No I think it is generally well managed I think there are certain areas we need to work on, the think the streets themselves could do with a good clean up and I know that is coming down the line, from a local authority point of view, but in general I think it is and people get a good vibe about Kilkenny when they come here

<Documents\Interviewee 2> Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority-
§ 1 reference coded [5.17% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 5.17% Coverage

> I think it is but there are always things that are not manageable, there are a certain about of control bodies like ourselves controlling what we can but as I mentioned there are factors beyond our control, as part of the tourism element you have things like train and taxi's, food outlets , pubs, restaurants, there is a whole diverse kind of market out there and some fall into certain controls and others do not, to say is it managed effectively…well the parts that can be managed or are manageable are

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managed in as well as they can be. We started an initiative called "Kilkenny Cares"; it is a code of practice for clubs, pubs and late bars, and it involves the chamber of commerce, Kilkenny city vintners, an garda siochana, the health service executive, Kilkenny borough council, Kilkenny County Council, Kilkenny Tourism, Kilkenny festivals, the small firms association and Failte Ireland and as I said it sets out a code of practice on how to deal with issues that we call the night time economy.

<Documents\Interviewee 3> Key Informant Borough Council- § 1 reference coded [1.73% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.73% Coverage

I'd say public yes, all public sector stakeholders involved in running the destination are doing their best and some of the private sector I feel could do a lot more

<Documents\Interviewee 4> Local Representative Media Sector- § 1 reference coded [2.02% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.02% Coverage

Not particularly no, Well the reason is again sectoral interest would be the big thing, you have the hen and stag parties where by the vintners are very keen particularly on this exercise and the other sectors are not

<Documents\Interviewee 5> Key Informant Special Interest Marketing Group- § 1 reference coded [1.34% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.34% Coverage

No, I do not think there is a collective strategic vision

<Documents\Interviewee 6> Local Representative Transport Sector- § 1 reference coded [2.02% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.02% Coverage

Yes I think there is, I know the chamber of commerce are working extremely hard to unite sectors both public and private in order to continue to grow Kilkenny a popular tourism destination

<Documents\Interviewee 7> Local Food and Beverage Proprietor- § 1 reference coded [1.76% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.76% Coverage

Yes I feel there are good relations between both sectors and there is a good coming together which is very positive

<Documents\Interviewee 8> Local Hotelier- § 1 reference coded [1.76% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.76% Coverage

Yes I think so, the Kilkenny Cares initiative is a clear example of different sectors coming together to unite in a common goal in relation to making the streets a saver place during late night opening hours of bars.

<Documents\Interviewee 9> Manager Local Leisure Amenity- § 1 reference coded [1.66% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.66% Coverage

To a certain degree yes, more can always be done in relation to this aspect but a start has been made on improving relationship links between the two sectors but it needs to be fine tuned

<Documents\Interviewee10> Local Retailer- § 1 reference coded [1.56% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.56% Coverage

I would say in relation to a lot of our competitors in terms of tourism destinations, we have an advantage of having a superior collectability certainly.

Phase 2

Analysis of Responses into Sub Themes

Free Nodes created

Cooperation
Togetherness
Relations
Continuity
Unity
Collect ability
Communication

Management
Leadership
Relationship Links

Contribution
Planning
Collaboration

Involvement
Cooperation
Collectability
Contribution

Coding Patterns

Destination A : Waterford

Question 4-
Do you believe Waterford is managed effectively by both public and private sectors?
Yes/ No   Reasons?

<Documents\Interviewee 1> Key Informant Chamber of Commerce- § 1 reference coded [4.15% Coverage]

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> At present I do not think there is very good cooperation between public and private sectors, a lot of work has been done on the whole discover Waterford brand but communication, or lack of it is hindering progress. The main problem I think within any tourism offering, board or management is that you are trying to cater for somebody but the product and service range that is offered is so diverse and there is a huge gap, and we would actually need all layers of that

contributing and that is a real challenge, you are trying to be all things to all people, but I think a start has been made.

<Documents\Interviewee 2> Local Representative Transport Sector- § 1 reference coded [2.14% Coverage
Reference 1 - 2.14% Coverage

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<Documents\Interviewee 3> - Local Hotelier § 1 reference coded [1.29% Coverage]

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No, I don't know if there is enough unity between everything, there is no body pulling the whole lot together

<Documents\Interview 8> - Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority § 1 reference coded [2.10 % Coverage]

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I feel its lacking in certain areas, continuity among public and private sectors is diminishing in my opinion.

<Documents\Interviewee 10> - Local Representative Media Sector Media § 1 reference coded [1.95% Coverage]

Reference 1 – 1.95% Coverage

Managed effectively?? Good question….I would say not. A lot of effort and cooperation is needed by all sectors towards a common goal of successfully growing the tourism industry and I am not sure if that is happening…I'd say not.

Destination B: Kilkenny

Question 4-
Do you believe Kilkenny is managed effectively by both public and private sectors?
Yes/ No   Reasons?

<Documents\Interviewee 1> Key Informant Chamber of Commerce> - § 1 reference coded [4.28% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 4.28% Coverage

Oh that's a tuff a question, is there an in between!!!! I think it is generally well managed I think there are certain areas we need to work on, I think the streets themselves could do with a good clean up and I know that is coming down the line, from a local authority point of view, but in general I think it is and people get a good vibe about Kilkenny when they come here

<Documents\Interviewee 2> Key Informant National Tourism Development Authority- § 1 reference coded [5.17% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 5.17% Coverage

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<Documents\Interviewee 4> Local Representative Media Sector- § 1 reference coded [2.02% Coverage]

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<Documents\Interviewee 5> Key Informant Special Interest Marketing Group- § 1 reference coded [1.34% Coverage]

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Reference 1 - 1.76% Coverage

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<Documents\Interviewee 9> Manager Local Leisure Amenity- § 1 reference coded [1.66% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.66% Coverage

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<Documents\Interviewee10> Local Retailer- § 1 reference coded [1.56% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.56% Coverage
I would say in relation to a lot of our competitors in terms of tourism destinations, we have an advantage of having a superior collectability certainly

Phase 3

Thematic Analysis

<u>Tree Nodes created</u>

Commonality

Structure

Operational Assistance

Goal Congruence

<u>Structuring of Tree Nodes and Free Nodes for Thematic Analysis</u>

<u>Commonality</u>	**<u>Structure</u>**	**<u>Operational Assistance</u>**	**<u>Goal Congruence</u>**
A1	A3	A4	A1
A2	A7	B1	B5
B2	B9	B3	A8
B4			B8
A5			A10
A6			
B6			
A7			
B7			
B8			
A9			
B10			

Commonality

- Waterford
  - Cooperation
  - Togetherness
  - Relations
  - Unity
  - Continuity
- Kilkenny
  - Unity
  - Togetherness
  - Communication
  - Collectability

Structure

- Waterford
  - Management
  - Leadership
- Kilkenny
  - Relationship Links
  - Management

Operational Assistance

- Waterford
  - Contribution
- Kilkenny
  - Planning
  - Contribution

Goal Congruence

- Waterford
  - Involvement
  - Contribution
  - Cooperation
- Kilkenny
  - Collectiveness
  - Cooperation
  - Unity