Destination Marketing through Tourism Network Positioning

Ho, Chia-Hui
Department of Tourism Management Far East University

ABSTRACTS

Tourism destinations are likely one of the most unique "products" to market, involving large numbers of stakeholders which a manager typically has very little control. However, destination marketing and its value presently has been acknowledged as an important issue in the area of tourism development. Positioning of a tourism product is generally understood as the creation and placing of a desired image of a certain product or service within the target market. Destination positioning is in the end aimed at effectively positioning the destination image in the minds of the tourists as an exclusive product offering and also as distinct from competitors. Therefore, to understand such complex situation, a suitable analysis methodology is needed to be introduced and implemented.

Social network analysis (SNA) is typically used to understand relationships among units (which can be people, organizations...), what is termed "one-mode" networks. Destination management, however, is not only concerned with one organization, but also with the things and activities the stakeholders provide. As such, two-mode network analytic methods may be more useful in developing understanding of
issues of interest to destination marketing.

The purpose of this paper is to employ concepts and methods of SNA to expose hidden structures in the relationships between destination stakeholders and their affiliation (membership) in market. In particular, this paper uses a special type of 2-mode network structure called an affiliation network. In these networks, the actors (destinations) are joined together by common membership of groups (in this case the activities). Research utilizing this type of structures includes networks of individuals joined together by their participation on some type of activities. The result of this paper is to create the map of competitive destination market for destination managers. Destination market managers clearly understand their market position with the purpose of developing market strategies.

INTRODUCTION

In conventional marketing scenarios, all elements of the marketing mix (product, price, promotion and distribution) are usually within the control of a single organisation. This, however, is not the case when marketing a country or even a regional destination. The destination product is a combination of the individual services and products of many independent actors (eg hotels, tour operators, airlines).

Positioning is widely accepted as a central process in destination marketing. Mill (1990) defines a tourist as a person traveling for pleasure as well as a person traveling for business reasons. On the other hand, Kambjord (1999) states that tourism is when a person is temporary at another location than the place of residence, where the purpose of the visit is not work. However,