

Closely related to destination image is the concept of a destination's positioning. Whereas a destination's image can be described by itself, a destination's positioning relates the image of one destination to those of its competitors. So, destination positioning is all relative. Through consumer research on the amount of important attributes that make up a destination's image and then "mapping" of a destination with its likely competitors, decision makers can see how their destination "stacks up." Destination positioning is a strategic tool used to "reinforce positive images, correct negative images, or create a new image" for a destination (p. 334).¹⁶ Once the position is determined, an ideal position can be decided and then tactics can be developed to move the destination's image to the new, improved position. Tourists make the decision about where to travel after narrowing down all of their options. The process of destination selection is a series of stages where possible vacation spots are eliminated based on the tourists' awareness and preference.²⁴ Tourism promotion agencies use positioning as a way to encourage awareness and preference for their own destination to successfully compete with similar destinations.

Public/Private Organizations

Decisions concerning tourism promotion are complicated and raise many questions. Should more be spent on leisure travelers, or should the bulk of funds be spent trying to attract conferences and other meetings to the area? Should a mass-marketing strategy be used, trying to attract any and all comers to the area, or should segmentation and targeting be used to attract a specific group? In addition, organizations need to determine how much money should be spent on attracting tourists from their own region, from outside their region, and from outside the country.

A common way for tourism promotion and development decisions to be made and funded is through **public/private organizations** or partnerships. A public/private partnership is an organization whose members include government officials as well as private citizens. A tourism-related public/private organization usually has a membership composed of local or state government officials, tourism business owners and managers, and local citizens. These partnerships are being used more and more to fund the promotion and development of tourism. Often, the government partner funds infrastructure improvements; the private enterprise partners fund the superstructure (often with the help of tax incentives); and then together the government and private business partners fund tourism promotion through contributions and the collection of special tourism-related taxes, such as a room tax.²⁵

Chambers of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureaus

Two common examples of local public/private tourism promotion organizations are chambers of commerce and **convention and visitors bureaus**. As suggested in the chapter opener, in smaller communities, chambers of commerce often perform the tourism promotion role (as well as many other economic and business developmental roles). Frequently, as communities grow, the tourism promotion role is conducted through a special organization called a convention and visitors bureau. In very large cities, Chicago, for example, responsibility for attracting tourists is further divided. Promotion to leisure travelers rests with the Chicago Office of Tourism, whereas attracting professional travelers is the concern of the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau. A priority of all of these types of organizations is literally to put their area on the map by educating prospective visitors and meeting planners about the destination.

Convention Centers

Convention centers are also frequently public/private organizations. An increasing number of cities worldwide have been developing and renovating convention center