

SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM ADVERTISEMENTS IN MAGAZINES: A CHANGING PHENOMENON

Prof. Nico Kotze

Department of Geography,
Environmental Management and Energy Studies,
University of Johannesburg,
PO Box 524, Auckland Park, 2006, Johannesburg
Tel: +2711 559 3810,
E-mail: nicok@uj.ac.za

ABSTRACT

Tourism has developed into a major world industry in that many countries rely on the revenue generated by tourism in their balance of payments. In South Africa, tourism is also recognized as one of the top foreign exchange earners. Therefore, it is important for a positive image to be conveyed to tourists and for favourable perceptions to be developed in respect of tourist destinations. Advertisements of tourist destinations, be they in terms of accommodation, scenic beauty, adventure, or wildlife, constitute one of the most effective means of communicating such images. Tourism as a product is consumed outside of people's normal time schedules and daily space; therefore, advertising plays an important role in attracting consumers to such destinations. This study looks at the changes that have taken place from 2004 to 2016 in tourism advertisements in South African magazines. Three local magazines ("Getaway", "Caravan and Outdoor Life" and "Country Life") specialising in and highlighting tourism and holiday destinations, were used in this analysis. The type, size and number of advertisements differ according to the magazine, mainly on account of the focus being on different target sectors of the tourist market. From this analysis, it is clear that there has been a dramatic decline in the number of advertisements placed in the printed media in the past 12 years and that the majority of the advertisements in the selected magazines could be classified as accommodation, namely camping sites and resorts, hotels, guesthouses, bed-and-breakfast, as well as self-catering establishments. Finally, suggestions are made for the reasons behind the changes in the delivery platforms of advertisements, as well as for the decline in advertisements for tourist destinations in South African magazines.

INTRODUCTION

The export of tourism has become an important sector for raising foreign exchange earnings in many countries (Keyser, 2002; Seddighi & Tkeocharous, 2002, Mosedale, 2011). For a country setting out to enhance its tourist potential and revenue, it is essential to ascertain the average traveler's perception of alternative options as destination choices. Therefore, the focus should be on promoting a coherent image of the country or region as a tourist destination since the choice of a destination is also influenced by a person's perception of alternative possibilities (Govers, Go and Kumar, 2007). It follows, therefore, that a clear image of a country or region as a tourist destination should be presented in order to promote tourism (Bojanic, 1991; Visser & Kotze, 2006, Govers *et al.*, 2007).

The image of a country as an ideal tourist destination can be defined as the positive impression that an individual or a group of people would hold about a country or area in which they do not live (Rajesh,

2013, Hunt, 1975). Tourism images and perceptions can be formulated or developed through personal knowledge or an understanding of a particular country, or could be developed without such a direct transfer of information. The perceptions or images about countries or regions that individuals or groups hold are shaped and created through advertisements and promotions, news broadcasts, accounts from friends and travel agents, as well as through travelers' memories of past experiences (Bojanic, 1991).

This paper studies the changes that have occurred in tourism advertisements in the printed press, considering these to have been based on deliberate decision-making. It is divided into five sections, the first covering a literature review that looks at the changes that have taken place in the advertisement industry and in delivering advertisements. The second introduces the research objectives, and the third, the research methodology. The fourth section deals with the results of the research, pinpointing the nature of the changes that have taken place in advertisements in the printed press in South Africa, while the final section sums up the conclusions reached and also provides recommendations for effectively advertising tourism in the future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Beniger, as cited by Nyilasy, Whitehill King, Reid, and McDonald (2011), the development of advertisements as a marketing tool is directly linked to the rise of the publication and mass circulation of newspapers and magazines from the 1980s.

An important mechanism for creating and managing the identities of tourist products is through advertising these images (Reynolds & Gutman, 1984). The function of these images is to enhance the physical attributes of the chosen destination and to focus on its relative significance to the consumer. Furthermore, should the nature of the tourism product be desirable, it is relatively easy to produce advertisements that prove to be both good and effective in respect of marketing the product (Bojanic, 1991, Govers *et al.*, 2007). Advertising also plays an important role in changing the perceptual processes of the individual or group at which the advertisement is directed as it is one of the most efficient modes by which a country or region can communicate a favourable image of itself to potential tourists. Advertising can improve the induced image of a country or region, or the impression individuals have of it without their having visited it in person (Gunn, 1972, Kamenidou *et al.*, 2009).

According to Goodrich (1978), numerous studies in the 1970s had already discussed the importance of a good destination image as a promotional strategy. However, a favourable image of a destination is normally the conclusion reached from or the implications suggested in such studies. Furthermore, these studies either measure the perception of a person or group in respect of the image of a particular destination, or compare the images of various destinations with one another (Bojanic, 1991, Kamenidou Mamalis and Pripora, 2009).

Worldwide marketing campaigns have used the television and newspapers as the dominant mode of communication for advertisements, with magazines occupying the third place in the hierarchy. However, over the past two decades, these delivery platforms for advertising have been overtaken by the Internet, and both television (since 2013) and the newspapers (since 2009) (Green 2014). According to Green (2014), the placement of advertisements in magazines peaked in 2007 and has since been steadily declining.

The advent of the Digital Age was introduced with the establishment of the World Wide Web, that had a partial but an extreme impact on the entire information system (Abramson, 2015). This digital

revolution provided new delivery platforms, such as computers, tablets and smart phones, which many publishers are now trying to embrace (Green 2014).

According to Nyilasy *et al.* (2011), the impact of the World Wide Web in the United States of America (USA) resulted in a drop in revenue in respect of the placement of advertisements in newspapers and magazines, since over a 50-year period, percentages of the total spending declined from 38.4% to only 18%. This had a major impact on the number of consumers (Striplin, 2009), with an initial drop in the early 2000s, but with a steady recovery in the number. The major trend that emerged, however, showed a positive shift from the number of advertisements placed in the more general-interest magazines to the placement advertisements in the more specialised journals (Nyilasy *et al.*, 2011).

Magazines are faced with two important revenue streams, namely advertising and circulation (Abramson, 2015). From studies conducted, it is clear that the printed press is losing out on the advertisement income stream, due to the fact that revenue generated from online advertising is only a small fraction of that generated by the printed media. Furthermore, circulation revenue is also declining because the reader rarely pays for the online content (Abramson, 2015).

At present, according to Rosengren and Dahlén (2013), advertising should not only help to subsidise the media, but managed properly, it should enhance the experience of the reader. If an advertisement is creative, it should engage the reader and add to the sense of exclusivity of the magazine. Furthermore, Cunningham and Haley (2000) even suggested that advertisements, if managed and executed properly, could justify the reading of a magazine.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Owing to the importance of the tourism industry to the South African economy in respect of job creation and as an earner of foreign exchange earnings, it is important to take cognisance of the way in which this sector is presented in the printed media and to ensure that the country becomes a destination of choice for the average tourism consumer. This paper investigates the changes that have taken place in tourism advertisements in the printed media, with magazines as the vehicle for conveying this information to the public.

The specific objectives of this study include the following:

- The changes that have taken place in the number of tourism advertisements that are published in the printed media, with special reference to magazines;
- The changes in the type of tourist attraction that is advertised in magazines;
- The changes in the number of advertisements per province/region/town in South Africa;
- The manner in which South African magazines have adapted and responded to the impact of the World Wide Web on advertisement revenue.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Personal observations during the past three decades have indicated that changes have occurred in the way in which tourism advertisements have appeared in the printed press. In the early 1980s, tourism journals in South Africa included a significant number of advertisements in respect of holiday

destinations and resorts in neighbouring countries. This trend started to change dramatically during the final years of the Apartheid era with fewer advertisements being placed by these countries. With easier access to the Internet by consumers, more providers of tourist services turned to the Internet to develop web pages to advertise their services.

This study used the statistics collected by and deductions made by Kotze (2004) as a base-line to compare the changes that have taken place in the number of advertisements in the printed media since 2004. In the 2004 study, four magazines were included in the study. One of these went out of print, while the remaining three were used to compare and establish the changes in the placing of advertisements of tourist destinations in the printed press in South Africa.

The advertisements were classified according to different categories, namely self-catering, accommodation (hotels, bed-and-breakfast establishments, as well as guesthouses), camping and resort destinations, adventure holidays, farm holidays and wildlife holidays. An analysis was then made of the number of advertisements that were published in the selected magazines between the years 2004 and 2016. A second analysis was carried out by analysing the number of and changes in the total number of advertisements per province for the period in question.

Results: Tourist advertisements in the printed media

For the 2004 study, four magazines in printed format were used to evaluate the number of tourism advertisements in each of them. The magazines included “Getaway” (published since 1999), “Caravan and Outdoor Living” (published initially as “Caravan” - since 1960), “Country Life” (no date of issue or number is indicated) and “Out There”. All except the last-mentioned magazine are still in print. However, the number of the outdoor type of magazine has increased to nine, with four being published monthly in Afrikaans, as in the case of “Weg” and “Wegry”, the Afrikaans equivalents for the English magazines, “Go” and “Drive Out”, with the same content and cover page. The first published dates of these latest magazines range from 2005 to 2011. However, this set excludes magazines specialising in hunting and fishing.

From the difference in the number of advertisements placed in magazines between 2004 and 2016 respectively, it is clear that there has been a dramatic fall in the number of advertisements over the past 12 years (see Table 1). In total, the decline in advertisements amounted to almost 82 per cent. The decline in the number of advertisements in “Country Life” amounted to 92.9 per cent over this period of time, whereas the decline in “Getaway” and “Caravan and Outdoor Life” amounted to 85.9 per cent and 48.5 per cent respectively. It was mainly in the case of advertisements for self-catering establishments, and hotels and bed-and-breakfast establishments, the last two classified together in one category, that the greatest decline occurred, with 89,7 per cent and 84,8 per cent fewer advertisements respectively. In the 2004 study, 20 (4%) of the advertisements were for *Farm Holidays* and *Wildlife Holidays* (see Kotze, 2004). However, the numbers in these two categories declined to only three advertisements in the 2016 study, so that these two categories were excluded from this study. A possible reason for this trend could be that magazines that specialise in hunting and fishing would be better media forms in which to publish such advertisements.

The lowest decline in advertisement placings occurred in the category, *Camping and Resorts*, with 36.6 per cent of the original number remaining (63.4% fewer advertisements). On the other hand, by 2016, *Caravan and Outdoor Life* had retained just over 44 per cent of the number of advertisements in this category that it had placed since 2004. A possible reason for this is that the target market at which the

advertisements in this case are directed is more specific. *Caravan and Outdoor Life* is taking its specialisation a step further by also publishing a *Great Outdoor Guide*. The advertisements in the 2016 edition of the *Great Outdoor Guide* are categorised in terms of the nine provinces. This guide, published in English and Afrikaans, features advertisements that range from full pages to one sixth of a page. There is a list at the end of each provincial section with contact details for the respective caravan parks and resorts.

TABLE 1
NUMBER OF AND CHANGE (%) IN ADVERTISEMENTS PER MAGAZINE (2004 – 2016)

| | Getaway | | Caravan & Outdoor Life | | Country Life | | Total | |
|------------------------------|--------------|------|------------------------|------|--------------|------|--------------|------|
| | 2004 | 2016 | 2004 | 2016 | 2004 | 2016 | 2004 | 2016 |
| Self-catering | 298 | 36 | 3 | 11 | 157 | 0 | 458 | 47 |
| Change in no | 262 (less) | | 8 (more) | | 157 (less) | | 411 (less) | |
| Change in % | 86.9% | | 72.7% | | 100% | | 89.7% | |
| Hotel and B&B | 209 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 120 | 20 | 329 | 50 |
| Change in no | 179 (less) | | No change | | 100 (less) | | 279 (less) | |
| Change in % | 85.6% | | 0% | | 83.3% | | 84.8% | |
| Camping & Resorts | 13 | 1 | 131 | 58 | 1 | 0 | 145 | 59 |
| Change in no | 12 (less) | | 73 (less) | | 1 (less) | | 92 (less) | |
| Change in % | 92.3% | | 55.7% | | 100% | | 63.4% | |
| Adventure Holidays | 27 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 32 | 10 |
| Change in no | 17 (less) | | No change | | 5 (less) | | 22 (less) | |
| Change in % | 62.9% | | 0% | | 100% | | 68.8% | |
| Total | 547 | 77 | 134 | 69 | 283 | 20 | 964 | 166 |
| Change in no | 470 (less) | | 65 (less) | | 263 (less) | | 798 (less) | |
| Change in % | 85.9% | | 48.5% | | 92.9% | | 82.7% | |

2004 data (Source: Kotze, 2004)

An analysis of the advertisements per province clearly shows that the number of advertisements in the *Outdoor Life* category decreased the most, with only 11 advertisements featuring in 2016, 95 per cent fewer than in 2004. Limpopo Province had 64 advertisements in this category in 2004 but none in 2016 and the third-lowest number in terms of the total number of advertisements placed in the selected magazines in this year. Mpumalanga and Free State Province also had no *Outdoor Life* advertisements in 2016. The low numbers for these three provinces could possibly be attributed to the fact that they are not perceived as mainstream tourist destinations in South Africa (see Table 2).

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF AND CHANGE (%) IN ADVERTISEMENTS PER PROVINCE (2004 – 2016)

| | Type of ads | | | | Total | |
|----------------------|---------------|------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|------------|
| | Accommodation | | Outdoor life | | 2004 | 2016 |
| | 2004 | 2016 | 2004 | 2016 | | |
| Western Cape | 362 | 32 | 18 | 2 | 380 | 34 |
| Change in no of ads | 330 (less) | | 16 (less) | | 346 (less) | |
| Change in % | 91.2% | | 88.9% | | 91.1% | |
| KwaZulu-Natal | 269 | 48 | 52 | 1 | 321 | 49 |
| Change in no of ads | 221 (less) | | 51 (less) | | 272 (less) | |
| Change in % | 82.2% | | 98.1% | | 84.7% | |
| Limpopo | 58 | 8 | 64 | 0 | 122 | 8 |
| Change in no of ads | 50 (less) | | 64 (less) | | 114 (less) | |
| Change in % | 86,2% | | 100% | | 93,4% | |
| Eastern Cape | 103 | 17 | 12 | 1 | 115 | 18 |
| Change in no of ads | 86 (less) | | 11 (less) | | 97 (less) | |
| Change in % | 83.5% | | 91.7% | | 84.3% | |
| Mpumalanga | 74 | 21 | 30 | 0 | 104 | 21 |
| Change in no of ads | 53 (less) | | 30 (less) | | 83 (less) | |
| Change in % | 71.6% | | 100% | | 79.8% | |
| Free State | 62 | 6 | 7 | 0 | 69 | 6 |
| Change in no of ads | 56 (less) | | 7 (less) | | 63 (less) | |
| Change in % | 90.3% | | 100% | | 91.3% | |
| North West | 43 | 12 | 25 | 5 | 68 | 17 |
| Change in no of ads | 31 (less) | | 20 (less) | | 51 (less) | |
| Change in % | 72.1% | | 80% | | 75% | |
| Gauteng | 34 | 6 | 14 | 1 | 48 | 7 |
| Change in no of ads | 28 (less) | | 13 (less) | | 41 (less) | |
| Change in % | 82.3% | | 92.9% | | 85.4% | |
| Northern Cape | 32 | 8 | 8 | 1 | 40 | 9 |
| Change in no of ads | 24 (less) | | 7 (less) | | 31 (less) | |
| Change in % | 75% | | 87.5% | | 77.5% | |
| Total | 1037 | 158 | 230 | 11 | 1267 | 169 |
| Change in no of ads | 879 (less) | | 219 (less) | | 1098 (less) | |
| Change in % | 84.8% | | 95.2% | | 84.7% | |

2004 data (Source: Kotze, 2004)

When advertisements for the various types of accommodation (including those for hotels, bed-and-breakfast and self-catering establishments, as well as camping and resorts) are examined, it is evident that the number of these types of advertisement, although still in the majority, has also declined by almost 85% since 2004. KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape still support the majority of

accommodation advertisements in magazines, probably because these provinces are perceived by most South Africans as the destinations of choice for a coastal holiday. However, there has been a decline between 2004 and 2016 in the number of advertisements for these two provinces of more than 82% and 91%, respectively.

This decline must also be seen in the light of the number of advertisements published in the annual *Great Outdoor Guide* publication that provides tourists with specialised information on holiday and camping resorts. This type of publication could possibly be in response to the inroads that the Internet has made and the devastating effects that it has had on advertisements in the printed press. The total number of advertisements and listings of destinations published in the 2016 edition of this publication amounted to 882, ranging from 183 in the Western Province to 36 in Gauteng (see Table 3). This publication also includes articles on specific areas such as the Waterberg and the Natal Midlands to ensure reading pleasure for the consumer.

TABLE 3
ADVERTISEMENTS IN THE 2016 GREATER OUTDOOR GUIDE

| Province | Number of Ads | Number of Listings | Total | Towns with largest number of listings |
|-----------------|----------------------|---------------------------|--------------|--|
| Western Cape | 24 | 159 | 183 | Clanwilliam 9 (4.9 %) |
| KwaZulu-Natal | 27 | 115 | 142 | Port Shepstone 8 (5.6%) |
| Eastern Cape | 6 | 116 | 122 | East London 13 (10.6%) |
| Limpopo | 12 | 74 | 86 | Bela-Bela 20 (23.3%) |
| Northern Cape | 7 | 74 | 81 | Upington 9 (11.1%) |
| Free State | 7 | 59 | 66 | Parys 8 (12.1%) |
| North West | 9 | 53 | 62 | Brits 17 (27.4%) |
| Mpumalanga | 12 | 32 | 44 | Middelburg 8 (18.2%) |
| Gauteng | 8 | 28 | 36 | Pretoria 12 (33.3%) |
| Total | 112 | 710 | 822 | |

The advertisements in this publication range from full-page advertisements with pictures depicting the facilities available and a key indicating the facilities and activities at the resort. This type of information is also available from the advertisements of half and a third of a page. An interesting feature of the photographs featured in the advertisements is that 60.7% show water bodies such as swimming pools, rivers or waterfalls, or border on the ocean, possibly to make the facilities/resorts more alluring to the consumer. The smallest advertisement is a sixth of a page. However, all of these advertisements have GPS coordinates and show the closest town to the resort, as well as contact details and the website address.

There are 710 listings of resorts and camping sites in the *Great Outdoor Guide* - which is dramatically more than those in the camping and resorts category of the advertisements that were published in the selected magazines for 2004 and 2016. These listings provide the name of the resort or camping site, the closest town or city to the tourist attraction, as well as a contact number. With this information available, the consumer can easily find these establishments on the Internet to ascertain what services and facilities each of these resorts or camping sites has to offer.

If the towns that feature the most in the listings are scrutinised, a few surprises come to the fore. Bela-Bela in Limpopo, for instance, has eight advertisements and 12 listings, amounting to 23.3% of the total number for the province, and 2.4% of all of the listings for South Africa. This could be due to the concentration of and competition between holiday resorts that have been developed in this region. Seven of the eight advertisements of resorts at Bela-Bela show water features such as swimming pools to attract consumers to their establishments. Taking advantage of the milder winter climate of the province, the marketing divisions of such resorts are able to exploit their potential for hosting water-related activities.

According to the 2016 edition of the *Great Outdoor Guide*, Brits in Northwest Province, with seven advertisements and ten listings, supports the second-largest number of advertisements for holiday resorts and destinations. A possible explanation for this is the close proximity of the town to Sun City, the Cradle of Humankind, and local nature reserves.

The only unexpected phenomenon relating to the town in the Western Cape with the largest number of tourist listings is that of Clanwilliam, with one advertisement and eight listings, representing almost five percent of the total for the province. Although not a seaside location, the town has the Clanwilliam Dam that can support a number of water-oriented activities.

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As in the case of the USA and the rest of the world, but with a very small consumer market and few magazines in this specific niche market, there has been a decline in the number of tourism advertisements in the three magazines selected for this study, with one magazine that has since been withdrawn from the market. However, as in the case abroad, the number of magazines specialising in tourism advertisements has increased since the mid-2000s, with some even providing for an Afrikaans readership.

Since the late 2000s, with a dramatic decline in the number of advertisements featured in the printed media, it is clear that the same tendencies in advertising - as in the rest of the world - are occurring in South Africa. Another factor that must be considered is the increase in the number of magazines. This has been the case in South Africa, but also more especially in other niche markets falling under the tourism banner. As in the USA and the rest of the world, specialisation has also increased in South Africa, with magazines focusing on fishing, hunting and four-by-four driving and adventure tourism.

It is clear from this research that although there has been a drop of almost 50% in their monthly revenue from advertisements, the longest-running magazines specialising in caravanning, camping and outdoor life are doing better than the selected magazines that were initially investigated in this study. These outdoor guide publications, that appear annually, have almost reached the same number of advertisements and listings as those that were recorded in the four magazines in the 2004 study.

With the breakdown of advertisements per province, the two provinces with beach holiday resorts, the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, had the largest number of advertisements, and although they also showed the same magnitude of decline in the number of their advertisements, they were continuing to support the highest number of advertisements in 2016. Gauteng and Northern Cape have been lagging behind in the last two spheres, in terms of their total number of advertisements featured in the three selected magazines.

Finally, it seems that as in the rest of the world, magazines in South Africa have gone through the same phases of change owing to the impact of the World Wide Web. Firstly, they have suffered a loss in terms of their revenue on account of the decline in the number of advertisements placed in magazines. There has also possibly been a decline in the number of magazines. In fact, one of the four magazines that was studied 12 years previously – 2004, is no longer in publication. However, as in the rest of the world, much more specialisation can be observed when the titles of magazines on the shelves of bookstores are considered.

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