Destination Positioning Analysis through a Comparison of Cognitive, Affective, and Conative Perceptions

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STEVEN PIKE AND CHRIS RYAN

There has been exponential growth in the number of studies of destination image appearing in the tourism literature. However, few have addressed the issues of destination positioning analysis and the role of affective perceptions. This article analyzes the market positions held by a competitive set of destinations through a comparison of cognitive, affective, and conative perceptions. Cognition was identified by trialing a factor analytic adaptation of importance-performance analysis. Affect was measured using an affective response grid, while conation was gauged by stated intent to visit. The alignment of the results from these techniques identified leadership positions held by two quite different destinations on two quite different dimensions of destination attractiveness. It is suggested that this method of positioning analysis offers a practical means for destination marketers faced with the challenge of identifying the one or few features from their diverse and multiattributed product range that could be developed to differentiate their destination in a meaningful way to consumers.

Keywords: *destination positioning; affect; short break holidays; New Zealand*

In an increasingly competitive tourism industry, a key challenge for destination marketers is to cut through the noise of competing and substitute products to attract the attention of the consumer-traveler. With thousands of destination marketing organizations (DMOs) now competing for attention, places are becoming substitutable. From the demand perspective, the explosion in destination choice and destination publicity material has increased confusion among potential travelers (Gunn 1988). The study of destination competitiveness is an emerging field, and this article contributes to an enhanced understanding by addressing three topics that have received relatively little attention in the tourism literature: (1) destination positioning, (2) affective perceptions, and (3) the context of short break holidays. Specifically, the purpose of the article is to present the results of an analysis of the positions held by a competitive set of destinations through a comparison of cognitive, affective, and conative perceptions. The intent is to identify dimensions of destination attractiveness representing positions that could be developed by DMOs to differentiate their destination in a meaningful way to consumers. The key assumption underpinning this discussion is that effective positioning is a mutually beneficial process to both the marketer and the consumer. This is because positioning is underpinned by the philosophy of understanding and meeting unique consumer needs. Effective positioning offers the customer benefits tailored to solve a problem related to their needs, in a way that is different to competitors (Chacko 1997). For the organization, the value of positioning lies in the link it provides between the analyses of the internal corporate and external competitive environments. This is fundamental to the definitions of strategic marketing, which point to the matching of internal resources with environmental opportunities. For example, Wahab, Crampon, and Rothfield (1976) offered the following definition of tourism destination marketing:

> The management process though which the National Tourist Organisations and/or tourist enterprises identify their selected tourists, actual and potential, communicate with them to ascertain and influence their wishes, needs, motivations, likes and dislikes, on local, regional, national and international levels, and to formulate and adapt their tourist products accordingly in view of achieving optimal tourist satisfaction thereby fulfilling their objectives. (P. 24)

DESTINATION POSITIONING

Positioning theory is based on three propositions (Ries and Trout 1986). First, we live in an overcommunicated society, bombarded with information on a daily basis. Second, the mind has developed a defense system against the clutter. Third, the only way to cut through the clutter to reach the mind is through simplified and focused messages:

> Marketing battles are not fought in the customer's office or in the supermarkets or the drugstores of America. Those are only distribution points for the merchandise whose brand selection is decided elsewhere.

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> Marketing battles are fought in a mean and ugly place. A place that's dark and damp with much unexplored territory and deep pitfalls to trap the unwary. Marketing battles are fought inside the mind. (Ries and Trout 1986, p. 169)

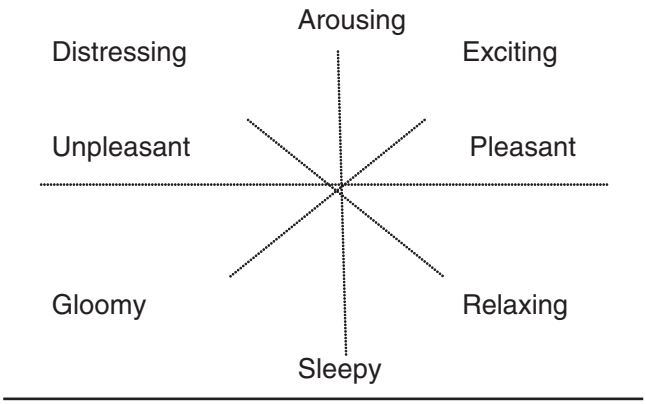
Image is the key construct in destination positioning. Kotler, Haider, and Rein (1993, p. 141) highlighted the way in which minds simplify the process of destination image formation: "Images represent a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with the place. They are the product of the mind trying to process and essentialize huge amounts of data about a place." In the three decades since the first destination image studies appeared (see Mayo 1973; Anderssen and Colberg 1973; Matejka 1973), the topic has become one of the most prevalent in the tourism literature. Chon's (1990) review of 23 frequently cited destination image studies found the most popular themes were the role and influence of destination image in traveler buyer behavior and satisfaction. It has been suggested that images held by potential travelers are so important in the destination selection process that they can affect the very viability of the destination (Hunt 1975). Most tourism products are intangible and can often compete only via images. A major objective of any destination positioning strategy will be to reinforce positive images already held by the target audience, correct negative images, or create a new image.

While it is agreed that destination images can play an important role in travel decisions, the definition of *destination image* is not so certain. A number of authors have been critical of attempts to conceptualize the construct, with suggestions that most destination image studies have lacked any conceptual framework (Echtner and Ritchie 1991; Fakeye and Crompton 1991). From a review of 15 studies between 1975 and 1990, Echtner and Ritchie (1991) suggested most definitions were vague, such as "impressions of a place" or "perceptions of an area." Jenkins (1999) found the term *destination image* had been used in a number of different contexts, including, for example, perceptions held by individuals, stereotypes held by groups, and images projected by DMOs. The range of different definitions of image used in the tourism literature has been so great that image is becoming another piece of marketing jargon (Cossens 1994).

Fishbein (1967) and Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) argued the importance of distinguishing between an individual's beliefs and attitudes. While beliefs represent information held about an object, attitude is a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of the object. Fishbein (1967) proposed attitude comprised cognitive, affective, and conative components. Cognition is the sum of what is known about a destination, which may be organic or induced. In other words, this is awareness, knowledge, or beliefs, which may or may not have been derived from a previous visit. After all, destination images can exist only if there is at least a small amount of knowledge (World Tourism Organization 1979, in Milman and Pizam 1995). Most studies of destination image have analyzed cognitive perceptions, focusing on tangible physical attributes (Pearce 1977; Pike 2002a).

Affect represents an individual's feelings toward an object, which will be favorable, unfavorable, or neutral (Fishbein 1967). Gartner (1993) proposed that affect usually becomes operational during the evaluation stage of the destination selection process. This evaluative image component had been overlooked in tourism studies (Walmsley and Young 1998). Only recently have destination studies studied both cognition and affect toward destinations together. Pike's (2002a) review of 142 destination image papers published in the literature during the period 1973-2000 found only 6 that showed an explicit interest in affective images.

FIGURE 1
RUSSEL, WARD, AND PRATT'S (1981)
AFFECTIVE RESPONSE GRID



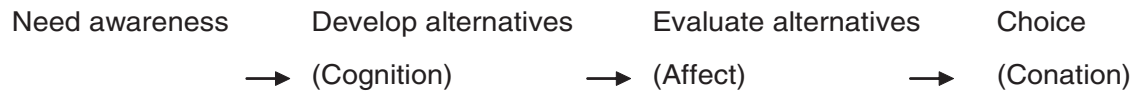
Russel, Ward, and Pratt (1981) pointed out that the number of terms used in the English language to describe affect toward a place would be in the hundreds. Following Russel (1980), Russel, Ward, and Pratt (1981) factor analyzed 105 common adjectives used to describe environments. This resulted in the development of an affective response grid, shown in Figure 1. Eight adjective dimensions of affect were included in the model, 45 degrees apart. The assumption is that these dimensions are not independent of each other but represent a circumplex model of affect. In the model, the horizontal axis is arbitrarily set to represent pleasantness, while the vertical axis represents level of arousal. In this way, "Exciting," which is a dimension in its own right, is a combination of arousing and pleasant, while "Distressing" is a function of arousing and unpleasant.

Using four semantic differential scales, "pleasant/unpleasant," "relaxing/distressing," "arousing/sleepy," and "exciting/gloomy," Baloglu and Brinberg (1997) demonstrated how the affective response model could apply to perceptions of destinations. The use of these scales in destination studies has also been reported by Baloglu and McCleary (1999) and Baloglu and Mangaloglu (2001).

The conative image is analogous to behavior since it is the intent or action component. Intent refers to the likelihood of brand purchase (Howard and Sheth 1969). Conation may be considered as the likelihood of visiting a destination within a certain time period. Figure 2 highlights how the cognition/affect/conation relationships might apply in decision making. The process is similar to the AIDA model followed by advertisers, where the aim is to guide a consumer through the stages of awareness, interest, desire, and action.

Positioning analysis requires more than an understanding of a product's image in the mind of the consumer. What is also required is a frame of reference with the competition since a position is a product's perceived performance, relative to competitors, on specific attributes (Lovelock 1991).

FIGURE 2
COGNITION/AFFECT/CONATION



Source: Myers (1992).

The destinations of interest are the five leading domestic holiday areas in New Zealand's North Island that are within a half-day drive of Auckland and represented by a regional tourism organization (RTO): Bay of Islands, Coromandel, Mount Maunganui, Rotorua, and Taupo. The first three destinations are coastal, while Rotorua and Taupo are inland lake districts. Since attribute importance may vary in importance depending on the travel context (Hu and Ritchie 1993), the focus is narrowed to that of short break holidays by car. Short breaks have been acknowledged as a significant holiday trend in many parts of the world. However, only 2 of the 142 destination image papers reviewed by Pike (2002a) had indicated an explicit interest in short break holidays. Chon, Weaver, and Kim (1991) investigated the image of Norfolk, Virginia, as a "minibreak" destination, while McClellan (1998) analyzed perceptions of Cherbourg as a potential short break destination for French and English travelers. This study represents the first investigation of short break holidays in New Zealand. A short break is defined as a nonbusiness trip of 1 to 3 nights away, following Ryan (1983) and Fache (1994). The market of interest is Auckland, which is New Zealand's most populated urban center, containing almost one-third of the country's population. Private cars are the most common form of travel to a domestic short break destination (Fache 1994), and Auckland averages 1.6 cars per household (Auckland Regional Council 1999). Significantly, Auckland is the largest source of visitors for each of the five destinations of interest.

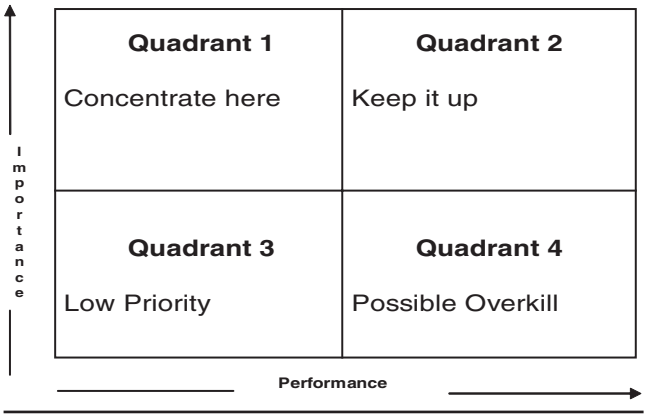
METHODS

The range of cognitive attributes deemed important by Aucklanders when considering a short break holiday had not previously been identified. Therefore, three techniques were used to develop a set of cognitive scale items. Kelly's (1955) repertory grid was used in personal interviews with Auckland residents (n = 25). The supply-side perspective was analyzed through personal interviews with tourism decision makers in the five destination areas of interest (n = 11). Finally, a content analysis of 84 destination image studies was undertaken to identify attributes used in the literature. A set of 20 cognitive attributes was selected for use in a structured survey. For more details on this research stage, the reader is referred to Pike (2003).

A 165-item questionnaire was then developed to incorporate the cognitive, affective, and conative scale items. It should be noted that other items were included to address top of mind awareness, decision set composition, motivation for taking a short break, and intent to visit each destination. However, these are the subjects of further papers.

Respondents were first asked to rate the importance of the 20 cognitive attributes using a 7-point scale anchored at 1 = *not important* and *7 = very important*. In a separate section, respondents were asked to indicate the perceived performance of each of the five competing destinations across the same attributes. Again, a 7-point scale was used. The purpose of these two sections was to facilitate an importance-performance analysis (IPA) of the cognitive perceptions. Understanding how well a destination's features perform is not sufficient to determine positioning if they are not also evaluated in terms of importance to the traveler. Destination attractiveness consists therefore not only of the beliefs about a place but also the importance of this belief (Ryan 1991). IPA, introduced by Martilla and James (1977), was selected as a valid technique suitable for operationalizing this aspect of destination attractiveness. Results are plotted on a matrix with four quadrants, as shown in Figure 3. The y-axis records respondents' importance rating of each attribute, while the x-axis plots perceived performance of the destination on the same attributes. Quadrant 1 features attributes that have been rated important but where the product is not perceived to perform strongly. This signals the need for the marketer to "concentrate here" to improve perceptions of performance. Quadrant 2 features those attributes rated important and where the product performs strongly. These attributes represent potential strengths. It would be expected that the marketer would focus promotional communications on attributes in quadrants 1 and 2 since those plotted in quadrants 3 and 4 are rated lower in importance by the target audience.

FIGURE 3
IMPORTANCE-PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS MATRIX



Source: Martilla and James (1977).

To enable an affective response grid, two semantic differential scales were used. The findings of Russel, Ward, and Pratt (1981) suggested that two dimensions, sleepy/arousing

and unpleasant/pleasant, could be sufficient to measure affect toward environments. Other studies have demonstrated how this can apply to travel destinations. For example, Walmsley and Jenkins's (1993) principal components analysis of repertory grid data produced the same two factor labels. Walmsley and Young (1998) also supported the concept of such a common evaluative schema. The first scale is anchored at 1 = *unpleasant* and 7 = *pleasant*, and the second scale is anchored at 1 = *sleepy* and 7 = *arousing*. Conation was measured by requesting respondents to indicate the likelihood of visiting each destination within the next 12 months. While it is acknowledged this represents stated intent rather than actual travel, Belk (1975) found intent was associated with behavior when context and time were included. A 7-point scale was used, anchored at 1 = *definitely not* and 7 = *definitely*. Following a series of pretests, the questionnaire was mailed to a systematic random sample of 3,000 Auckland households during May 2000.

RESULTS

A total of 763 useable responses were received, along with 56 that were nonusable. The sample size is considered adequate for the data analysis requirements in that it has been recommended that there should be a minimum of 10 respondents per item used in an attitudinal questionnaire (Nunnally 1967; Ryan 1995). The useable response rate was 26%, which is within the midrange achieved for previous multidestination image studies (Pike 2002b). Admittedly, the potential for nonresponse bias is a disadvantage of mail surveys. This is because nonresponse is not a random process (Oppenheim 1966). It has been argued that the lack of a nonresponse bias test has been a weakness of many tourism studies (Hunt 1975). However, differences between respondents and nonrespondents are not always able to be determined (Dillman 1978). One option proposed by Dillman (1978) and used in this study is to compare the respondents' characteristics with those of the general population. In Hunt's (1975) study, respondents' characteristics were found to be similar to those of the general population. Hunt therefore suggested a nonresponse bias test would have been of questionable value. Ideally, the sample characteristics would have been compared to those of Auckland residents who have demonstrated a propensity for short break holidays. It might be expected that the characteristics of such a group would differ from the general population in terms of income or available time. However, the characteristics of New Zealand short break participants have not previously been investigated or identified. Thus, geodemographic characteristics of the sample, which are presented in Table 1, were compared with those of the 1996 Auckland census population (Statistics New Zealand 1997). The sample profile is similar to the census population, with only minor differences noted in the following categories: higher female/male ratio, higher level of 50- to 64-year-olds and lower level of 18- to 34-year-olds, higher level from affluent suburbs and lower level from low-income areas, higher level of partnered relationships, higher education levels, and higher level of respondents born in New Zealand. The differences are similar to those experienced in previous New Zealand destination image studies. For example, Driscoll, Lawson and Niven (1994) found the sample profile to be older married professionals, with higher than average education and incomes than the general New Zealand population. Similarly, the sample of Kearsley, Coughlan, and Ritchie (1998) is biased toward older, better-educated respondents. Also, the sample characteristics are similar to those of UK/Europe short break travelers (see Euromonitor 1987; Lohmann 1990; Middleton and O'Brien 1987; Ryan 1983). Therefore, it is felt that the sample characteristics would not damage the validity of the findings, in that they help to highlight the characteristics of those with a greater propensity for short breaks. Therefore a nonresponse bias test was not undertaken.

TABLE 1
SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

	n	Valid %
Gender		
Male	350	45.9
Female	413	54.1
Total	763	
Age		
18-25	25	3.3
26-34	118	15.5
35-49	297	38.9
50-64	233	30.5
65 and older	90	11.8
Total	763	
Household income (NZ$)		
$38,000	161	22.6
$38,000-$49,000	119	16.7
$49,001-$65,000	120	16.9
$65,001-$80,000	76	10.7
$80,000-$100,000	104	14.6
$100,000	131	18.4
Total	711	
Missing	52	
Marital status		
Single	83	11.0
Gay single	5	0.7
Married/de facto	562	74.3
Permanent same-sex partner	21	2.8
Separated/divorced	85	11.2
Total	756	
Missing	7	
Number of dependent children		
0	425	55.8
1-2	260	34.2
3 or more	76	10.0
Total	761	
Missing	2	
Highest level of education		
High school	279	36.8
Polytechnic	156	20.6
University graduate	105	13.8
Professional qualification	152	20.0
Postgraduate	67	8.8
Total	759	
Missing	4	

The cognitive attribute importance results are presented in Table 2. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is .83, which Kaiser would have regarded as "meritorious" and therefore suitable for factor analysis (George and Mallery 2000). A series of exploratory

TABLE 2

ATTRIBUTE IMPORTANCE

Attribute	Rank	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Suitable accommodation	1	753	5.99	1.19
Good value for money	2	752	5.99	1.29
A comfortable drive from home	3	755	5.50	1.42
Natural scenic beauty	4	756	5.37	1.40
Good cafes/restaurants	5	746	5.20	1.62
Good weather	6	752	5.07	1.49
Lots to see and do	7	747	4.85	1.51
Good ocean beaches	8	747	4.50	1.82
Friendly locals	9	742	4.46	1.74
Places for swimming or boating	10	741	4.34	1.92
Not too touristy	11	746	4.34	1.76
Hot pool bathing	12	721	4.15	1.77
Places for walking/tramping	13	734	4.11	1.86
Shopping	14	714	3.82	1.75
Wineries	15	704	3.79	1.93
Adventure activities	16	711	3.56	1.73
Fishing	17	662	3.23	2.11
Close to other holiday destinations	18	696	3.02	1.74
Snow sports	19	634	2.74	1.90
Maori culture experiences	20	663	2.41	1.63
Grand mean			4.38	0.86

factor analyses was then undertaken. In searching for a simple structure (see Kline 1994), where factors have a few high loadings, the cleanest rotated component matrix was generated from an orthogonal analysis using 16 attributes. Four attributes, Maori culture experiences, snow sports, within a comfortable drive, and wineries, were not included due to low correlations with other attributes. Principal components analysis, with a varimax rotation, identified four factors that explained 55.2% of total variance. The KMO for this analysis is .81, and the Cronbach α for the 16 items is .82. The factor loadings are shown in Table 3.

The mean factor scores for attribute performance and perceived performance for each destination are presented in Table 4. These factor means were applied to an IPA matrix, which is highlighted in Figure 4. The y-axis crosshair is plotted at the grand mean of all destinations' performance (4.82), while the x-axis crosshair is plotted at the grand mean for attribute importance (4.38). The first letter of each destination, along with the factor number, has been used to code each data point. For example, in quadrant 2, nine points are identified: Rotorua (R1) and Taupo (T1) on factor 1, Coromandel (C2) and Bay of Islands (B2) on factor 2, and all five destinations on factor 4.

Distinctive positions were identified for two destinations. The first is Rotorua's performance on factor 1, "the good life/infrastructure," which features five attributes: good cafes/restaurants, suitable accommodation, hot pool bathing, good value for money, and shopping. Rotorua achieved top rank on the first four of these attributes and is ranked second for the fifth. The second prominent position is Coromandel on factor 2, "getting away from it all," which contains five attributes: places for walking/tramping, natural scenic beauty, not too touristy, ocean beaches, and friendly locals. Coromandel ranked first for each of these. The other dimension plotted in quadrant 2 is factor 4, "the weather," which features three attributes: good weather, lots to see/do, and close to other destinations. All five destinations are perceived to perform strongly on this factor, with no dominant destination position. The remaining factor 3, "outdoor play," which features places for swimming/boating, fishing, and adventure activities, is plotted in quadrant 4. Each destination is perceived to perform strongly on this factor, which rated below the scale midpoint and is not considered determinant.

TABLE 3

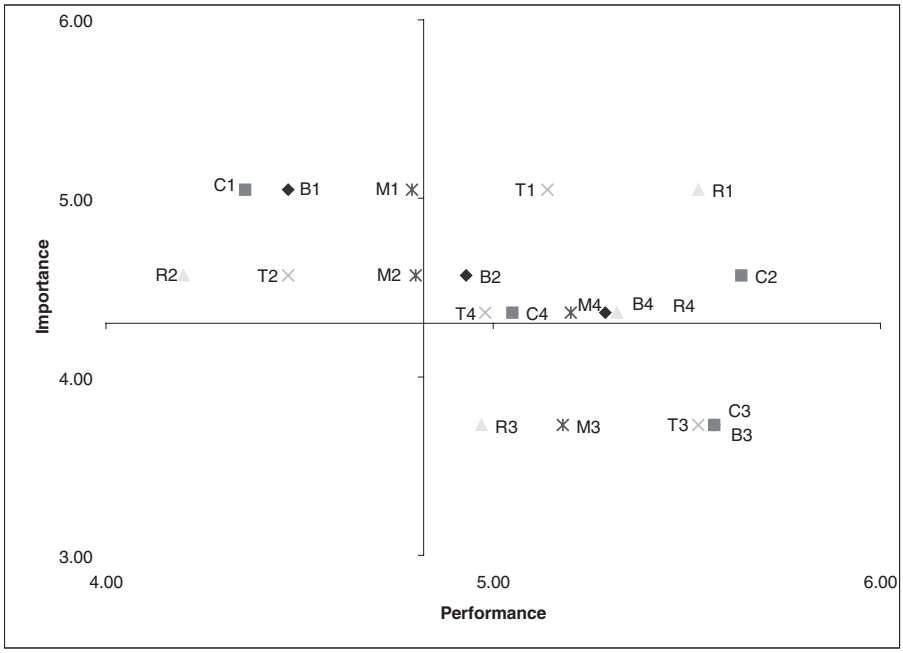
EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS OF ATTRIBUTE IMPORTANCE ITEMS

Factor	α	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	Variance (%)	Communalities
1. The good life/infrastructure	.69		4.47	27.9	
Cafes/restaurants		.79			.63
Suitable accommodation		.73			.59
Shopping		.59			.55
Hot pool bathing		.56			.51
Value for money		.44			.43
2. Getting away from it all	.73		2.11	13.2	
Natural scenic beauty		.75			.62
Not too touristy		.71			.52
Ocean beaches		.64			.61
Walking/tramping		.63			.46
Friendly locals		.43			.44
3. Outdoor play	.66		1.17	7.3	
Places for swimming or boating		.72			.68
Fishing		.67			.58
Adventure activities		.58			.49
4. The weather	.64		1.09	6.8	
Good weather		.75			.63
Lots to see/do		.65			.53
Close to other destinations		.64			.60
Total variance				55.2	

TABLE 4
FACTOR MEANS

Factor	Importance	Bay of Islands	Coromandel	Mount Maunganui	Rotorua	Taupo
1. The good life/infrastructure	5.1	4.5	4.4	4.8	5.5	5.1
2. Getting away from it all	4.6	4.9	5.6	4.8	4.2	4.5
3. Outdoor play	3.7	5.6	5.6	5.2	5.0	5.5
4. The weather	4.4	5.3	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.0

FIGURE 4
FOUR-FACTOR IMPORTANCE-PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS



Note: R = Rotorua; T = Taupo; M = Mount Maunganui; B = Bay of Islands; C = Coromandel; 1 = factor 1, the good life/infrastructure; 2 = factor 2, getting away from it all; 3 = factor 3, outdoor play; 4 = factor 4, the weather. For example, R1 denotes Rotorua's position for factor 1.

TABLE 5
AFFECT 1: SLEEPY/AROUSING

Rank	Destination	*n*	*M*	*SD*
1	Rotorua	756	5.3	1.1
2	Bay of Islands	756	4.9	1.1
3	Taupo	754	4.9	1.2
4	Mount Maunganui	747	4.8	1.3
5	Coromandel	756	4.6	1.4
Grand mean		761	4.9	0.8

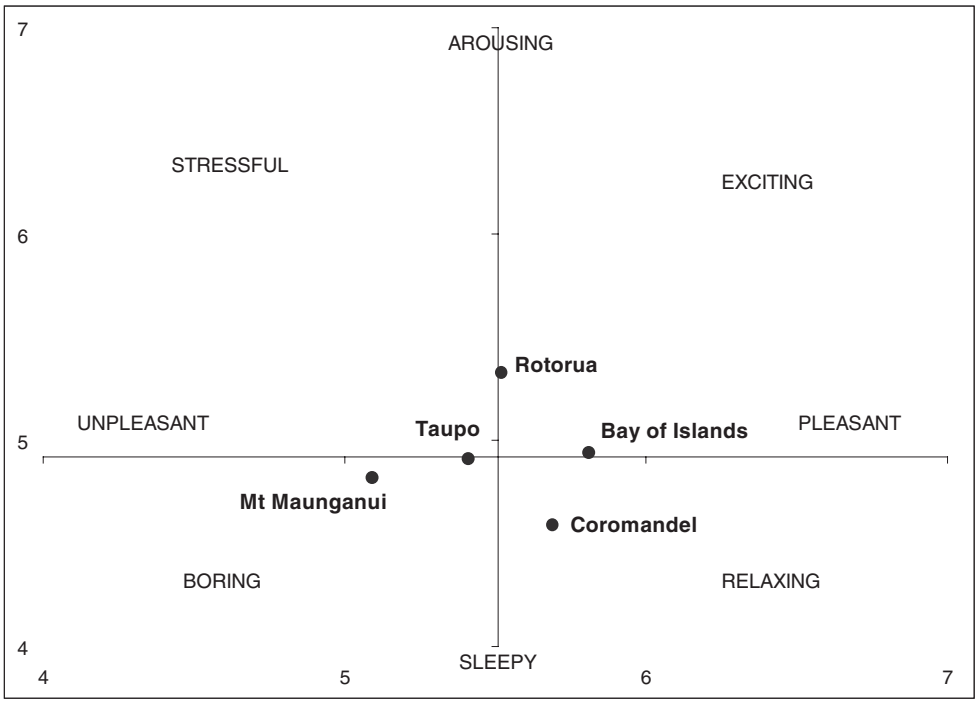
TABLE 6
AFFECT 2: UNPLEASANT/PLEASANT

Rank	Destination	*n*	*M*	*SD*
1	Bay of Islands	758	5.8	1.1
2	Coromandel	757	5.7	1.2
3	Rotorua	756	5.5	1.2
4	Taupo	752	5.4	1.7
5	Mount Maunganui	745	5.1	1.3
Grand mean		762	5.5	0.8

The Cronbach αs for the two affect items, for each of the destinations, range from .84 to .61, which is a good indication of reliability for two scales. The two affect items also correlate with each other at the $p < .001$ level, for each destination: Taupo ($r = .72$), Rotorua ($r = .69$), Mount Maunganui ($r = .67$), Coromandel ($r = .51$), and Bay of Islands ($r = .44$). Table 5 shows the mean scores for each destination on the first affect item. This 7-point scale is anchored at 1 = *sleepy* and 7 = *arousing*. All destinations' means are on the arousing side of the scale midpoint, with Rotorua rating highest (5.3) and Coromandel lowest (4.6). These results appear consistent with the factor-analytic IPA performances.

Table 6 presents the mean scores for each destination on the second affect item. This 7-point scale is anchored at 1 = *unpleasant* and 7 = *pleasant*. Interestingly, given the strong performance in previous sections, Rotorua (5.5) ranks third behind Bay of Islands (5.8) and Coromandel (5.7). Nevertheless, the grand mean of 5.5 reflects positively on the five destinations and further validated their selection.

FIGURE 5
AFFECTIVE RESPONSE MATRIX



The affect results are plotted onto an affective response grid, which is presented in Figure 5. The grand means of arousing/sleepy (4.9) and unpleasant/pleasant (5.5) were used to place the crosshairs. It should be noted that since all five destinations' means rate above the midpoint for both scales, if the scale midpoint is used to place the crosshairs, all destinations would be located in the arousing/exciting/pleasant dimension. Instead, the grand means are used to provide a guide to how each is positioned relative to the others for each dimension. *Stressful* is used in place of *distressing*, while *boring* is used in place of *gloomy*. Rotorua is positioned closest to three poles: stressful, arousing, and exciting. Coromandel, on the other hand, is positioned closest to sleepy and relaxing. These positions are consistent with the cognitive IPA positions.

The leadership positions of Rotorua and Coromandel are also reflected in the results for respondents' stated likelihood of visiting each destination. These are presented in Table 7. Also highlighted are the number of respondents who indicated a score above the scale midpoint. It can be seen that Coromandel and Rotorua perform strongest for this item, again consistent with the IPA and affect performances.

CONCLUSIONS

Effective positioning requires a succinct, focused, and consistent message. Positioning analysis requires an understanding of how a destination is perceived to perform on attributes deemed important to the target, relative to the competition. Therefore, positioning a multiattributed destination in dynamic and heterogeneous markets presents a significant challenge for DMOs. Two important implications of positioning theory confront the destination marketer. First, which destination attributes should feature in positioning campaigns and which should be omitted? Second, the research requirements to analyze the position held in the range of different markets and travel contexts of interest to stakeholders are likely to be prohibitive. Therefore, would one succinct and focused positioning theme consistently meet the needs of all target markets?

This investigation of the positions held by a competitive set of domestic short break destinations in New Zealand features a comparison of cognitive and affective positioning techniques. It is suggested that this method of positioning analysis offers a practical means for destination marketers faced with the challenge of identifying the one or few features from their diverse and multiattributed product range that could be developed by DMOs to differentiate their destination in a meaningful way to consumers. Few studies of destination image have included the analysis of affective perceptions.

Conceptually, the alignment of the factor analytic IPA and the affective response grid provides an alternative option for destination positioning analysis. The extension of the IPA technique to incorporate dimensions derived from factor analysis has contributed to an enhanced understanding of the suitability of IPA for destination positioning analysis. The factor analytic IPA and affective response matrix proved effective in identifying the positions of the competitive set of five domestic destinations. While the New Zealand travel context is acknowledged, the dimensions of short break destination attractiveness may be of interest to destination market researchers in other regions. An important implication is that affective messages may be used in promotional themes

TABLE 7
LIKELIHOOD OF VISITING EACH DESTINATION

Destination	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n* = 5, 6, or 7	%
Coromandel	759	4.8	1.4	471	61.8
Rotorua	759	4.7	1.4	446	58.5
Bay of Islands	760	4.5	1.4	397	52.1
Taupo	755	4.4	1.4	383	50.1
Mount Maunganui	751	4.1	1.4	292	38.2

aimed at previous visitors since, for example, *exciting* or *arousing* might trigger memories of the underlying attributes in factor 1. On the other hand, for an individual with no previous experience at the destination, a cognitive elaboration of such an affective message will be required.

In this regard, the use of the techniques could be of value in analyzing perceptions of the positions of other competitive sets of similar destinations. For example, this could include small Pacific Island destinations such as Samoa, American Samoa, Cook Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, and New Caledonia. These destinations offer similar winter sun benefits and are difficult to differentiate in the Australian and New Zealand markets (Oscar Netzler, Samoa Visitors Bureau marketing manager, personal communication, June 2001). Arguably, interpretation in some positioning studies has been facilitated by the inclusion of destinations that are more geographically dispersed and have featured more diverse characteristics, leading to more opportunities for differentiated promotion.

The two clear leadership positions on cognitive and affective dimensions are further reinforced by the results for stated likelihood of visiting. First, Coromandel is positioned as the destination offering opportunities to escape and recharge through relaxation. In terms of cognitive attributes, Coromandel is perceived to perform strongly on the dimension labeled "getting away from it all," featuring places for walking/tramping, natural scenic beauty, not too touristy, ocean beaches, and friendly locals. For affect, Coromandel is positioned as the most relaxing of the five destinations. Second, Rotorua is positioned as the destination offering "the good life/infrastructure," a cognitive dimension featuring good cafes/restaurants, suitable accommodation, hot pool bathing, good value for money, and shopping. For affect, Rotorua is positioned as the most exciting and arousing destination. Intuitively, these two dimensions of attractiveness reflect the evolution and geography of the two destinations. Rotorua was arguably New Zealand's first tourist destination and has an established place on group tour itineraries due to a large range of commercial accommodation, attractions, and amenities. Coromandel, on the other hand, features a less developed environment and a relatively small population who elected New Zealand's first "green" member of Parliament.

If another destination seeks to lay claim to the attractive positions occupied by Rotorua and Coromandel, the market needs to be convinced. It was suggested to the RTOs at Coromandel and Rotorua that they should maximize their leadership positions by more explicitly targeting the Auckland short break market. Such untapped opportunities may also be unearthed by DMOs in other parts of the world.

The findings demonstrate the importance of analyzing a destination's competitive position from the demand perspective in a travel context and then the value of comparing this "ideal" position with that projected by the RTO. Coromandel's main promotional message is "Escape to the Coromandel." This theme seems an entirely appropriate strategy for the Auckland short break market, and given the nature of the destination, it may be suitable for other geodemographic markets and travel contexts. Rotorua's message, on the other hand, is "Feel the spirit . . . Manaakitanga," which is based on the traditional strengths of Maori hospitality and culture as well as geothermal resources. This theme is used in all domestic and international markets. Tourism was Rotorua's first form of commerce and remains the district's largest employer. The Rotorua tourism industry has vested interests in a diverse range of segments covering a broad spectrum of traditional, growth, and emerging markets. It is speculated that the position occupied by Rotorua might differ between some of these, although a lack of information exists to enable such an analysis. Auckland is Rotorua's largest source of visitor arrivals and may therefore be considered by many to be the most important. The results suggest that the theme may not be maximizing the area's strengths as a short break destination in the Auckland market. However, the political reality of destination promotion cannot be ignored when considering this conceptually ideal position.

The results do not completely capture the "image" of each of the destinations. Given that any quantitative approach leaves open the issue of what respondents understand of the questionnaire items, it might be assumed that "image" still retains an element of being "fuzzy." However, the intent is to determine how destinations are positioned in one market for a specific travel context. For a more comprehensive picture of each destination's image, another approach would be required. For example, the importance of destination-specific or unique attributes for each destination should be incorporated into the model (Echtner and Ritchie 1991). In this regard, a number of researchers have used open-ended questions of respondents to identify perceptions of Rotorua. Usually "Maori culture" and "geothermal" are the most common features elicited, which is not surprising. These features therefore form a significant component of Rotorua's destination image. However, when examining how participants differentiate short break destinations, the repertory grid interviews, used by Pike (2003) as part of the process to develop the set of cognitive scale items, did not elicit "Maori culture experiences" as a salient attribute. The survey respondents confirmed this as unimportant. However, respondents did rate Rotorua's ability to provide this feature as the highest performer of any destination on any attribute. Clearly, without the evaluative component, such a performance result would be misleading.

A destination image study may be undertaken in isolation, while positioning analysis requires a frame of reference with competing destinations. Therefore, perceptions of place or destination image should not be taken to represent a destination's market position. At the core of strategic planning is the competition (Porter, 1979). Competitors are part of the external macro-environment, over which an organization has no control. For example, an RTO will have no control over the marketing initiatives or product developments of competing destinations. However, the RTO does have some

control over the selection of which destinations to compete with in various target markets. It is suggested that effective positioning analysis enables this.

There has been a dearth of research on New Zealand's domestic tourism market since the 1980s. The data in this study, summaries of which were presented to the RTOs at the five destinations of interest, were the first to investigate short breaks. Importantly, none of the RTOs were explicitly targeting this market segment, and each acknowledged this as the first short break positioning information for their destination.

Given the emergence of short breaks as a significant travel activity and the lack of research reported in the tourism literature, there is clearly a need for more in-depth analyses of the characteristics of this type of holiday activity. In particular, the following are proposed:

- a longitudinal exploration of the relationship between perceptions, stated intent to visit, and actual travel;
- qualitative investigations of short break motivations, as well as other characteristics such as the duration of short breaks, planning horizons, information sources, triggers, patterns of short breaks throughout the year, booking patterns, decision-making responsibilities, composition of travel group membership, and the extent to which short breaks are taken, either in place of or supplementary to the traditional summer holiday;
- an investigation of the significance of other types of short break options available, other than by car, such as domestic and international air packages; and
- an investigation into the politics of RTO marketing decision making, such as how positioning trade-offs are made, would aid understanding of effective process and inhibitors to best practice.

In calling for a new paradigm in destination marketing, Heath (1999) promoted the need for destinations to move from broad-based marketing to more targeted and customized positioning. Positioning should be the platform from which all the RTO's other activities flow. Clearly, this has implications not only for advertising but also for educating stakeholders and stimulating consistent delivery. After all, the promised position must be delivered. In this regard, the relatively poor result for Rotorua's "friendly locals" begs the question, is "Feel the Spirit . . . Manaakitanga" delivered and reinforced during a domestic visitor's stay? This is particularly important in near-home domestic markets, given the possible influence of word-of-mouth recommendations and the effect of experience and familiarity. The following are recommended to enhance positioning effectiveness:

- an understanding of the benefits sought by the target audience and the relative performances of the competitive set of destinations,
- trade-offs for a focused positioning strategy based on determinant attributes,
- implementation to cut through and stimulate intent (demand),
- the delivery and monitoring of benefits offered by the position,
- performance measures to track effectiveness over time, and
- staying in touch with target audience needs.

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