

Dissertation Cover Sheet

**'Cultural Branding and Storytelling: In the context
of the ski industry'**

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In the Context of the Ski Industry

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I certify that the dissertation entitled:

Cultural branding and storytelling: In the context of the ski industry

Submitted for the degree of: MSc in Global Brand Management is the result of my own work and that where reference is made to the work of others, due acknowledgment is given.

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Abstract

Cultural Branding and Storytelling: In the context of the ski industry

John Ward BA

In this dissertation the concept explored was the use of cultural branding in conjunction with storytelling in the marketing of destinations, with ski destinations acting as the main context for discussion. This dissertation also examines how storytelling is used in the marketing within the ski industry. This paper explored which storytelling practices and brand theories could be best suited to the field of tourism marketing, with a focus on ski destinations. It is identified within this paper how storytelling can be used in the marketing of destinations, and how it can be used to connect brands to a wider audience. The process data of collecting data for this paper was through a series of open-ended interviews with experts with professional backgrounds from branding, national tourism, storytelling, and the ski industry. The results indicate that there are doubts over whether the principals of cultural branding are best suited to the marketing of destinations, although there is scope for more research to be conducted. This research also found that storytelling is an effective tool for the marketing of destinations and for brands to communicate and emotionally connect with mass markets by triggering subconscious motivations through the use of storytelling. Marketers working within the ski industry are recommended to identify their strongest brand assets in order to understand the motivations on their customers and to encourage their customers to create their own user generated content in order to promote their brand story.

Keywords: Cultural Branding, Storytelling, Ski Industry, Destination Branding

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

The ski industry in the United States has been estimated to be a three billion dollar industry (The Atlantic, 2012), a sizable figure considering ski resorts homogenous nature. Resorts can no longer solely depend on marketing themselves based on which mountain has the best snow levels, number of lifts, or ski runs available, although these still obviously are major factors. It has become more of a trend for ski destinations, and many tourism destinations in general to promote the communitive experience that is to be enjoyed when marketing themselves to consumers. This dissertation explores how those working within the ski industry could make use of cultural branding principals in conjunction with storytelling to better promote their touristic experience. The ultimate goal of this research is to understand how a marketer working in tourism may fully exploit the potential of the market in order to sustain tourism in an increasingly competitive environment.

1.2 Justification for the Research

Travel is one of the most searched topics on the internet, and as the world population's middle class is expected to continue to grow over the coming century, it is essential to look at what practices may help to improve the marketability of tourism products, from city trips to resorts which cater for sporting and adventure tourism, as the tourism industry becomes increasingly competitive. The overall aim of this research is to understand if the methods and disciplines of cultural branding, in which brands become cultural icons, can be applied to the practice of tourism marketing, in particular, the marketing of ski destinations. This conceptual thinking has been researched through the scope of understanding new marketing theories based on advancements in neuroscience, which propose a new form of building up relationships with consumers. One such theory is that through the process of a deep understanding of storytelling, consumers will become more open to ideas and products should the story and product appeal to their deep rooted desires.

The overall objective is to investigate which practices and theories could be best suited to the field of tourism marketing, with a focus on ski tourism. Can the principles of cultural branding be used to market destinations or is the discipline limited to consumable products? Can these principles be applied to ski marketing? Is storytelling a useful marketing tool to connect with customers? In what way can storytelling be used in the marketing of destinations?

The principals of cultural branding involve a brand building a sense of community amongst its consumers, working off the contradictions in society and constructing an identity myth which consumers can relate to and thus, associate themselves with. This is particularly effective amongst mass marketed fast moving consumer good products (FMCGs), which can be described as frequently purchased essential or non-essential goods such as food, toiletries, soft drinks, disposable nappies. The differences in each product, for example, a soft drink, are minuscule in terms of the satisfaction one can gain, aside from the quenching of thirst, so it is important for brands to build an identity which captures the attention of its target market. Cultural branding is most effective when constructing identity myths, which are myths that are useful fabrications that stick back together otherwise damaging tears in the cultural fabric of a nation, or indeed so, a community, no matter what the size.

The ultimate goal of any marketing is to fabricate such a powerful identity myth that connects to a major mass audience so that the brand becomes an iconic brand. Iconic brands function like cultural activists, encouraging people to think differently about themselves, which can be expressed by buying a certain brand which, should the identity myth be a powerful one, the consumers perception of that brand will drive that consumer to purchase the brand over similar products, as that particular brand will enhance their lives and in doing so, will bring them closer to achieving their aspirational choice of lifestyle.

Although it is extremely rare for a brand to become truly iconic, examples of those companies that have achieved iconic status are that of Coca-Cola, Apple, and Nike. These brands have enjoyed major success due to their successfully woven identity myths tapping into the deepest emotional desired goals of mass consumers. Their success is evidence of their consumer base connecting with their brand identity, where the consumers derive the value from the brand by advancing the brand story by personalising the brands myth to fit in with their own personal biography. The consumer's role in the formation of a cultural

brand is that they come to use the brand in a form of ritual action, where they can experience the identity myth to which the brand portrays when using the product itself.

It is therefore imperative that storytelling should play a vital role in constructing an identity myth that will most effectively emotionally connect with the consumer base. A company working on its branding strategy needs to be aware that extended research should be conducted into understanding the compendium of stories that a company's target market instinctively relates to. This goes beyond understanding merely what the target markets current interests are, and what stories they are currently following, instead it goes deeper than that, understanding the stories and myths that have been fed to a consumer by the culture that they have grown up in practically from their birth. These stories, that have been told and retold from the time memories begin to form in a child's brain, have been deeply ingrained within human beings and thus have greatly helped shape the conscious and subconscious actions of how consumers interact with product advertising, and indeed the greater world around them.

Phil Barden addressed this in his book 'Decoded: The science behind why we buy' and developed a framework in the form of a goals map, which portrays the deeply ingrained needs and wants of a consumer. This work stems from neuroscientist Daniel Kahnemann's Nobel prize winning study of the 'dual process' model of the brain showcased in his book 'Thinking Fast, Thinking Slow' which it address when making purchasing decisions; a pilot and autopilot. These two different areas are used separately when it comes to making purchasing decisions. Understanding the behaviour of consumers is an invaluable tool to marketers, and this in line with understanding the deeply ingrained compendium of stories that have helped shape the personalities of its consumers, and crafting a story that address the needs and wants of consumers through relatable stories would sure to be a deeply coveted goal for all marketers. While cultural branding is most effective for fast moving mass produced consumer goods, is it the focus of this research to explore if it would be possible to apply areas of cultural branding techniques to the marketing of a destination.

For the purpose of this research, the type of touristic destinations that have been chosen as a focal point is that of ski resort destinations, as this researcher feels that these destinations in particular have a lot of the desired elements that would work well in line with the principals of cultural branding put forward by Douglas B. Holt in his book 'How Brands Become Icons', however it must be remembered that he was focussing on its use in

marketing FMCG products such as beer, and soft drinks, focussing on the brand history of Budweiser, Snapple, and Mountain Dew.

1.3 Research Objectives

This is an exploratory research, and aims to provide a platform for marketers, brand managers, and even neuroscientists, to explore if indeed cultural branding techniques can be used to market a destination as effectively as they can be used in marketing fast moving consumable products. In the extended research that was conducted in the lead up to the writing of this article, there seems to be a gap in the literature regarding cultural branding and destination marketing being discussed in tandem, and it is felt that storytelling is the obvious vehicle for how the two fields can be linked and marketed successfully. Storytelling can be used to connect a brand to a wider audience by emotionally triggering aspirations, desires, and memories which are deeply ingrained in consumers. As a species, humans have communicated through the medium of storytelling since long before records began, a story has the power to connect people around the world, they provide context to otherwise mundane objects, and brands that foster a culture of storytelling amongst its clientele generally possess a loyal consumer base. Marketers use stories in every day when they advertise to their target markets, but it is those advertisements that have triggered an emotional reaction that have proven to be the most successful.

Tourism is also such a competitive industry, and for the most part, the consumer makes the decision about where they want to go and purchase their expected experience long before they visit the destination. There is then an immensely difficult challenge for marketers to make sure their product stands out and connects with consumers, when there is generally an infinite amount of options which the consumer can make their purchasing decision from. Taking the ski industry for example, in Europe alone, there are over one thousand ski resorts, each with varying but not dissimilar product benefits, in terms of ski lifts, snow levels, accommodation options, ease of access, price etc.

Thus hence, the question guiding the research is how would a destination competing in such a homogenous market, use branding techniques to ensure that it understands its consumers deeply ingrained needs and wants, connecting with the consumer before they have made their holiday purchasing decision, and ensure not to over promise an experience and not under deliver.

Furthermore, this research looks to identify how storytelling has been used in the marketing of destinations, and how it can be used in conjunction with cultural branding techniques. It is with this in mind that the research explores storytelling options, branding techniques, service delivery, and learns from reflections from experts working in the field of storytelling, branding, tourism, and ski destination marketing.

A – To what extent are cultural branding techniques used in the marketing of destinations, in particular, the ski industry?

B – To what extent is storytelling used to effect within marketing destinations, and what are the advantages of doing so?

C- To what extent is the ski industry using storytelling in its marketing?

D – How can storytelling used in marketing to connect to wider audiences?

1.4 Study Structure

The research presents a critical literature review of research that has been conducted into articles that relate to the various fields mentioned, and identifies the gaps in literature that have been found. This is followed by the introduction of a conceptual framework which has helped to guide the ideas and discussions that are touched upon in this research article. Following that is the methodology of research conducted in the writing of this article, which for the most part involved doing extensive research into these various fields, and conducting interviews with those working within the marketing industry. A presentation of findings from the research conducted and observations made by those interviewees previously mentioned is discussed in detail. The presentation of findings has been broken into themed sections that discuss the core concepts that have come out of the data collection process conducted for this research.

There is a final conclusion chapter containing both research conclusions, and strategic conclusions, with a section describing the limitations of the research, followed by the researchers' observations and recommendations based on the findings. It is hoped that this research will provide a platform for marketers working within the field of destination marketing, ski marketing and those with an interest in branding practices, to conduct further research into the cultural branding of destinations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview

Recent developments in the field of branding and behavioural science have led to renewed interest in understanding why consumers make purchasing decisions. In order to conduct this research, extensive reading was undertaken in order to gain an understanding of what work which had already been done, and to gauge the fields of research that needed to be further examined, and to gain a consensus of the current intellectual thinking on the topics that this research will be discussing. Many theories have been proposed in explaining what is meant by branding and how it can be used effectively to market both products and destinations to consumers.

Although the literature that has been reviewed covers a wide variety of topics, this review will focus on six major themes which are the focal point of this research. These themes are: Cultural branding, destination branding, ski destination marketing, storytelling within marketing, neuro-marketing, and tourism marketing. Although the literature reviewed presents these themes in a variety of contexts, this paper will primarily focus on their application used in order to market a ski destination.

What was most important was that an understanding was obtained concerning what avenues had not been explored, and whether current thinking had addressed these focus topics in tandem with each other. This was crucial to the writing of this research, as it benefitted the researcher in providing guidance concerning the direction this research should follow, and to ensure that there was no duplication of research that already addressed the research topics. Whilst conducting this research, it was found that few peer-reviewed articles had already addressed the discussion put forth within this paper, providing encouragement that the need for exploratory research concerning these topics to be addressed was a worthwhile one.

2.2 Cultural Branding

This research will look to understand the concept of cultural branding and how it may be related to building a destination's brand image, so as to be considered a cultural brand; it is through storytelling and cultural relevance that cultural brands have spun the most

compelling myths that have had such an effect on consumers that they become icons (Holt, 2004). Until now, the framework for cultural branding put forward by Holt has only been used for the marketing of mass FMCGs. This research stemmed from reading Douglas Holt's book 'How Brands Become Icons' and the author was eager to explore if the same principals of cultural branding are or can be applied to the marketing of a destination.

So what is a cultural brand? Holt describes a cultural brand as a performer of, or a container for an identity myth, requiring a myth that addresses an acute contradiction in society (Holt, 2004). Cultural Branding is a marketing style which involves transforming brands into cultural icons through companies using their brands a vehicle for tapping into the cultural disruptions that are taking place in the societies which their target market occupies. By tapping into these cultural contradictions, brands can capture the imagination and attention of the market, by emotionally connecting with its customers.

In recent years, research on using storytelling in a marketing context has become quite popular. The focus is moving away from companies simply telling consumers what to buy, but instead they need to tell their story on a much deeper level via the careful crafting, editing and curation of branded content, as this is the approach necessary in tourism marketing (UM, 2013). This is important for marketers to understand, as developments in neuroscience, have led to new revelations in understanding why consumers make the purchasing decisions they do.

This research will be looking into understanding what components are vital to a destination's brand; destination brand building, and improving tourism brand equity. Through researching this paper, it became apparent that utilising a destinations brand assets is of utmost importance in the marketing of a destination. Brand Assets can be described as distinctive assets which are more creative alternatives to directly showing a brand name, and they help create a larger brand footprint when elements are used in conjunction with the brand. Marketers can use non-word elements such as colour, visual images, and sound to provide a multi-layered process for entry into consumer memory (Harnett, Romaniuk, 2010). These assets are vital for an organisation to identify in maintaining and building the brand's image, which is the consumers perceptions and feelings towards a brand, which encompasses cognitive, sensory and emotional aspects (Cho, 2011), and ensuring consumers' love for the brand, which fosters the deep emotional connection consumers can make with brands (Cho, 2011).

Holt's position on what makes a brand a cultural icon is interesting, however through researching this paper, several other views on how a brand can be seen, or connected with by the consumer became apparent, such as in the work done Keller and Lehmann. These authors discussed in their paper the idea of the brand at customer level is essentially a lens through which the word and actions of a company, its competitors, and the environment in general is conveyed through thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions about a product (Keller, Lehmann, 2004).

Another theory that was examined in understanding customer's relationships to brands, and possibly their relationship with destination brands, is Kevin Robert's theory of love marking, where companies can create a highly charged, emotional relationship with their consumers to build loyalty. (Roberts, 2004) His love mark experience would supersede the brand experience as through love marking, consumers would hold a high love and respect for their chosen brand, whereas brand love would only maintain a high level of respect and medium love (Cho, 2011).

Brand building is at the core of understanding how brands form connections with consumers, and several papers were examined which explored theories and discussions around the subject, and how they can be applied to the tourism sector. In Christensen, Cook and Hall's paper: 'Marketing Malpractice: The cause and the cure' in which in order to build brands that mean something to customers, it is required to attach the brand to a product that means or represents something to the customers (Christensen, Cook, Hall. 2009). This research examined the framework of destination branding put in place by Christensen, Cook and Hall, which details how brands that may already have a strong identity can expand without damaging the brand equity. The article makes the point that if a company chooses to extend a brand onto other products that can be hired to do the same job, it can do so without concern that the extension will compromise what the brand does (Christensen, Cook, and Hall. 2009).

To gain an understanding of how brand building works, Petak's and Ruzzier's article 'Brand Identity Development, and the role of marketing communications' was examined as it focused on understanding how brand identity is perceived by various brand managers and marketers based in Slovenia. This was a useful in terms of understanding how current brand managers are thinking about how best to build a brand, and which advertising mediums are most effective in practice, and their opinions on current marketing trends. The research found that there was not one single brand identity conceptualisation evident

among the respondents. One point of interest for this research is that developing a brand story was only mentioned by a single interviewee as important during the brand building process. On reviewing this article, it was another indication that the research using storytelling for destination brand building was necessary to explore. (Petak, Ruzzier, 2013)

In Bakshi and Khandelwal's article 'Iconic Brands: Brands Which Survive', the author speaks about how some brands have lost their iconic status due to moving away from their consistent brand image, referencing Holt's book "How Brands Become Icons". Without going into much detail, the author reinforces Holt's argument that for brands to be successful, they must be ever changing their brand identity. The brand icons that will manage to survive will be those that can reinvent themselves to be more essential and less iconic (Bakshi, Khandelwal, 2012). This was an interesting contradiction, and one that was explored further in the interviews with marketers conducted for this research paper, which will be examined later in the paper.

2.3 Tourism

A starting point as to why this research may need to be done is that throughout the tourism industry, the workforce tends to be quite low skilled, which means that tourism marketing departments may not be using their resources effectively. Carole Favre gives a reason for the workforce being low skilled, arguing that this stems from either entrepreneurs in the richer countries of the world going into the industry for the lifestyle value but are lacking in industry skills, or people in poorer countries seeking to make money in order to avoid poverty. From this, they are then ill-equipped to keep up with trends, and develop products to offer customers the experiences that they are seeking. (Favre, 2014). This indeed can apply to marketing sectors of the ski industry, where a lot of appointments to marketing positions are granted as promotions to employees from within the current organisational structures, employees who are loyal to the resort, having been with the company for many years. Whilst this has its advantages, in terms of the employee being familiar with the brand assets of the ski resort, it can be argued that fresh eyes are more valuable in the formulation of a new marketing strategy, although knowledge and experience of the destination that is being marketed is also invaluable.

In the recent paper by Kim and Stepchenkova entitled 'Perceived Destination Personality, based on visitors experience – Branding in Tourism', the authors focused on the perceived

destination personality of Jeju Island in South Korea, with findings based off travel blog entries from visitors reviewing their experience. Jeju Island is UNESCO's only triple-crown winner (World Natural Heritage, Global Geopark and Biosphere Reserve) and has been designated as one of the New Seven Wonders of Nature (Jeju Special Self-Governing Province 2014), while it is also a premier tourist destination for domestic and Asian tourist markets (Kim, Stepchenkova, 2015). The contents of the paper addresses the importance of the emotional connection visitors make when visiting a location, and how that information can be useful for marketers identifying the best practice in marketing to different demographics. This paper brought to this researcher's attention the Destination Brand Personality (DBP) model, which is considered to reflect tourist's emotions and perceptions, as well as the unique destinations identity. (Kim, Stepchenkova, 2015)

The paper also brought to my attention Aakers Brand Personality Scale (BPS), which contains different dimensions for how consumers perceive a destination (e.g., peacefulness, excitement, ruggedness, sophistication). What is most useful is how the author identified how the BPS can show how the same destination can be perceived differently by various cultures. For example, Western visitors to Jeju Island did not single out a specific personality trait, whilst Eastern visitors lauded the locations peaceful and exciting atmosphere. This is important in terms of how marketers would develop their destinations brands story, which is vital in creating an iconic brand message, and the BPS could be said to be an excellent and resourceful tool for understanding the goals for which the consumer is motivated to accomplish in visiting a destination. (Kim, Stepchenkova, 2015)

In Adam Arvidsson's article 'Brands: A Critical Perspective', the author argues that brands build on the ethical surplus (social bond, shared experience, common identity) which is produced by consumers' interaction with brands. How consumer involvement helps shape the brand, how it is the brands managers role to guide the autonomous nature of the brand, as it is taken on by consumers who have entered into the brands life world. This also helped clarify the duties of the brand manager, who must act as composers of brands myth (Holt 2004), and plays a vital role in creating a cultural branding strategy, which includes targeting the most appropriate myth market composing the identity myth, extending the identity myth, and reinventing the identity myth (Arvidsson, 2005). The author explains the principals of modern branding, some challenges faced, and how branding is used effectively to get consumers to assign higher value towards certain

products. This article was useful in the context that the author argues that brands can be used as cultural resources and that organisations then capitalise on what consumers produce with those resources, thus fostering a brand culture. What is also useful for the research, in terms of fostering a brand at say a ski resort destination, is when the author explains that in a contemporary organisation, the unpaid, social life of its employees is thought of as an extension and core resource of the organisations identity. (Arvidsson, 2005)

More research was then conducted into papers that looked at the value of Destination Brand Personality, such as that put forward by Aaker, to gain a clearer understanding of how brand personality works. In the paper 'Using Brand Personalities to Differentiate Regional Tourism Destinations – Branding in Tourism' by Murphy, Moscardo and Benckendorff, research was conducted concerning DBP in comparing and differentiating two similar tourist destinations; Cairns and the Whitsunday Region in Northern Queensland, Australia. The article was most relevant for my own research, as it addressed the branding of similar destinations, such as is the case in most ski resort destinations, where there is almost always strong competition located within a small vicinity of each resort.

This research paper concluded that more research needs to be done to develop a more robust tourism destination-specific brand personality model, as Aaker's model does not translate directly to tourism destinations (Murphy, Moscardo, and Benckendorff 2007). This was an excellent example showing that more work needs to be done by researchers for tourism marketing, as it provides some evidence that there is no standard as of yet for branding and differentiating destinations with similar attributes.

2.4 Neuroscience

Stemming from researching Kahnemans Nobel Prize-winning framework which showcases the two systems of action which human brains refer to in process of making decisions and determining our behaviour (Barden 2013). It was important to research areas of behavioural science to investigate claims of what is the best practice in order to understand customer motivations, moving towards the cognitive side of understanding customer behaviour. The paper also explored the notion that market research is a pseudo-science (Graves, 2010) and is outdated to an extent in terms of delivering the most effective

information for companies to meet their customer's needs. This research will explore claims made by Christensen, Cook, and Hall that analysing trends is not an effective form of research, and exploring other avenues might be more effective for the tourism sector.

Through advancements in neuroscience, answers may be found here. The basis of neuroscience reaffirms what many marketers have thought, that in order for brands to be truly effective, they must emotionally connect with customers. This can be seen in the research as neuroscientists observe how different areas of the brain are involved during mental and physical activities. They have tested how different stimuli and interactions change how people behave (Graves, 2010) which is of course vital information for marketers. We can see how emotionally connecting with customers is important. However, as Holt argues, there have been many misguided branding efforts that seek to build identity value by provoking an emotional reaction from the audience. Holt claims that emotional connections between brands and their core customers are the result of potent identity myths spun by the brand (Holt, 2004). In his argument, Holt raises the point that what sticks with consumers are stories that affect how people think about themselves and the world (Holt, 2004).

One theory in neuroscience, is the concept of mirror neurons which may contribute to explaining some essential aspects of the tourism market (Parrinello, 2012) This will be of particular interest to the author but will require much further research as there is a paucity of informative studies that have linked neuroscience with tourism, although it is likely that tourism studies are expected to be affected in some way soon.

Looking at how the tourism industry can benefit from new advancements in neuro-marketing, an excellent research paper is 'Tourism and Neuroscience: A Preliminary Approach' Giuli Liebman Parrinello of the Università Roma Tre, taken from the journal of tourism 'Tourismos' in August 2012, the author focusses on two of the primary areas which was of interest to this research in terms of the uses of neuroscience and storytelling in relation to fields within the tourism industry. As the title suggests, the chosen paper takes a preliminary approach in addressing how neuroscience can possibly be used to improve tourism practices. 'Tourism and Neuroscience: A Preliminary Approach' primarily a research paper that offers no specific practices for the use of neuroscience within tourism, but draws on many past sources of research and knowledge, from philosophy to ethics, and debated theories within neuroscience to illustrate the research that the industry, particularly those in the social studies, can further explore.

The author is generally making research claims that are backed by knowledge and research from other sources of authority, and how the knowledge can relate to the tourism field which has not yet explored neuroscientific methods. Parrinello argues that it is also necessary for tourism social studies to take into account recent developments in the field of neuroscience. The paper's main areas of research include work and knowledge from recent studies, debates, and theories in relation to the fields of neuroethics, extended mind, and mirror neurons. The author explains these topics so the reader can gain an understanding of the fields but only suggests that these areas of research be examined further for use by tourism social studies, and offers no framework for implementing the research in practice. Parrinello's claims are tentative in approaching the practical uses of the suggested fields, and he acknowledges in parts that some areas of evidence and research were inconclusive at the time of writing the paper.

The paper includes a number of reliable scientific sources and shows that a great amount of research has been looked favourably at introducing neuroscientific techniques into tourism. The sources generally come from literature reviews of theoretical discussions of the above mentioned three fields of neuroscience that the author chose to focus on. The paper makes no attempt to affirm a theory that is not backed up by conclusive evidence. The author is consistent in this style throughout the paper as well as not providing possible solutions, or his own theories of how neuroscience may be used in application.

Parrinello acknowledges that further work and research is necessary in order to form a clearer argument for neuroscience's uses in tourism, and goes on to suggest areas of research that need to be explored. However, little reasoning is given as to why these subjects in particular are of certain importance. Furthermore, the author provides little counter evidence that negates the use of neuroscience in tourism. The author has provided much research to show that there is indeed a vast body of knowledge that is growing for use of neuroscience.

2.5 Storytelling

Destination marketing is an important area to look at in terms of how developments are being made in using storytelling in tourism marketing, with attention increasingly focussing on how to tell a destination's story to customers. It is of interest to this research how efforts are being made with marketers to move away from playing it safe in their

storytelling (Responsible Tourism, 2014), and telling stories that engage with their audiences. Considering destination marketing and storytelling, there is also a danger that by telling only one story to the world, that this singular story may be dangerous as it will paint a nation with one brush (Adichie, 2009), and so may be the telling of different stories in destination marketing, that relate to different cultures. This is of utmost importance to consider, as the marketing of a destination to multiple cultures is a vastly more complex process than marketing to a single culture, due to the societal differences, emerging from the compendium of stories each different culture have been exposed to. As Adichie adheres to, a single story can be dangerous, both in terms of misrepresentation, and falling on deaf ears in unsuccessfully marketing a product.

It is important to note that storytelling is becoming an increasingly necessary tool in tourism marketing, as despite the huge advancements in technology which have made information much more available to consumers, a study by Kelly Fay claims that 90% of all brand discussions are held offline (UM, 2013), face to face or over the phone. There is a lot of focus on providing the deepest content for consumers, and through storytelling this can provide the deepest meaning for tourists looking for experiences. They are two very important tools for tourism marketing, as consumers are naturally drawn to content that is marketed best, which means that securing a consumer's attention is a key priority in the tourism industry (Digital Tourism Think Tank, 2013).

Storytelling is an essential focus of this research and knowledge was derived from Vladimir Propp's 'Morphology of a folk tale' in which Propp has analysed many of his country's folk tales and identified common themes within them. He broke down the stories into chunks that were easily analysed and identified 31 narrative units or functions, that comprised the structure of many of the stories. All functions fit into one consecutive story. The series of functions represents the morphological foundation of fairy tales in general (Propp, 1968). Folk stories around the world form a web of connections and the same or similar stories can be found in many places. These old stories also have formed the basis of many more stories since and hence Propp's morphology is useful not only in understanding Russian folk tales but practically any other stories. This provided a useful framework for this research as it identified a methodology to the telling of stories, one which marketers can reference when creating a brand story.

2.6 Ski Industry

Much research has been conducted on customer experiences within winter tourist destinations, such as ski resorts, and in researching this paper, the author found several articles to be of particular interest in gathering an understanding of the complex nature of delivering a satisfactory experience to ski resort customers. Papers that were of particular interest to this researcher were Clark and Maher's paper 'If you have their minds, will their bodies follow?' which explores the relationship between organisational related factors and customer loyalty (Clark, Maher, 2007), collecting data from a North American ski resort. In focussing on the ski industry, where the field is most competitive, ski resorts marketing must strive to find a balance between acquiring new business and retaining customer loyalty. This article addresses relationship marketing, as defined by Gummesson as marketing based on relationships, networks and interaction, recognizing that marketing is embedded in the total management of the networks of the selling organization, the market and society (Gummesson, 2002) within ski resorts.

This research was of interest to this paper as the ski resort which is based in North America is located only a few miles from a competitor, emphasising the competitive nature of ski resorts, and the relationship management between the consumer and organisation was relevant. The article points out that ski resort providers should concentrate on enhancing long-term exchanges between the firm and customers in the service industry by creating new value with individual customers (Clark, Maher, 2007). Due to the fact that ski resorts sell extended touristic experiences, it is important to note how the customers' interaction with the product of the ski resort experience involves many variables. These include ski conditions, the number of slopes, number of restaurants and shops, atmosphere, and it is the provider's difficult task to manage and deliver on consumer expectations which are developed within the consumer's mind before arriving at the destination. Through quantitative testing in one ski resort, they found no particular trend in customer's loyalty to the ski resort in relation to how the organisation was run, and results indicated that the resort marketers should segment their consumer base, based on their visits to the resort to ensure better loyalty programs. The results of this research, and the subsequent recommendations which were to simply provide customer loyalty packages to customers with a large number of visits to maintain loyalty.

This was of interesting to this researcher, and it was felt that the concept of how to retain loyalty against drawing in new business was of relevance, and was further pursued in the interviews held for this research. Clark and Maher recognise the importance of loyalty building through relationships between customers and employees, which Gill does in his article 'An integrative review of storytelling: Using corporate stories to strengthen employee engagement and internal and external reputation' about the use of the use of corporate storytelling as a valuable strategy to heighten employee engagement (Gill, 2001).

A customer of a ski resort enters into a contract of trust with the ski resort provider that they will deliver on an expected satisfactory experience. Trust can be considered to be defined as the degree of confidence in the exchange partners reliability and integrity. Clark and Maher conclude that favourable evaluations from consumer interactions with ski resort staff have a positive effect on the loyalty of ski resort customers, highlighting the importance of the role of ski resort staff in delivering a satisfactory experience, which is invaluable in the quest for customer retention.

Winter tourism is a hugely-service based industry: from marketing, to resort management, general resort staff to ski holiday providers, the industry is entrenched in customer service relations. Ski centres should be regarded as service networks that offer multiple services and activities at one site. Service networks face complexity, in terms of tuning and organising service networks due to diachronic changes in visitors' preferences, availability in time for activities and other services, physical constraints and space limitations (Pullman and Thompson, 2002).

Several publications have appeared in recent years documenting sustainable tourism, that is, tourism as an industry committed to making a low impact on the environment and local culture, and in the article entitled 'Administration of a Tourism Product' the authors Fotiadis, Vassiliadis, and Stylos addressed this area using ski resorts as their focus. It is important to consider in the marketing of a ski destination that due to the changing landscape of the world, and the now accepted general concern over global warming issues, incorporating sustainability into the marketing of a resort may well prove to be the way forward. The article concludes commenting that a business model that could bridge financial and environmental concerns, as well as national and social responsibility could set the bar for a series of huge success stories in the branch of winter tourism. (Fotiadis, Vassiliadis, Stylos, 2012)

It was important in preparing this paper to understand why this research would be beneficial to future marketers and ski resorts. One only has to look at the future trends that have been identified in (Vanat, 2014) which shows that in terms of new start up resorts, and new chair lift placement, the Eastern European and Asian countries, such as China and South Korea indicate that there is potential for huge growth in winter tourism in these markets, with some predicting that by the year 2020, these markets will match the weight of customer flow in comparison with their Western equivalents. (Vanat, 2014)

One of the key articles that was researched for this paper was the work put forth by Lydie and Ghamous entitled 'Emotion's Impact on Tourist's Satisfaction with Ski Resorts' as it was of interest in its relation to emotional branding and how that may be used in the marketing of a ski destination. Ski resorts are primary examples of multiple encounter, hedonistic, extended touristic experiences, and it has been shown that emotions play an important role in consumers evaluation of their consumption experiences, including multiple encounter touristic ones (Lydie, Ghamous, 2013). It could be argued that emotions indeed play a more important role in delivering a satisfactory touristic experience due to the multiple variables that can affect the judgement in deciding upon whether a satisfactory or non-satisfactory experience has been delivered. This is adhered to in Lydie and Ghamous's work as they allude to the service-focussed nature of ski destinations, indicating that among different service and tourism experiences, emotions are considered to be of particular importance in the case of extended multiple encounter experiences (Lydie, Ghamous,2013) such as a week-long, or two week-long ski vacation.

Due to the amount of factors that determine a satisfactory ski holiday, consumers do not form concrete expectations for all situations that could occur in a multiple encounter experience. As such, Lydie and Ghamous point out that consumers cannot assess their experience through the sole cognitive mechanism of confirmation or disconfirmation of their expectations, which leaves space for emotional evaluation (Lydie, Ghamous, 2013). It is clear that for touristic experiences which are multiple encounters, ski resort providers should focus on using their brand assets to build memories for customers, as developing a brand story which invokes an emotional response from a consumer could be a deciding factor in retaining customer loyalty. Consumers are emotional beings in search of sensitive experiences and, in many cases, emotions can be seen as a motive for consuming and can influence the choice between competing products and services. (Lydie, Ghamous, 2013).

A difference can be seen in how Holt rejects the concept of emotional branding as he points out that emotional attachment is only the consequence of a great myth (Holt, 2004), though his thinking was focussed on fast-moving mass-marketed consumable products and not multiple encounter touristic experiences. In extended touristic and leisure service experiences, such as winter sports tourism, where emotional benefits are at the core of the service offering where sensory stimulation, themed spaces, and emotional content are major benefits that are valued by the customer, more so than quick moving, low interaction products (Lydie, Ghamous 2013). This article particularly influenced this research, as the authors rightfully point out that managers should be aware of this type of service experience, where being able to generate emotions relating to joy, excitement, and peacefulness allows managers to think about segmentation criteria and its positioning (Lydie, Ghamous, 2013), which is crucial in the formation of a marketing strategy.

To conclude on some of the various articles that were encountered concerning market research within the context of the ski industry, this review points to another paper 'Satisfactory and loyalty factors at ski resorts – the case of Slovakia and Austria' which highlights the difficulty in understanding the factors that influence a customer's loyalty to a ski resort. Bediova and Rhyglova's study of ski resorts in Austria and Slovakia highlights that there is a gap between providers and consumers perceptions of what the most important satisfaction and loyalty factors are at ski resorts (Bediova, Rhyglova, 2015). The paper investigates the relationship of factors influencing the satisfaction and loyalty according to ski resort customers and ski resort providers. The paper provides evidence that successful organisations are able to diagnose their customer expectations fully, and satisfy them completely during each and every service encounter (Bediova, Rhyglova, 2015). The article however offers no guidance on what the best practice would be to allow providers to diagnose or meet these customer expectations, however it highlights that ski resort management should show more concern for the satisfaction and loyalty factors, such as price of ski pass, music, ambience, atmosphere, and accommodation. The paper also expresses a need for ski resort management to identify the drivers of customer satisfaction, measure satisfaction levels, and derive strategies to increase satisfaction (Bediova, Rhyglova, 2015).

It is this that is of particular interest to this research, as this researcher believes that through storytelling and researching of the target markets compendium of stories, that one could gain an understanding of those drivers of customer satisfaction, as understanding the

goals of the customer is a crucial construct to creating a powerful brand. Products and brands are instruments with which consumers achieve goals (Barden, 2013) and as pointed to by Christensen in his work 'Marketing Malpractice: the cause and the cure' products are "hired" by consumers to complete a "job", in other words, to achieve their goals (Christensen, 2009). When people have a job that needs doing, when they have a goal that they want to achieve, they hire products to that job for them. Therefore it is the role of marketers, to create product experiences that deliver on these consumer goals. (Barden, 2013)

2.7 Conceptual Framework

In conducting research for this paper, it was found that there appears to be a gap in the literature that has so far been reviewed in respect of applying the methods used for cultural branding to make iconic brands, and how these methods may be used through storytelling in the tourism industry. Storytelling can be an extremely powerful tool that can mean the difference between extraordinary status for a brand, and being a brand of little or no interest. A single powerful story has the ability to connect through human emotions, and if a brand can build a message that connects with its consumers, they can form a very strong bond with the brand, which in turn results in brand loyalty. The ability to engage a listener with an emotional and informative story results in being registered in the consumers mind, and if the story forms a strong bond, the consumer will generally want for more. Storytelling thus provides a tool for brands to engage with their customers at both a conscious and subconscious level.

This research will explore areas of neuroscience theory which have helped this researcher in understanding the ability storytelling can have on connecting with a consumer's subconscious, and will be looking at frameworks from both areas of research. Vladimir Propp's "Morphology of the folk tale" (Propp,1968) provides a framework that can be applied in some part to the vast majority of folk tales from different cultures, and tends to highlight the similarities that are apparent across storytelling from around the globe. Having researched Propp's work, it is clear that this provides an excellent example of how a brand manager could take an approach to telling a brand's story using the guidelines set out in 'Morphology of the folk tale'. This framework alludes to the possibilities of a global story; a highly prized commodity for any global brand, and could be most beneficial in telling a destinations story, by providing the destination with an identity myth.

To understand the reasoning behind why our behaviours and decisions can be influenced by stories, this research looked at Kahnemans Nobel Prize winning framework showing the two “Systems” of the human brain, the “Autopilot” and the “Pilot” which determine human decisions and behaviour, relating to how brands can frame their marketing effectively to influence consumers (Barden,2013) This framework makes the distinction between two systems of mental processes, which Kahneman refers to as System 1, referred to as the “Autopilot” and System 2, the “Pilot”. System 1 is said to control the most highly skilled mental activities, such as predicting movements and creative actions, which we would regard as instinctive. Whereas System 2 is slow, works step by step, and enables us to make reflective, deliberate decisions. The hallmark of a strong brand is to activate System 1, and to circumvent the System 2 process (Barden 2013).

This research used both of these frameworks as a guideline for understanding how storytelling techniques have been used within the context of tourism marketing, and to understand what effects they may have with a particular focus on how it may be applied and of use to marketers associated with the ski industry. These frameworks were useful in the formulation of the questions that were drawn up before interviewing experts with backgrounds in storytelling, branding, and destination marketing.

This research was also guided by understanding which marketing “Era” the tourism sector generally adheres to, and whether it be that of the product, consumer, or brand. It was felt by this researcher that the tourism sector would belong to the era of the brand, as destinations look to differentiate themselves from competitors, particularly in the ski industry, where product benefits tend to be extremely similar. This ties in with the thinking behind this research as the storytelling and behavioural insights are significant for the new era of marketing practice which is known of the “Era of the Brand”; in which the value for the consumer is created using the brand as a meaning system.

2.8 Conclusion

Having conducted extensive research into the fields of tourism, branding, neuroscience, storytelling, and research articles relating to the ski industry, it is clear that there appears to be a gap in the literature in relation to how cultural branding and storytelling can be used in the marketing of destinations such as winter sport tourism locations like ski resorts. None of the researched articles have addressed the issue of how the above fields of study

can be used in tandem with each other to create a more marketable product to consumers, both existing and new. The researching of the above mentioned articles has helped to clarify the research objectives for this paper, and has guided the data collection process in terms of what information would be of useful substance.

3. Methodology and Research Design

3.1 Overview

To understand if cultural branding and storytelling is applied effectively within tourism marketing, it is important to understand what attributes of current marketing practices are most effective, and the above frameworks acted as guidelines in the formulation of understanding the approach to this research topic. The questions which needed to be looked into in order to accomplish this research's objectives of gaining an understanding of where the marketing of ski destinations was presently at, the researcher posed the following questions.

- How is storytelling used in marketing ski destinations?
- How has the marketing of destinations changed over time?
- Can cultural branding be applied to the marketing of destinations?
- What are the benefits of using storytelling as a marketing device?
- What are the difficulties in retaining loyal customer's vs attracting new market segments?
- What is important to remember in the formulation of creating a story for a brand?

3.2 Research Philosophy and Approach

For this study, the paradigm that I feel best describes the philosophy that will drive this research is that of a mix of interpretivism, using aspects of phenomenological approach. The focus of a phenomenological inquiry is to gain an understanding of subjects' experiences in regard to some phenomenon or other and how they interpret those experiences. This researcher felt that to best gain an understanding of the contextual landscape that this research paper would be focussing on, it was decided that the research should be mostly exploratory as the intention was to look at different perspectives from

various backgrounds, such as screen writers, market researchers, market theorists, destination marketing experts, destination brand managers, and ski industry marketers, and thus the insights gained from the interviewees are looked at in a subjective manner. It is felt that this approach was most useful in understanding the perspectives of the people involved in order to gather an understanding of how different backgrounds and personal experiences have shaped the views of the people involved in this study. What was most important was through these interviews, the researcher gained an understanding of what the current pulse of thinking is within the interviewees various sectors.

3.3 Research Strategy

In constructing this paper, it was decided that a qualitative approach would be necessary for this research, through a series of open ended interviews, and then drawing conclusions from the information garnered from these interviews. It was originally planned to then follow a snowball sampling approach, which involves, where possible, the interviewees recommending avenues of research to explore in order to gain further knowledge about the topics being covered. This was hoped to be achieved by developing strong positive relationships with the people involved in this study, potentially triggering the participant's interest in this research so as to lead them to suggest further areas of research to uncover. However, this did not quite turn out to be the case, due to time constraints and complications in arranging interviews with potential and sought after interviewees.

3.4 Collection of Primary Data

3.4.1 Methods

For this research, it was felt that the best approach was to take on a qualitative survey strategy. Qualitative research is primarily exploratory research. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. The process undertaken consisted of a series of interviews that allowed for open ended questions to be asked of the participants who agreed to contribute. These open ended interviews have accounted for the main method of data collection for this research, and their use contributes to the qualitative nature of the research.

This survey strategy was deemed to be best suited strategy for this research and is in keeping with the interpretive and phenomenological approach as it allows for

differentiation in the information that is divulged by the participants. By having the participants account their own experiences and beliefs, other areas of research to be studied was done, which was felt to contribute to a better rounded study. The context with which this method of data collection was used has supported the overall research design, and this researcher believes that this method was the best practice for a study of this nature.

3.4.1 Sources of Data

Primary and secondary data sources have been used throughout the data collecting process in researching this paper. The open ended interviews took place with those who were willing to take part in the research and who had experience in concept marketing design from various backgrounds, namely branding experts, ski destination holiday providers, tourism marketing experts, screenwriters, and those working within marketing in the ski industry. Experts from these fields made up the main participants for this research. I believe that those who are on the forefront of making marketing decisions would be best suited to be interviewed as they will have an expert understanding about the implications their marketing decisions have had. What is most important is that the fields from which these participants' backgrounds have come were varied to a reasonable extent, without moving too far away from marketing, in order to get a clearer understanding of how different experiences have shaped their outcomes.

3.4.2 Access and Ethical Issues

Ethics

From an ethical standpoint, all participants were informed that the interviews were to be recorded via a voice recorder, and that their personal and employer information, and their answers that were to be included within the report would be kept anonymous unless desired otherwise. Confidentiality Agreements were also drawn up and offered to the participants to sign before the commencement of the interview.

This researcher has held himself accountable to high standards of behaviour; both on a professional and ethical level and has behaved accordingly in maintaining an impartial stance on recording, analysing and divulging the information gathered from the interviewees.

Access

As alluded to previously, the participants that were contacted for interviews were experts with a marketing background in both regional and national tourism consumer products. In order to gain an insight on storytelling, screenwriters, and producers of opera and plays, as well as winter tourism marketing experts were also contacted as they provided the localised aspect to the research. Other sources, as was previously mentioned, were easily come by as the researcher had reliably close access to marketing experts who have been teaching this author whilst studying a Master's programme at Griffith College Dublin. These individuals have extensive experience in branding products, and the teaching of marketing methods, as well as in depth knowledge of the frameworks of Kahneman and Propp which were discussed previously. Their experiences and insights were most beneficial in the writing of this paper, and greatly helped in guiding this research.

Six interviewees were gathered for this research, which was a slightly lower figure than what this researcher hoped to acquire, however, given the extensiveness and insights garnered from their answers, I believe that the interviewees have provided me with enough primary data to justify the benefits of conducting this research. Unfortunately the researcher found it difficult to attract respondents, particularly from North American ski resorts, where it was hoped, due to these interviews being conducted over the summer, that it would be a relatively quiet time and so allow respondents to make time for interviews. However, interview requests were declined and in some cases, not responded to. Due to the lack of any major ski facilities within Ireland, the interviews that were planned to be conducted with those involved in ski resort marketing always needed to be conducted online. The chosen online communication method was the video call service Skype. This proved to be a successful means of communication, and interviews were recorded whilst using this service.

However, as the process of seeking out respondents developed, it became clear that of the respondents who were sought out for their knowledge of ski marketing, most of those who agreed to participate in interviews, were located in the Southern Hemisphere. These respondents were in the middle of a busy snow season, and could only respond by email, and so, a questionnaire was sent out to these respondents by email, emphasising the necessity for open ended answers, and their answers were sent back through the same service. A contingency plan had been formulated in the event of respondents not being able to arrange a meeting in person, or organise a Skype call, and their answers received

through email were most beneficial and it is not believed that this was a detriment to the research.

Aside from that, the rest of the interviews were conducted in person. All such interviews conducted were recorded, following the participants agreement to have them so, and notes were taken both during and after the interview. If face to face or video call interviews were not at all possible, then a questionnaire was drawn up and emailed to the participants, who then emailed back to the researcher their responses in full to the proposed questions.

In order to gain access to these sources the following measures were taken:

- Extensive reviewing of websites connected to tourism industry bodies, ski resorts and travel agencies to gather the necessary contact information.
- An interview request email was drawn up, which included a brief summary of the purpose of the dissertation, as well themes which suggested what questions would be asked in the interview.
- Marketing firms of tourism industries were contacted, as well as ski destination holiday providers were then contacted by phone or by email.
- Emails were sent to marketing and brand managers from ski resorts from Europe, North America and Australasia
- Emails were sent to experts in the field of storytelling such as screenwriters and theatre producers.

3.5 Approach taken to Data Analysis

Upon re-evaluating the research objectives, and coming to a final decision on what they should be, a first draft of sample questions was drawn up and reviewed to see if they would be best suited for extracting the desired information from the respondents. This process involved contacting a secondary school teacher with an English language degree who also had previous experience conducting interviews. The questions were voiced to this acquaintance as a form of testing on how the respondents would answer. Following two of these testing sessions, two more drafts of questions were drawn up, before settling on a staple set of questions that were to be used in the research interviews. This process was

most beneficial as formulating the questions proved difficult as the respondents all had various backgrounds in their fields of expertise. This meant that unlike a questionnaire survey, it would not have been the most beneficial option to have one set of questions for all respondents to answer.

3.5.1 Coding

During this testing phase, the method of recording the interviews was reviewed and decided upon. The interviews were to be recorded using a voice recorded from an iPhone, and then immediately transcribed following the end of the interview. This seemed to be the best way of operating throughout the interview process, as it allowed the researcher to emphasise any points that were made in the interviews as it was still fresh in the researchers mind. Due to the many themes that this research was exploring, a system of coding, separating and extracting pockets of information that then related to separate themes was necessary. To become fully immersed into the research, four separate themes were decided upon and colour coded to ease the process of extracting information. The information was filtered when the researcher felt certain responses leaned more towards different themes than others. The colour coding and theming process is as follows, and can the practical use of this process is shown in the appendices.

- *Red: Branding*
- *Purple: Ski*
- *Orange: Destination Marketing*
- *Blue: Storytelling*

Due to the nature of the themes, and the research questions that were asked, an immense amount of overlapping of information which related to the core concepts took place. In order to make sense of the information, the data collected needed to be read and reviewed a number of times, and then separated in accordance with what theme to which each respondent's answer related, and how the views expressed were in agreement or disagreement with other respondents' views. The coded pages, consisting of nineteen pages in total, were referenced back and forth to each other in an attempt to find clarity within the information. This process again involved reviewing and rechecking, as it was important to make sure no contradictions were found in comparison to what has made the final article, and what was said in the interviews. This process has allowed for a validation that the information provided within this research paper is reliable.

3.6 Nature of data

A selected sample of the open ended questions that were used in the interviews are detailed below, and were most beneficial to the research in garnering the insights of the participants and their experiences as to how storytelling has been used in their various fields, and the different types of techniques that are being used amongst the participants. Due to the mixed nature of the respondents' field of expertise, it was felt that in order to gain a good scope of understanding and different insights, as well as to make the questions more accessible to the respondents, a strictly adhered to set of questions was not recommended. Instead each respondent answered a range of questions, some which related to their field more than others. An example of which is that the questions sent out to one of the interviewees whose profession was primarily a screenwriter, were less focussed on branding issues, but had a stronger emphasis on storytelling.

- *What are the benefits of developing a cultural brand and the challenges faced?*
- *How would the principals of Cultural Branding be used in marketing a destination to another culture?*
- *How important is it to have an awareness of a target market country's cultural history in marketing another country's product/destination?*
- *When marketing a destination as a brand to another culture, how important is it to strike a balance in not overdoing aspects of a destinations culture.*
- *How important is it to have an awareness of the target markets cultural history when marketing another country?*
- *How has the marketing of destinations changed over the last 10 to 15 years?*
- *In your experience, what are the main benefits of using storytelling techniques within marketing?*
- *Practicalities: What is important to consider when creating a story for a brand?*
- *In your experience, how can storytelling misfire when used in marketing a destination?*
- *Can you tell me how you would go about marketing a destination? Challenges in doing so, such as overcoming pre-conceptions. (Ibiza = Ibiza Uncovered/ Beautiful upper class Ibiza)*
- *What trends are taking place in the industry in terms of using storytelling a marketing tool?*

Observations from experts in the field of storytelling, marketing theory, and marketers working within the ski industry enabled the researcher to gain a greater understanding of how marketing processes work amongst the different fields and where changes may or may not be need to be implemented. It was also insightful in gauging the reaction of the participants as to how they feel about storytelling being used within their marketing fields. Conversations with these individuals were also most beneficial, as interest was expressed from most participating parties in recognition that this research paper would be a unique observation looking at how branding can be used in conjunction with storytelling to market a holiday destination.

3.7 Conclusion

The above practices that were used in the gathering of the data for this dissertation are believed to have been the most useful in terms of extracting the information necessary for this research. The nature of data which is presented in the findings in the following chapter compliments the phenomenological approach that was undertaken. The strategy employed in the formulation of the interview questions, and the rigorous testing that followed has helped to ensure that a high quality standard of response was gained throughout the six interviews conducted.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Overview

The information gathered for this research was collected through the process of conducting a series of open ended interviews with experts from various fields, ranging from market researchers, screenwriters, ski holiday providers, ski resort destination marketers, and national destination marketing managers. In order to accommodate the amount of information that was collected during the process of these interviews, the decision of how to best present the information was to accommodate the large number of useful quotes gathered. The volume of quotes that show different extents of overlapping core concepts are so extensive, that apart from challenges faced in unbundling the concepts as defined in the literature review, they also present a challenge to the presentation and organisation of the findings. Therefore, the findings are presented as an extensive narrative, which are then followed by a more easily comprehensible set of research and strategic conclusions.

4.2 Branding

One of the research questions that this research intended to explore was whether or not cultural branding may be applied to the tourism sector, with the use of storytelling, in the area of destination marketing in particular. The respondents who had an expert background in market research were asked what the benefits were of developing a cultural brand, and the challenges faced. This question seemed to be a useful starting point for understanding the use of cultural branding in destination marketing.

“Well I think the benefits are that it gives you an element of emotional connection that won’t exist if you don’t tap into the culture, because we are what is all surrounding us, and people take their own stories to your story”.

This emotional connection that is sought after by marketers for their brands became a recurring point throughout the various respondents’ answers, with another respondent remarking

“In this day and age you have to be honest with the consumer, who is more aware than ever of the tricks of the trade and motivations of brands. A great brand has to connect to the individual as well as the masses.”

It was suggested that if cultural branding were to be used in destination marketing, developing a deep understanding of that destination's community would be essential with one respondent remarking

“The collective understanding of community is important as well, that it isn't missed out on, because it is a vastly universal term, but it is quite distinctly used in different cultures”

The example that was then used to emphasise this point was the difference of opinion between a UK resident whose *“sense of community was more about friends”* to an Indonesian resident who felt that *“community was all about family, and there were certain hierarchies within that community”*.

It can then be said that understanding community would be an important factor in marketing a destination to markets from another culture, as would be the case in marketing a ski destination, which are generally sought by global consumers looking to find a new experience of skiing. When discussing how one would indeed have to manage the interpretation of a community when marketing a ski destination, the brand expert carried on to say

“I think you need to research the perception of a community so that whatever sense of community you're trying to create in a ski resort, that is how they actually view community themselves.”

A winter tourism communications expert who has years of experience in the field explained some difficulties in reworking perceptions of a community.

“There were perceptions that the ski resort was a party mountain, close to Melbourne, with a tendency to be overcrowded. The work was all around creating a mountain that flows and which has the ‘best possible mountain experience’ for each identified market segment – committed skiers, high involvement families, and new young actives.”

4.3 Storytelling

One respondent talking about why storytelling is a beneficial marketing tool, remarked

“We remember things better when we are emotional towards them, and we will rationalise our decisions afterwards, stories don’t always make sense or need to be accurate, they just have to make you feel”.

This use of emotion within the marketing of destinations as an important factor was agreed upon amongst the majority of respondents, with emotions being cited as the difference between a brand’s advertising falling on deaf ears, and making a connection with the consumer.

“Brands don’t matter to people, but the world matters, their stories and experiences matter, and we’re all ultimately emotionally driven. Stories tap into that emotional space, and something that is actually more meaningful for people, whereas brands are not meaningful”.

Concerning marketing destinations to a massive audience, as is generally the case, since each individual hails from a different background, and raised in a different communities and thus has grown up listening to and experienced a different compendium of stories, be it through media, literature, or life experience, the respondent was asked if it is important to understand the cultural history of differing target markets. This question was intended to be useful to understand how marketers felt about conducting this level of research, and whether they felt it was necessary.

“I think the Enneagram is a brilliant tool to identify the type of behaviours around certain cultures, I think cultural branding around destinations has to start with the whole world of Enneagrams and how does one culture behave in relation to another, and then how is a culture perceived outside”

An Enneagram is a model of human personality that is principally understood as a typology of nine personality types. If the Enneagram is used to do extensive research of a culture, it can identify starting points for marketers in understanding if a culture is patriarchal, matriarchal, shame-based, guilt-based.

“The Enneagram allows you to build a picture and a story around a culture which you can marry up with other people’s ideas of what that culture is”

The use of the Enneagram as a starting point for destination marketers is indeed a useful indication for marketers that may want to explore new applications when devising new marketing strategies. One respondent supported the reasoning of this research that;

“To create a really good story around your brand, you need to understand what the consumers are going to bring to it from their own compendium of stories, they will bring their story to your story and if they have no experience of what you are trying to tell them, then it is just wallpaper to them”.

This response was reached after the researcher posed the question of how storytelling can backfire when used in marketing, as it was important to ask this question so as to identify the negative aspects of using storytelling when marketing destinations. This research question proved to be an agreeable one amongst some participants who highlighted that one of the most difficult aspects in marketing destinations concerns managing consumers’ expectations of what experience they expect to have when visiting a destination.

“I think the promise has to align with the experience, because of lot of the problems, where Lonely Planet (a well-known travel website) is so important, is that they are all time pointing out the gap between promise and experience and exit interviews. In a way you’re not dealing with the truth, but the purchasing cultures perception of the place they are going to”.

One respondent, who is a head marketing manager for a national company responsible for marketing that country as a holiday and business tourism destination, remarked that;

“You can never afford to be complacent; you need to keep reviewing the product and the promise. We’re in the business of the proof and the promise, we’re in the business of the promise, but the proof is when people come here.”

This insight was interesting as it agrees with the principals from Douglas B. Holt’s of cultural branding, where the author explains that in order for brands to be consistently successful, they must review their product and adapt it to changes in the cultural landscape of their chosen markets. However, as will be shown this was contorted by one of the respondents, an expert in market research. Every respondent was asked to describe in their experience,

what the benefits of using storytelling within their marketing, as this was a crucial research question to ask in order to achieve this research objectives.

One of respondents, familiar with Douglas B. Holt's book 'How Brands Become Icons', said that;

"Holt says that a brand has got to keep changing itself, and that is nonsense. The thing about cultural branding is some of the time it's a place to go when you have absolutely nothing to say about the product or service. Even with the world's most sophisticated brands, Holt's work hasn't really caught on, but the whole area of using cultural branding to market destinations is an extremely interesting one, which I would have thought that nobody is really doing it. The thing that every brand wants to do is be iconic, and I think Douglas Holt's book does a great job in relation to one part of cultural branding, I think he gets storytelling, but he does not understand archetype."

Archetypes are a storytelling device, which are used to create characterisations which resemble the embodiment of a set of values and motivations that a brand represents, and want their consumers to resonate with when consumers think about that brand. As alluded to in the literature review, through understanding Phil Barden's Goal Map, we can employ two levels of "jobs" for which we can employ brands: to meet goals which are category specific, and to meet implicit goals that are more general and operate at an underlying level. The same respondent, who has a very reliable knowledge of archetypes, Phil Barden's work, as well as Kahnemann's Nobel Prize winning neuroscience theory about the Autopilot and Pilot brain systems, said that

"The thing about archetypes is that they are an articulation in narrative of the goals. So what Barden's Goal Map does is take you to Kahnemann's System 1."

Meaning that by using archetypes in creating a brand's story, companies can represent to consumers what goals their product will achieve by tapping into the subconscious. As alluded to before, using stories to connect emotionally with consumers allows the brand to position itself into the emotional space of the subconscious. This basically means that when consumers are deciding on purchasing a brand "you are actually just tapping into that subconscious System 1."

4.4 Destination Branding

Reservations about the practicalities of using cultural branding in the marketing of destinations were made by one of the branding experts, citing that the nature of cultural branding is, thus far, of more use to FMCG's, due to the more inherent need to give these type of products a personality.

"Holt's work can be said to be the application of cultural branding to mass market fast moving consumable goods that are sold to everyone in a category that is generic, and they look at the big cultural myths which are resolving cultural contradictions with a brand that is mass marketed to the whole population. They have ten million to spend, but nothing much to say about the brand, which would be the total turnover of a ski resort. You're dealing with the situation where you can't afford the mass advertising needed. But can you do it with transmedia storytelling"

Transmedia storytelling can be described as the process of telling a single story over integrated across different media, this can be used to encourage consumers to create their own user generated content, and in an essence create their own world shaped around that story. This is an interesting observation made, and one that could help greatly reduce the costs that may be needed to communicate the cultural branding message to a wider audience. In responding to how storytelling can be used to market a destination, another respondent replied that a possible best application would be to;

"Figure out what emotional territory you want to connect with the brand, then use the brand's archetype to find existing stories that might work to put across that emotional territory, and test those stories in each culture."

Keeping with Phil Barden's goal mapping, one respondent queried which would be the best qualities that should be worked into a brand story for a ski resort.

"Are you selling excitement? Adventure? Enjoyment? Or is it autonomy which means to be the best? Or are you selling security? Meaning people say 'I'm going to a ski resort, I don't want my kids to be killed'. So you're actually selling security and an adventure, or selling security and enjoyment. All those contradictions are important to consider. You could be the ski resort for the beginners or the ski resort for sophisticated people going down black runs, or the one for families, where as a buyer, I actually am wanting to buy discipline".

This raised an interesting issue on the motivations that drive consumers when they make purchasing decisions when choosing their holiday destination. It is important to understand the deep lying motivations of market segments in the marketing of a destination. Another respondent speaking of their experience with diversifying market segments and how best to go about the marketing process noted that;

“We know what motivates them when they do their searches, we know what sort of keywords they’re searching for, what we believe is that we have a product that is aligned with their needs. It is all about clusters, clustering interesting products, so they may be into culture but they’re not hugely high-brow, but they still want to have a flavour. A destination is different than a FMCG product, which you can experience in another culture, but one can only experience another culture when you visit that culture.”

4.5 Ski Destination Marketing

It was important for this research to identify what trends were taking place in terms of using storytelling within marketing, as well as gaining an understanding of how the marketing of destinations has changed over the years, and this proved to provide rich material from all respondents. What is noticeable is the importance in using social media, and other media resources to promote a brand’s story, and encouraging consumers to create user generated content is crucial as it spreads excellent word of mouth amongst consumers and strengthens the brand. A communications expert noted that

“The promotion of the resort tends to continue to hinge around selling an experience, providing offers/packages and then also creating interest around events and activities. Over the years, social media is of course now a much bigger part of this. I think this in turn sees more ‘storytelling’ and conversations taking place than previously. We tend to invite customers and guests to participate in our marketing “tell us about...” and “share your photos...” type communications and outreach which wasn’t possible pre-social media”.

This is an important aspect in terms of developing a community feel, especially for a destination such as a ski resort, where the majority of visitors would not tend to visit the mountain several times in a *season*.

“You’ll see it of course in media coverage of the resort which is critical PR. We host media and expose them to as much as we can in the resort and encourage them to create a story to suit different markets.”

However, this respondent went on to note that storytelling has been used in the marketing of this particular Australian ski resort for many years, and that there have not been major changes in their experience as to how that destination has been marketed.

“I don’t however see big changes in media and promotion of the resort, the way we host media and the types of stories that they create are not wildly different to what they have been for decades. A big part of our PR is often centred around characters and stories. We often draw on these characters to bring the resort story to life in media, radio, articles etc. They also feature in resort (Legend photo walls) and in our marketing materials.”

This would seem to agree with the remarks of another respondent who previously claimed that brands need to stay consistent and not change their message, and not change their image in order to adhere to changes in the target markets culture. It would seem important then that customers are still able to feel part of a community, even without being at the destination.

“Increasingly, it’s about the universe and not the stories, because different media also allows you to experience that universe without narratives (a viral video, or an interview for example). It seems the most successful online campaigns are not stories, but a universe that the experience is situated in”.

In one respondent’s experience, this has also been used in attracting visitors to a country, through the medium of association with a popular TV programme;

“I’ve developed a campaign which is in Northern Ireland: Game of Thrones territory. We targeted the HBO fan base, and we create content that they can share, but ultimately it’s all driving their interest in the series, to cause them to come to Ireland. It’s all new information. It’s very contemporary.”

The same interviewee also made the point that hearing other people’s stories, that is consumers generating good word of mouth, is crucial in the managing of expectations that can be out of a marketer’s hands.

“If you book something, you want someone else’s story, because you don’t want to make mistakes, so storytelling is essential to what is a very big ticket purchase item. People want factual stories as well as hypothetical stories.”

One respondent, marketing manager for a ski holiday package company insists that storytelling is vital to the marketing of ski destinations.

“One hundred per cent. Massively, it is all about stories. In terms of explaining to people what they can expect. If somebody has been away with us before, you might end up telling them a story but it’s all about what kind of experiences they have had in the past. If somebody hasn’t been with us before, you would describe it using examples and stories of things that have happened on previous trips.”

However, this respondent’s views on how best to promote a ski destination, in terms of trying to achieve iconic brand status, that is universally beloved and recognised, differ then that of another respondent, an expert in storytelling. It is so that the latter remarks;

“I would favour the quality of skiing over the unique culture if you want to go iconic. For me, it comes back to getting the balance right between universal and culturally specific.”

This contradicts the former in his statement on how best to use storytelling in marketing a resort;

“I don’t think it’s just down to describing the resort based on the number of ski lifts, or longest runs, I think it is often down to why that resort has worked well for people in the past.”

The respondents who partook in these open-ended interviews were also asked, in their experience, as well as hypothetically as some of the respondents had no experience in the matter, of how they would go about marketing destination, or in some cases, a ski destination. This question has provided some interesting insights into how people from various backgrounds would approach such a task. One respondent, with no experience of marketing ski destinations, but with much experience working with brands said

“I think destination wise, going on holidays is about building memories, and going on repeat holidays is about trying to reconnect and re-experience those memories. So I think even more so than product marketing, in destination marketing you are about building memory structures that will live longer than your time there.”

The importance of memory building in advertising and creating destination experiences soon became clear through other answers from respondents.

“Iconic brands are about building layers of memory, and layers of memory can be anything from a smell, colour, attitude, or association with something else. So I think it is about what makes a particular destination iconic.”

Another respondent remarked about the importance of considering memories when marketing a destination;

“Well I think you’re selling memories and the stories that the leavers are going to tell, so the whole thing about word of mouth is so incredibly important in the marketing of a service in the digital age. You’re selling an immersive experience in a ski resort, so I’m involved for not 0.004 of a second, like an advert, I’m involved for seven to fourteen days, so you’re dealing with a different immersion”.

In terms of the technical details of how one would go about starting to design a marketing strategy for a ski destination, one respondent detailed their process as;

“The way I would do it is identify what those memory structures are. I would look at the destination or the brand and think what can we uniquely say about this place? What does it smell like? What does it look like? What colour codes should we use? And what memories do we want to create for people that they will then tell other people.”

These attributes which are so specific and unique to each destination are directly related to the subconscious when they are experienced over again, and in doing so, would trigger the System 1 or ‘Autopilot’ part of the brain when they are activated. This is an invaluable insight as these can certainly be identified as crucial brand assets to a ski destination. Brand Assets can be described as distinctive assets which are more creative alternatives to directly showing a brand name, they help create a larger brand footprint when elements are used in conjunction with the brand. Marketers can use non-word elements such as colour, visual images, and sound to provide a multi-layered process for entry into consumer memory. The same respondent went into further detail about how they would start to devise a branding strategy;

“Identify what those branding iconic assets are and you build them, you show them and tell them, and get people to experience them over and over again so that it is there in their subconscious, like System 1. For example, say somebody is walking past a store, they smell glühwein, and they are immediately transported back to their ski holiday in Austria.”

The argument made here for identifying and leveraging these brand assets is indeed a strong case, as anyone who has been on a ski holiday which they have enjoyed surely remembers minuscule details which do not seem all encompassing whilst on their trip, but once they are experienced again, even hearing music, can transport a person back to their ski experience. However, in following interviews conducted with those working within the ski industry, there seemed to be less detailed understanding of what brand assets were in comparison to the holiday provider. This may be that in terms of the ski holiday provider, there is obviously less sensory brand assets available as a lot of their work is carried out in Ireland, nowhere near a ski resort. But amongst the communications manager from the Australian ski resort, the brand assets identified were not particularly relevant to the consumer, more focussing on the strength of the company. This again, may be due to poor question phrasing by the researcher. The latter’s answer in response to what they felt were the ski resorts strongest brand assets was

“A real strength for the resort, and something that sets it apart from many resorts in Australia and overseas, is that the main assets of website, logo, etc. are all shared. The resort management board and the lift operations company are all sitting under a shared brand, and share these channels. One logo and one identity is a real strength in the market”

It would appear to be so, however it is felt by this researcher that although the shared brand is a very useful organisation situation to have, it is less something that would have an impact on customers’ memories of the resort. The ski provider listed where their logo appeared around chalets, on uniforms, on vans and directories that appeared in chalets, as well as saying that;

“I think language would be very important in how we describe things, I think there is a consistency there.”

This was an interesting observation to make as the company considered its use of storytelling through using descriptive language as a brand asset.

“We would talk about things like excellent service, and we would always describe it as excellent service, we wouldn’t call it anything else. I think that having a few keywords like that to help underline the differences as we see them could be considered as brand assets.”

In a way this does amplify the importance of correctly using storytelling when marketing a product to consumers, but also when an employer is marketing towards their own employees. One respondent noted this in how he interpreted how ski resorts could build a sense of community amongst the resort staff, which would be a crucial component on reflection.

“The purpose of a lot of service based marketing is not for the consumer, it’s for the culture of employees of the organisation, because what you really want them to do is set a standard of excellence in service that significantly increases the probability of positive word of mouth as people leave.”

This indeed raises an interesting point of how ski resort companies can create a certain type of community through their employees, considering they are the mountains brand advocates who come into the most contact with consumers, through identifying their most important brand assets and creating a story around those assets which personifies the way of life on that particular mountain. When people visit a ski resort for the first time, they already know or can easily find out about the amount of ski runs, elevation, snow conditions, amenities etc. But they can’t be sure of the experience they are going to have before they visit the resort. It is therefore imperative that each ski resort presents a unique offering, one which is an immersive experience for the consumer. In considering what era of marketing which ski destination marketing belonged to, one respondent remarked that it is very much focussed on delivering a brand story experience citing Andorra as an example of delivering an immersive brand experience to customers.

“I think it’s branding, it has to be, the product is so easily replicated, skiing is skiing, snow is snow. I don’t think it’s about the product itself with skiing. If that was the case only the very best mountains would have ski resorts and Andorra for example wouldn’t exist (as a ski destination). Andorra has its own unique offering of where it is and you know it’s not the best skiing in the world but has a real sense of community. You immerse yourself in that place for a week and come out of it in a daze. So I think it’s definitely the branding era.”

Another respondent, one of the branding experts that took part in an interview however noted that if one were to apply cultural branding techniques in marketing a ski destination,

that is, to identify and work off the contradictions of the culture of the destination, noted that the product itself should not be forgotten.

“I wouldn’t forget about the functional side (of the resort benefits), because with a resort, there may be some Era 1 stuff, where you could actually work with some functional contradictions, like it is competitive and friendly, and restful and stressful.”

The same respondent also pointed out the difficulties that may entail in delivering a sophisticated destination brand story, such as selling a brand story to employees in order them to create a certain sense of community. As alluded to in the literature review by Carole Favre who noted that the tourism marketing sector is sometimes tends to be low-skilled, this may prove a difficult task, and particularly as one respondent earlier pointed out that certain marketing techniques have been used for decades to good effect.

“You have a very interesting link up between marketing and culture change, where you’re wanting to change the culture of the ski resort employees, so that they live up to the promise which is inherent in the marketing plan of the ski resort. But the practicalities of selling to the hotel managers, or the resorts chamber of commerce are difficult, you’re dealing with non-professional marketers whose level of sophistication mightn’t be that high.”

Another focus of this research was to gain an understanding of what the difficulties are in retaining loyalty amongst existing customers and attracting new customers, as managing this balancing act is crucial to the survival of ski resort destinations. As adhered to in the literature review by Bediova and Rhyglova, as well as Clark and Maher, both articles which recognise that ski resorts should give particular focus to providing loyalty schemes in order to keep their customer base happy. One respondent noted that

“The balance has to be around your memory structures to get your existing customers to return, and then you get different hooks to get people in, and it’s the new people will be most excited about the destination.”

The communications expert based in the Australian ski resort acknowledged the importance of finding the correct balance responding;

“This is a continual challenge as seasoned customers (membership holders and long-time visitors) have a strong sense of ownership and involvement with the resort. They are often threatened and challenged by marketing to new segments (culturally and ethnically diverse

markets, and first timers) and may see this as a threat, in terms of overcrowding. This is addressed by creating different offers for different market segments. Season Membership offers that include benefits of reciprocal skiing at international resorts, as well as discounts are valuable in the mix to reward loyal customers. So are targeted communications that address their specific interests, such as informative emails or SMS texts when there has been a particularly good snowfall.”

This identifies the importance in creating a cultural branding story, as marketing strategists would be advised to be delicate in their framing of what community they want to portray to the wider world in the marketing of a ski destination. The brand story would therefore need to bring in new customers, but do its utmost not to alienate new consumers. This however is difficult, as another respondent remarked that

“I think the balance is that you have to market very differently and if you’re looking to use influence in marketing, and brand advocates, make sure they are always new because they be most excited about you. Ultimately if you’re relying on existing customers to be your brand advocates, they won’t work, because people only tend to tell people about things that are new.”

This was an interesting insight into how using brand advocates to promote business should only be sourced from new customers, and in a way contradicts the work by Clark and Maher which highlights the importance that should be dispositioned to creating loyalty schemes.

“You’re refreshing memories with existing customers, and you’re building new brand asset memory structures with your new ones. You need both, but the reality of it is getting new customers, the broader your customer base, the bigger your business will be.”

5. Conclusions

5.1 Research Conclusions

- This research found that there are doubts amongst branding experts whether the principals of cultural branding can be applied to the tourism sector in the marketing of destinations. This is due to the scale of the vast nature of touristic experiences compared to FMCG's which cultural branding techniques have only been applied to. The finance required to promote to a mass audience is far beyond the reach of an average ski resort. A large amount of research would be required to begin the process of creating a cultural community for a destination that appeals to the inherent needs and wants of consumers from other cultures.
- Storytelling has been found to be used to a great extent in the marketing of destinations both locally and nationally, as its use has played a crucial role in making destinations appeal to consumers. The use of storytelling has become more recognised with the explosion of social media usage amongst consumers, and destination marketers are now actively encouraging their consumers to share content and create their own stories around their brand, which in turn drives interest in consumers to make a trip to their destinations. Storytelling is also used to manage the expectations of consumers in order to give a sense to consumers of what they can expect from their touristic experience, by given layers and context to a destination.
- The ski industry has used storytelling to differentiate their product packages against competitors and to give context to destinations which proves to be a vital component in delivering what can be described as a fairly homogenous product. Storytelling is used to generate interest around events which are put on throughout the seasons, and as an effective tool using local champions and long term residents as brand advocates for the destinations.
- Storytelling can be used to connect a wider audience by playing on people's emotions, connecting people through a shared ideal which evokes a response, and by giving people the means to make an exciting interaction with a brand, which is

then encouraged to share with other people. Storytelling allows people to connect with embedded subconscious memories that are connected with emotions and experiences, and not facts, thus provoking a more positive reaction amongst consumers.

5.2 Strategic Conclusions

5.2.1 Recommendations for Practice

- This paper hopes to provide a platform for other researchers to further explore the use of cultural branding in the marketing of destinations. On the basis of the data collected for this research, for cultural branding to be successful in the marketing of touristic destinations such as ski resorts, it is important to understand that creating a culture that is already linked with a destination, it is important to understand how the destination is viewed.
- As highlighted by one of the respondents, the Enneagram is a tool used to identify the type of behaviours around certain cultures. It is suggested that marketers start with understanding the Enneagram and how does one culture behave in relation to another and then how is a culture perceived to the general populous. The Enneagram is useful for extracting this information and building a marketing plan on top of it, which can be insightful and make a destination appear less stereotypical and obvious.
- In the modern world, storytelling is a vital tool in triggering those memories, given the trends of social media, and more constant interaction with media touchpoints within our everyday lives, it is important for marketers to figure out how to disrupt people from their interactions with their laptops and watching TV, storytelling provides an excellent disruptive catalyst for doing so.
- Storytelling has been used to considerable effect within the marketing of ski destinations, however it should be considered by marketers in this field to branch out into the world of transmedia storytelling; that is to tell a single story across many multi-media platforms. This encourages consumers to create their own user-

generated content building on a brands story, which results in excellent exposure and the strengthening of a brand community.

5.2.2 Recommendations for Future Research

- Research that would be of interest following this paper would explore the effects of building a strong sense of a brands community at a ski destination through marketing to the resorts employees, in an attempt to invoke a culture change, so that they live up to the promise which is inherent in the marketing of a ski destination.
- Marketers in the ski industry would be recommended to conduct extensive exit research to identify their strongest brand assets that customers instinctively associate with their destination. These assets act as memory triggers and are an invaluable tool for developing a brand story.

5.3 Research Limitations

As with any qualitative research involving open ended interviews, data collected cannot be viewed as conclusive evidence, due to the nature of interpreting different subjects experiences of the theme's explored in this research. Although the in depth and open ended questions used in for this research was beneficial and provided useful insight into areas of brand theory, storytelling, tourism, and ski destination marketing, the range of professional backgrounds from which the respondents hailed from inherently lead to difficulties when it came to interpreting the data. It was as such that some respondents were unfamiliar with concepts being addressed in this study, and therefore were reluctant to answer questions in relation to those concepts. It could be said that a greater volume of respondents from each of the industries that were discussed in this research, would have provided a greater insight into these matters.

However, it was felt that using the phenomenological approach in the researching of this paper was justified, as the subject addressed of using cultural branding techniques in conjunction with storytelling has seemingly not being explored by other researchers, which was discovered through the process of searching through literature in the formulation stage of this paper. In order to understand the meaning that these concepts had to professionals in the fields addressed in this paper, interviews were the logical option. It

was therefore necessary to take the approach of conducting an exploratory research or in order to gain an understanding if there is scope for future research relating to the topics addressed in this paper.

Advise for future researchers that are hoping to address the subject matter of this research would be to make an effort to acquire a larger volume of respondents, particularly from the ski industry as this may provide a greater understanding of how communities structure are structured around ski resorts, as this in particular seems to be a vital component necessary if one were to apply cultural branding to marketing a ski destination.

5.4 Contributions

It is believed that this research has provided a platform for future market researchers to explore the benefits of applying cultural branding and storytelling techniques in the marketing of ski destinations. Travel is one of the most competitive industries for marketers, and it is essential to look at what practices may help to improve the marketability of tourism products as the tourism industry becomes increasingly competitive due to the rise of the middle class throughout the world. With a large volume of ski destinations identified to be expected to be constructed and improved on within Asia over the ten years, the marketing of ski destinations within the continent is sure to grow immensely. It is hoped that the data that has been collected within this research paper will encourage marketers working within the ski industry to explore new cutting edge marketing principals such as cultural branding, and intricate storytelling as there is potentially a large market emerging in the world's most populous continent which is there to be capitalised on.

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7. Appendices

7.1 Process of Data Analysis

Themes - Interview Breakdown

Emotion : Pg 1, 5, 19, 14, 7 A - Eoin / Rachel ✓	Memories : Pg 3, 4, 7, 18, 16 A - Eoin / Rachel / Sandy A - Rachel / Brian ✓
Product Truth - Pg 2, 3 A - Rachel / Brian ✓	Immersion : Pg 14, 11, 4, 3 Disagree Sandy / Rachel Sandy / Brian - Agree - 6-14
Promise : Pg 8, 2, 17, 3, 12 AGRE - SANDY - BRIAN ✓	Story Points : Pg 5, 8, 11 Eoin / Sandy / 5-11
TMS - Pg 1, 5, 6, 7, 12, 9 14, 8, 11 A - Eoin / Brian / Sandy ✓	Archetype : Pg 6, 17, 8, 1, 11 ↓ - TMS Assets - human ↓ - TMS assets - advocates ↓ - TMS Service - 1 Immersion - era
NPS - Pg 19, 12, 8, 13	
Human - Pg 5, 6, 2, 10 A - Eoin / Brian / Rachel	Service : Pg 4, 11, 18, 6, 4, 15 A - Sandy / Alan - 8-11, 14, 13
Market a Sit. Description : Pg 9, 6, 8, 17 D - Eoin / ALAN - 8, 9 18, 19, 2, 12, 10, 15, 11 A - Alan / Rylla - 9, 10 RACHEL - SANDY - 11-15	Assets : Pg 10, 9, 15, 12, 13, 4, 16 D - Alan / Rachel / Rylla - 10, 15, 9
Advocates - Pg 7, 16, 3, 11	Experience : Pg 8, 3, 13 Brian / Sandy - Agree ✓
Era - Pg 2, 3, 5, 11 D - 8 / Sandy - Rachel 11, 3	Stereotypes : Pg 2, 3

Purple: Ski

Pg 12

Eoin

"There is also the spiritual side to mountains, whiteness and being alone with the elements, lost in instinct, speed and beauty. (If exploring skiing as spiritual, beware of the negative cultural subconscious associations with cults, mass religion and cheap spirituality)."

I don't know which destinations you're looking at, but I would favor the quality of the skiing over the unique culture if you want to go iconic. For me, it comes back to getting the balance right between universal and the (culturally) specific. You have to move between them to get that connection that also feels connects deeply."

Disagreement with Alan - B 8

Rhylla

"Story telling is important in marketing a ski destination as it is one of the most effective ways to engage and inspire. Although we may not always do it perfectly (I think our storytelling needs continual refining) you'll find it in daily snow report emails, on our websites and other communications."

Use of Storytelling in marketing

"You'll see it of course in media coverage of the resort which is critical PR. We host media and expose them to as much as we can in resort and encourage them to create a story to suit different markets."

-TMS

"This is why we'll host a parent with children, a young active couple, a group of friends etc. in the hope they'll have a different story and experience to share."

assess

"The promotion of the resort tends to continue to hinge around selling an experience, providing offers/packages and then also creating interest around events and activities."

agree with alan

"I don't however see big changes in media and promotion of the resort, the way we host media and the types of stories they create are not wildly different to what they have been for decades."

Pylo

like with literature

"Season Membership offers that include benefits of reciprocal skiing at international resorts, discounts etc. are valuable in the mix to reward loyal customers. So are targeted comms that address their specific interests (eg. Emails or sms when there is 10cms snowfall)"

loyalty/rewards Pg 12

"A big part of our PR is often centred around characters and stories (eg. Hans grimus is a legend here with a long history of building the lifts, running the lifts, building a hotel and raising a family here.) We often draw on these characters to bring the resort story to life in media, radio, articles etc. They also feature in resort (legend photo walls) and in our marketing materials."

Use of Storytelling

Alan

"Then, in the resorts its very much about having enough people on the ground to be able to make sure that guests know where they are going, there's always plenty of people around the chalet to

9

ink agreements/disagreements

Alan

"Well in terms of how we would describe things, as I said we would talk about things like excellent service, and we would always describe it as excellent service, you know we wouldn't call it anything else. I think that having a few keywords like that to help underline the differences as we see them could be considered as brand assets.

agreed with Sandy 18 Pg 4, 11

JW: Final question then, in your marketing, would you use storytelling? For example describe the perfect ski holiday.

Pg 4, 7, 16

How it should be used in

Alan: One hundred per cent. Massively. It's all about stories, in terms of explaining to people what they can expect. If somebody has been away with us before, you might end up telling them a story but it's all about what kind of experiences they have had in the past. If somebody hasn't been with us before you would describe it using examples and stories of things that have happened. I think it is a really big part of it, I don't think it's just down to describing a resort based on the number of ski lifts or the longest run or the highest altitude, I think it's often down to why that resort has worked well for people in the past.

Pg 17 Surely

disagreement with Foin Pg 9

Brian

"I've developed a campaign which is Northern Ireland: Game of Thrones territory. So we target the HBO fanbase, quite differently than what we normally do, and we create content that they can share, but ultimately it's all driving their interest in the series to cause them to come to Ireland. So that's new information, it's very contemporary."

✓

TMS Story Brian

"So it's all the sense of that they are getting away to something they don't have and they are being drawn by the sometimes romantic, but other times it is just that sense of contrast. But it is not inconsistent with what we would say to the Americans but we're just dialling up and changing the components, while hopefully the tone is welcoming and authentic and also has a lightness of touch. We don't want to take ourselves too seriously."

humour

Not all the way up Story Pg 2 Pg 3

"That is becoming more and more important, often people look for user generated content, or they look for people giving their own experience of what the whole encounter was like. Storytelling is very much in our nature, and it is an effective way to given layers, and context to it, so it's not that you just come and you just see an old building."

"How those are delivered is somewhat of a challenge when you get into foreign language obviously, so it needs to work. So sometimes you're into using subtitles or dubbing, but storytelling fits well with our persona as we are noted to be quite literal and we have a natural storytelling way.

humour agreement Foin Pg 5

Now other destinations do it as well, so the challenge is to create something that is uniquely Irish. The tone of delivery, the use of humour, but ultimately you are trying to persuade people to consider it as a visitor experience so it needs to be very flexible, it can't be long winded, it needs to be able to fit into various media environments, but people more and more are going to the Trip Advisors and various things and they are looking for stories. So if you book something, you want someone else's story, because you don't want to make mistakes, so storytelling is essential to what is a very big ticket purchase item. People want factual stories as well as hypothetical stories."

humour Pg 2

agreement with use of stories

6

Rachel

"I think it's really important that you don't dial up the stereotypes, that you get the traveller to learn something new about a destination and something that will really hook them, so its uncovering an unknown truth about a country, or destination that makes it even more interesting, then just the standard stereotypical thing." - True to Product, agree with Brian Pg 2

"So I think it's about understanding are the stereotypical views liked? Or are they not liked? And if they're not liked, get rid of them. And if they aren't collectively shared, find the ones that could actually enrich someone's interpretation of that culture."

Advocates

"Ultimately, if you're relying on existing customers to be your brand advocates, they won't work because people only tend to tell people about things that are new. So the balance has to be around, using your memory structures to get your existing customer base to return, and then you use different hooks to get new people in, and it's the new people that will be most excited about the destination."

agreeing with Brian? or not.

"So I think destination wise, going on holidays is about building memories, and going on repeat holidays is about trying to reconnect and re-experience those memories. So I think even more so then product marketing in destination marketing you are about building memory structures that will live longer than your time there."

they're missing Pg 3 memory a destination

"I think the starting point is what is particularly good about that destination, if there is preconceived ideas about it, get underneath that, understand what is driving that pre conceived idea."

FAA

"I think it's branding, I think it has to be, the product is so easily replicated, you know, skiing is skiing, mountains are mountains, snow is snow. I don't think it's about the product itself with skiing. If that was the case only the very best mountains would have ski resorts and Andorra for example wouldn't exist. Whereas Andorra has its own little unique offering of where it is and you know it's not the best skiing in the world but has a real sense of community and you immerse yourself in that place for a week and you come out of it in a daze. But I think it's definitely the branding era."

what era of branding. Sands

Disagreement Pg 8 Sands

Sandy

gets

"I would say that the experience around which stories will be told needs to be a thoroughly positive one where the experience is exceeding the promise. Then you're dealing with two groups of people, one is the returning person, and the other who hasn't come."

Brian agree Pg 2

"The place is a fixed thing, and in a way, can you somehow create in the experience of the destination, some resolution of the cultural contradictions which your particular purchasers are looking for."

Branding

"In a way what you're dealing with is not the truth, but the purchasing cultures perception of the place that they are going to,"

Predicted truth Pg 2 Pg 8

"You're talking about destination marketing, and you're talking about the selling of a service and a destination. Which is a tourist experience, and what you're exploring is the potential use of cultural

Alan | agree Brian 3