

TOURISM IN ACTION

TOURISM POLICY

Although by no means universal, some governments (national, state/provincial, or local) formulate a **tourism policy** to aid in guiding the development of a sustainable tourism industry in their jurisdiction. A formal statement of tourism policy serves as a “master plan” that lists the parameters for development and stewardship of tourism resources within the region. Specifically, a tourism policy has the following features:

- It is written at the macro level and offers a long-term perspective.
- It delineates the critical resources needed to develop and sustain tourism in the area.
- It explains the relationship of tourism components to the greater societal and economic systems of the region.
- It outlines the information inputs that will be needed for decision-making.

The tourism policy should provide a **destination vision**, which is defined as an “inspirational portrait of the ideal future that the destination hopes to bring about in some defined future (usually 5, 10, 20, or 50 years)” (p. 154). From this vision, tourism decision makers can formulate a destination image to strive for, both by developing resources and via marketing efforts.

Source: Ritchie, J. R. B., and Crouch, G. I. (2011). A model of destination competitiveness and sustainability. *Destination Marketing and Management: Theories and Applications*, 326.

Tourism Promotion Agencies

Many governments have an agency that is charged with promoting tourism. At the national level, this agency is called a “national tourism organization/office,” or the NTO. National and state/provincial governments fund such offices to fulfill two primary functions. First, the government agency collects visitor and industry information that can be used by tourism businesses to become more successful and grow, employing more citizens and generating more tax revenues. Visitor information is often gathered at welcome centers run by states, provinces, cities, and towns. Second, government agencies promote entire areas as destinations. Tourism businesspeople are usually unable or unwilling to fund advertising that does not expressly sell their individual businesses. But we know that tourists are first sold on a destination area and then look to buy specific services to fulfill particular travel needs, such as hotel accommodations, restaurant meals, guide services, and so forth. So, national and state/provincial governments engage in destination marketing through **destination marketing organizations (DMOs)** to generate sizable numbers of tourists. Individual tourism-related businesses are rarely able to afford marketing campaigns large enough to create a distinctive destination image. Research has shown that successful DMOs all exhibited a focus on the same following characteristics: effective communications with all suppliers; collaborative partnerships in marketing efforts, research, and sales; effective relationship management with all stakeholders; attention to strategic planning activities; organizational focus and drive; proper public and private funding; and attracting and retaining quality personnel.²²

Destination image is simply the detailed impression an individual or target segment has of a specific destination. This impression is composed of three parts. The first, called *cognition*, is the sum of all that the potential traveler knows and believes about the destination. These bits of information and beliefs may be from past experience with the destination or may have been acquired through a variety of information sources, from word of mouth from friends to magazine articles to movie settings. The second part of the destination image impression, called *affect*, represents the consumer’s feelings—favorable, unfavorable, or neutral—about the destination. From these two components of impression comes the third, called *conation*. Conation is the likelihood of the potential traveler to visit the destination in the near future.²³