Griffith Business School

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Natasha Hannah Cox

July 2014
Destination brand governance: An exploration of destination management organisations’ and operators’ perspectives.

Natasha Hannah Cox

BSc. ITM (Hons) / MITHM

Department of Tourism, Sport and Hotel Management,
Griffith Business Group,
Griffith University

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

July 2014
This thesis explores Destination Management Organisations’ (DMOs) and operators’ role in destination branding. The thesis draws upon a resource-based view to explore how the combination of a destination’s key resources and capabilities (i.e. destination brand) create valuable destination experiences that are aligned to consumer needs and wants. In doing so, through a multi-stakeholder exploration of branding practices, this thesis builds on existing destination branding literature. As the broker of the destination’s resources, the DMO must balance the relationships with operators to establish a consistent destination experience through brand governance. Yet, destination brand governance is complex due to the heterogeneity of the organisations involved developing and delivering the brand. As such, balancing the relationships within the destination to establish brand buy-in is a challenge for DMOs. This thesis defines brand buy-in as the operators’ willingness to engage positively with the destination brand. The process requires the operators and DMOs to contribute resources together to achieve a consistent brand experience. Failure to do so weakens brand experience and negatively influences consumer loyalty. It is therefore vital that DMOs understand the dominant logic influencing operators’ destination branding goals to stimulate brand buy-in. The absence of empirical research exploring destination brands from an operator perspective and, in particular, ways to promote their buy-in prompt the need for this research. In doing so, ways for DMOs to balance operator relationships through governance mechanisms are revealed.

This thesis adopts a post-positivistic paradigm and employed a sequential mixed methods design that involved three phases of empirical material collection. Tropical North Queensland, Australia, was the context for this study as it faces similar brand governance issues as many tourist destinations around the world. In-depth semi-structured interviews with 23 stakeholders (DMOs and operators) were undertaken in the first phase of research. A quantitative electronic-survey of visitors and non-visitors to the region was then conducted to generate a report on consumer perceptions. The final qualitative phase used structured telephone interviews with 19 participants from phase one. The consumer survey report was provided to participants to enhance discussion on brand governance practices.
Findings indicate two dominant but inconsistent logics. DMOs are the focal organisation in the brand network and see themselves as the “brand manager”. As such, they adopt hierarchical governance to manage the brand. DMOs use episodic relationships with operators to provide functional brand information through a top-down approach. Therefore, they operate under an economic dominant logic. DMOs focus on economic measures of performance, notably increasing visitor numbers and expenditure. Several multinational operators, such as large hotel chains, “the elites”, also operate under an economic dominant logic. They work closely with DMOs because they have the tangible (financial and human) resources to contribute to marketing campaigns. The elites have the resources, organisational knowledge and relational strength with the DMO to demonstrate brand buy-in. Conversely, smaller, independent operators, “the inbetweeners”, are central to the brand experience, but are at the lower end of the brand membership hierarchy and feel marginalised by power differentials. They have close contact with visitors and often with other operators through sub-networks, and focus on providing exceptional experiences over economic goals. As such, they operate under a co-creative logic and seek benefits such as knowledge, trust and support from the network. Based on the positive fit between their organisational culture and the culture of the destination the inbetweeners demonstrate some brand buy-in. Other operators, “the discontented”, show a lack DMO support and do not buy-in to the brand. This study found that DMOs and operators have differing views on goals, resource allocation and performance measures. Governance mechanisms, such as the reliance on formal communication, hierarchical brand management and no evaluation tools inhibit operator brand buy-in by creating information asymmetries and power differentials across the brand network. This is due to the lack of congruency between the DMOs structured economic drive and the operators’ co-creative needs. In order to achieve brand buy-in among non-elite operators DMOs need to adopt governance approaches that through flexibility meet operators’ co-creative needs.

This thesis explores multiple stakeholder perspectives of destination brand governance, examining complexities associated with the heterogeneity of stakeholders and identifying practical tools to develop brand buy-in. In doing so, this thesis advances theoretical understanding of destination brand governance from a multi-
stakeholder perspective. Through the in-depth analysis of destination brand buy-in, this study extends the destination brand literature by identifying why operators are not committing to the destination brand. This research also furthers practical understanding of governance tools that impact operators’ brand buy-in, presenting ways that DMOs can adapt governance practices to enhance brand buy-in across the destination brand network to achieve a more consistent brand experience and augmenting destination competitiveness. This thesis extends destination branding literature by providing an understanding of the core influencing factors on destination brand buy-in. Future research can extend the findings of this thesis by refining the brand buy-in framework and its components. Examining a case with strong operator destination brand buy-in and its influence of the visitor experience, in contrast to this thesis, could also advance knowledge on this topic.
ACADEMIC DECLARATION

This work has not been submitted for a degree or diploma in any other university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Natasha Hannah Cox

July 2014
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION............................................................... 1

1. INTRODUCTION.............................................................................. 1
1.1 DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS AND THE ROLE OF DESTINATION BRANDS......................................................... 2
1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS................................................................. 5
1.3 CONTEXT....................................................................................... 6
1.4 THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS.......... 7
   1.4.1 Importance of research....................................................... 7
   1.4.2 Theoretical contribution.................................................... 7
   1.4.3 Practical contribution........................................................ 8
1.5 RESEARCH METHODS................................................................. 8
1.6 DELIMITATIONS......................................................................... 9
1.7 THESIS OUTLINE..................................................................... 10
1.8 CONCLUSION............................................................................. 12

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH POSITIONING................................. 13

2. INTRODUCTION.............................................................................. 13
2.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM............................................................. 13
2.2 ONTOLOGY.................................................................................. 18
2.3 EPISTEMOLOGY......................................................................... 19
2.4 AXIOLOGY................................................................................... 21
2.5 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE.................................................. 22
   2.5.1 Resource based view......................................................... 22
2.6 CONCLUSION............................................................................. 28

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW................................. 29

3. INTRODUCTION.............................................................................. 29
3.1 DESTINATION BRANDING......................................................... 32
   3.1.1 Defining the destination brand........................................... 32
   3.1.2 The role of the destination brand...................................... 35
3.1.3 Using the destination brand ............................................. 36
3.2 DESTINATION STAKEHOLDERS ........................................ 37
  3.2.1 DMOs’ role in the destination brand .................................... 39
  3.2.2 Operator’s role in the destination brand ................................. 52
  3.2.3 The brand experience .................................................... 54
  3.2.4 Destination branding research ........................................... 57
3.3 COMPLEXITIES IN DESTINATION BRANDING ...................... 57
  3.3.1 DMOs conflicting position in the destination brand .............. 60
  3.3.2 Destination brand governance .......................................... 60
3.4 DOMINANT LOGICS ............................................................ 66
  3.4.1 Economic dominant logic ................................................ 66
  3.4.2 Consumer dominant logic .............................................. 69
  3.4.3 Service dominant logic and co-creation ............................... 70
3.5 GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES AND APPROACHES .................. 74
  3.5.1 Stakeholder-agency theory ............................................. 74
  3.5.2 Internal brand management ............................................ 82
3.6 KEY THEMES AND GAPS IN DESTINATION BRANDING LITERATURE ................................................................. 94
  3.6.1 Dominant logics ............................................................ 95
  3.6.2 Engaging operators ..................................................... 95
  3.6.3 Evaluation of destination brands ..................................... 96
3.7 CONCLUSION ................................................................. 97

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODS ..................................................... 99
4. INTRODUCTION ............................................................... 99
  4.1 MIXED METHODS APPROACH .......................................... 99
    4.1 Qualitative focus ....................................................... 102
  4.2 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH PROCESS ................................. 103
    4.2.1 Stage one – Preliminary planning .................................. 105
    4.2.2 Stage two – Research design ...................................... 105
    4.2.3 Implementation ..................................................... 107
  4.3 PHASE ONE – QUALITATIVE ........................................... 107
    4.3.1 Research design ..................................................... 108
CHAPTER SIX: INTERPRETATION………………………………………………………… 135
6. INTRODUCTION……………………………………………………………………… 135
6.1 ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THE DESTINATION NETWORK………………… 135
   6.1.1 Relationship between DMOs in the brand hierarchy………………………… 136
   6.1.2 Relationship between DMOs and operators…………………………………… 142
   6.1.3 Summary of relationships between DMOs and operators and the impact on their brand buy-in .......................................................... 150
   6.1.4 Relationship between operators……………………………………………….. 151
   6.1.5 Relationship between the brand network and consumers…………………….. 154
   6.1.6 Summary of operators’ dominant logic and their consumer relationships…………………………………………………………………… 158
6.2 DMO PERCEPTIONS OF BRAND GOVERNANCE PRACTICES…………………………………………………………………… 159
   6.2.1 Brand development practices and the impact on brand buy-in……………… 159
   6.2.2 Brand implementation practices and the impact on brand buy-in…………. 164
   6.2.3 Brand evaluation by the DMO…………………………………………………… 170
   6.2.4 Summary of DMO dominant logic and governance approach…………….. 171
6.3 OPERATORS’ PERCEPTIONS OF BRAND GOVERNANCE PRACTICES…………………………………………………………………… 171
   6.3.1 Brand development and the impact on operators’ brand buy-in……………… 172
   6.3.2 Brand implementation and its impact on operators’ brand buy-in. 182
   6.3.3 Brand evaluation and the impact on operators’ brand buy-in………..…… 196
   6.3.4 Summary of operators’ dominant logic and the influence the DMO’s governance approach has on brand buy-in………………….. 199
6.4 CONCLUSION………………………………………………………………………… 200

CHAPTER SEVEN: FURTHER INTERPRETATION, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION………………………………………………………… 201
7. INTRODUCTION……………………………………………………………………… 201
7.1 DOMINANT LOGICS……………………………………………………………….. 201
7.1.1 The economic dominant logic of the DMOs
7.1.2 Service dominant logic of the operators leading to co-creation
7.1.3 Balancing the divergent dominant logics

7.2 BRAND DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION PRACTICES AND THE IMPACT ON BRAND BUY-IN

7.2.1 Brand development
7.2.2 Brand implementation
7.2.3 Brand evaluation
7.2.4 Summary of brand buy-in

7.3 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

7.4 PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTION

7.5 LIMITATIONS

7.6 FUTURE RESEARCH

7.7 CONCLUSION

APPENDIXES

Appendix 1. Consumer survey report
Appendix 2. Ethics kit and informed consent
Appendix 3. Information sheet
Appendix 4. Participant list
Appendix 5. Phase one - interview checklist
Appendix 6. Phase one - code list
Appendix 7. Phase two - survey design
Appendix 8. Phase three - interview questions
Appendix 9. Phase three - code list

REFERENCE LIST

xv
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Literature review chapter overview</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Mixed methods sequential design</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>The research process</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Destination map of Tropical North Queensland</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Resource based view of destination brand buy-in</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>DMO structures, funding and control</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Summary of bottom up and top down approaches to destination and brand management</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The time I have spent on this was challenging and rewarding and has helped me to grow in so many ways. There are a number of people that I would like to thank for their help and support through my duration as a PhD candidate.

First, to my (many) supervisors, I am so thankful to have had the privilege to work with such amazing people, I am unsure where to begin so I will start in chronological order. To Assistant Professor Ceridwyn King, thank you for seeing the value in my project and agreeing to take me on as a student, for having the faith in my ability to achieve this. To Associate Professor Prakash Chatoth, I learnt a lot from you thank you, you made me think deeper and encouraged me to develop my thesis into more than I could have dreamt. To Dr Richard Gyrd-Jones, you have continued to help me grow and develop, ensuring that I achieve the best I can, you are a remarkable academic. You have inspired me to explore new perspectives and venture away from my comfort zone. Even through you are thousands of miles away you continue to support me and I am extremely grateful for all that you contribute, it has been an honour working with you. To Dr Sarah Gardiner, as your first PhD student I have to tell you, you are amazing. You have helped me stay focussed and ensured that my goals are achieved. Even when life got extremely busy you still had time for me, I cannot begin to explain how much that means to me. Your future students are lucky to have you; your knowledge and dedication are incredible things. To Professor Debra Grace, our time has been brief but you have supported to the finish line and I am extremely thankful for your input.

I would also like to thank others within the HSL department for helping me along my journey, for being there with advice and cups of tea whenever I needed. The support in the department is wonderful and I am extremely lucky to have started by journey in such a supportive place. In particular, thanks to Dr Michelle Whitford for ensuring HDRs are staying inline with a smile and a giggle and for helping me through the PhD process.
To my family and friends, thank you so much for helping me through this time. To my fiancé, Casey, thank you, thank you, thank you. For all the moments I have doubted myself and you have been there to pick up the pieces, for always believing that I am able to do this, and for loving me unconditionally even when I was stressing. Thank you for reminding me that there is more to life than just my PhD, for keeping me entertained, distracting me and most importantly for always putting the smile back on my face. Your support and love means to world to me, I promise I will start planning our wedding now. Love you. To my mum and sister, for always pushing me to follow my dreams and achieve my goals even when they took me across the world. You have given me the best foundation in life and your constant support has made me the person I am. Thank you somehow does not seem enough. I love you both so much. Finally, to my Australian family, thank you for taking me in, putting up with my stressing and supporting me throughout my journey. You are amazing.

To all the PhD students that have been along the journey with me to (past and present; here and overseas) on what seems like the never ending path, your words of advice and lunch time chats have helped me to see the wood from the trees on so many occasions, you are fantastic. I have been so lucky to meet such kind, intelligent and well just plain remarkable people, thank you for sharing the pain and the adventure! I look forward to seeing you all in years to come on the other side.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the financial support from Griffith University, through the International Postgraduate Research Scholarship, Australian Postgraduate Award and the Griffith Business School Top-Up Scholarship without which this thesis would never have begun.
PUBLICATIONS RESULTING FROM THIS THESIS


1. INTRODUCTION
There are over one billion consumers travelling to over two million tourist destinations around the world each year (United Nations World Tourism Organisation [UNWTO], 2013; Balakrishan, 2008). The number of travellers is anticipated to climb to 1.6 billion international trips by 2020 (UNWTO, 2013). Increased worldwide demand for tourism has resulted in a growth in the number of tourism destinations around the world (Bornhorst, Ritchie & Sheehan, 2010). Accordingly, competition between destinations for visitors has intensified. In response, tourism marketers employ destination marketing as a tool to gain competitive advantage. Destination brands are considered fundamental tools of destination marketing and are currently utilised by Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) globally (Crouch, 2011). Through destination brands, DMOs work to build appealing images associated with a destination in the mind of potential visitors and actual consumers. For those that have not visited the destination, the brand creates a set of expectations about the type of experience available in the destination. Once they have visited the destination, consumers then evaluate it based upon the quality of the services they experience. An experience that matches or exceeds consumer expectations generates positive associations with the destination and, in turn, improves the brand image in the minds of consumers (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Every interaction a consumer has with products and services in the destination, such as their stay at a hotel, visit to an attraction or dining experience at a restaurant, is a brand touch-point. These brand touch-points build consumers’ perceptions of the destination, challenges them to consider the overall experience of the destination and evaluate if the destination is delivering the brand promise (Morrison, 2013). Consequently, destination marketing has moved beyond mass marketing towards a more sophisticated individualised, experiential marketing approach, whereby, DMOs are able to convey the experience consumers can have in a destination, rather than just the functional benefits, such as a ‘nice’ hotel room and a ‘beautiful’ beach.
The prevalence of third party review sites and social media, where consumers can share their experiences with potentially thousands of others through the Internet, has forced the evolution of marketing practices and promoted the importance of having a quality destination experience (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). For that reason, investment into destination branding, to establish consistency in the quality of experience across the stakeholders that deliver the brand experience for visitor is more important than ever. In doing so, DMOs are able to deliver the brand promise to a diverse range of consumers (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride, 2011). Understanding how to deliver a consistent brand experience across multiple visitor touch-points within a destination is therefore important. For this reason, this thesis aims to explore destination brands from multiple stakeholders’ perspectives. As a result, an understanding of destination branding across the stakeholder network is uncovered. To begin this study, the background on destination branding is presented. The research aims and questions are then provided. This chapter concludes with an overview of the thesis and its contribution.

1.1 DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS AND THE ROLE OF DESTINATION BRANDS

Tourism contributes 9% to global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and is estimated to directly support 99 million jobs and indirectly one in 12 jobs worldwide (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2011). Tourism is a key economic driver in many nations around the world. Visitor numbers have continued to grow despite major events that have disrupted travel, such as financial recessions, medical epidemics, natural disasters and terrorism (Morgan et al., 2011). For these reasons, tourism is at the forefront of many governments’ economic development strategies. For example, in Australia (the location for this thesis), tourism contributes AU$42 billion to GDP and employs over half a million people (Tourism Australia, 2013). Destination competitiveness is important to governments that seek to maximise the tourism opportunities in their country, city or town (Tsiotso & Ratten, 2010). Destination competitiveness refers to the destination’s ability to increase economic gain through visitor expenditure and visitor numbers, whilst providing visitors with a memorable experience (Blain, Levey & Ritchie, 2005). However, competitiveness within tourism destinations is considered more complex than other industries due to the multitude and
diversity of stakeholders involved in delivering the product (Hankison, 2007). Among the stakeholders delivering the brand experience, the DMO is considered the central or focal organisation in the destination brand network (UNWTO, 2009); therefore, they often lead destination branding efforts. DMOs operate at national (i.e. Tourism Australia), state (i.e. Tourism and Events Queensland), regional (i.e. Tourism Tropical North Queensland) and local (i.e. Tourism Port Douglas and Daintree) levels. Regional DMOs, the main focus of this thesis, are traditionally membership-based organisations that service tourism and hospitality operators within a particular geographic region; the members deliver the brand promise through the experiences they offer to visitors. Consideration and consultation with members (operators) is considered to stimulate brand buy-in, thus provision of a more consistent experience (Kemp, Williams & Bordelon, 2012). Successful destination branding aims to encourage these operators to buy-in to the destination brand, as ownership of the brand helps them to develop and delivery visitor experiences that reflect the brand promise (Hankinson, 2007). Brand buy-in is defined as the operators’ willingness to engage positively with the destination brand, acknowledging through the input of their resources (such as knowledge) and the resources of the DMO, a consistent brand experience can be provided. Yet, operators often focus on their own business objectives rather than destination branding goals determined by the DMO, thereby, creating disconnect between the DMO and operators (Hanna & Rowley, 2011). Unlike corporate brands where management has tight controls on branding activities, DMOs have little formal control over operators; therefore, mitigating this disconnect is a major challenge due to the external nature of the operators to the DMO (Byrd & Gustke, 2006; Morrison, 2013). Accordingly, destination branding research requires a holistic approach that examines internal relationships and social structures that govern the myriad of operators involved in the provision of the brand experience (Hankinson, 2007; Hatch & Schultz, 2007). Understanding the role that the DMOs and operators play, and the relationships that exist, in creating a consistent destination brand experience is central to this thesis.

This research aims to explore multiple stakeholder perspectives’ of destination brand governance, examining complexities associated with the heterogeneity of stakeholders and identifying practical tools to develop brand buy-in. To understand the brand buy-
in of multiple stakeholders, the research assumes a resource-based view. Consistent with existing destination competitiveness research, this thesis assumes that destination brand competitiveness is established and maintained through the combination of the destination’s key resources and capabilities (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Preim & Butler, 2001). The resources can be physical (i.e. the tourism infrastructure), economic (funding for the regional branding), human (i.e. all the stakeholders involved in the brand experience) and organisational (i.e. the capacity of the DMO). The resources can also be both tangible (i.e. the attractions) and intangible (i.e. knowledge, support). To support the resource-based view and explore the practical governance mechanisms of the destination brand, this thesis draws on two additional logics – economic and service-dominant. First the thesis draws upon theories based in economic dominant logic. These theories are traditionally used to justify destination marketing expenditure to government. From this perspective, success is measured by economic indicators, such as visitor numbers, visitor expenditure and average occupancy rates (Bornhorst, et al., 2010; Dwyer, Forsyth & Spurr, 2004). As a means to understand the relational ties that underpin the economic exchanges, stakeholder-agency theory is utilised. Stakeholder-agency theory explores the exchanges between the principle (i.e. the DMO) and the agent (i.e. the operators). These exchanges create an understanding how the greatest economic returns for the destination, and its constituents, are received (Hill & Jones, 1992). The second approach this thesis explores is service-dominant logic. Co-creation underpins service-dominant logic. Co-creation addresses many of the shortcomings from the economic-dominant logic and relational approaches. Co-creation identifies reciprocity, through mutually beneficial actions and outcomes for DMOs and operators (Lusch, Vargo & O’Brien, 2007); in addition, co-creation sees the application of skills and knowledge as fundamental to marketing success (Vargo & Lusch, 2008b). This approach is used to inspire a collaborative brand network, thereby, stimulating brand buy-in and consistency across the destination. Internal brand management is explored as a tool to enhance the brand buy-in across the brand (Bregoli, 2013) utilising brand leadership and communication as practical tools to inspire consistency across the destination brand (Hankinson, 2012).
It is acknowledged that the dominant logics do not work in isolation, as elements from each overlap across destination brand governance. Consideration of each logic independently and, then exploring the similarities and differences between them, is important to uncover ways to leverage collaborative opportunities. Furthermore, this understanding of the dominant logics can help mitigate areas where there is disconnect, in order to enhance stakeholder buy-in to the destination brand. Collaboration between DMOs and operators in the provision of the destination brand experience is important (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010; Beritell, Bieger & Laesser, 2007; Bregoli, 2013; Cox & Wray, 2011; Hankinson, 2012); thus, better understanding of brand governance and, in particular, the relationships between DMOs and operators is warranted (Beritelli et al., 2007). This thesis seeks to draw theoretical insights into the use of brand governance and brand management principles in a destination brand context.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this thesis is to explore multiple stakeholder perspectives’ of destination brand governance, examining complexities associated with the heterogeneity of stakeholders and identifying practical tools to develop brand buy-in. In doing so, the following empirical and theoretical research questions are addressed:

Research Question 1 (RQ1). What is the dominant logic for DMOs and operators in the delivery of the destination brand experience? And how can managers balance these approaches to stimulate a consistent brand experience?

Research Question 2 (RQ2). What factors influence internal stakeholder buy-in to the destination brand?

Research Question 3 (RQ3). How does stakeholder-agency theory inform destination branding?

Research Question 4 (RQ4). What are the implications of internal brand management to destination branding?
1.3 CONTEXT

This research is undertaken in Tropical North Queensland (TNQ), Australia. TNQ was selected for this research because it is a typical tourism destination, in the stagnation stage of its destination life cycle. As with a number of destinations at the stagnation stage of the life-cycle, tourism is the main economic driver for the region, contributing $2.2 billion to the region’s economy between 2005-2010 (Tourism Tropical North Queensland [TTNQ], 2012). Tropical North Queensland attracts almost one third of international visitors to the state of Queensland (Tourism Queensland [TQ], 2011). Tropical North Queensland’s strong visitor numbers suggests that there is positive awareness among consumers and, therefore, is an appropriate destination to study the brand governance.

Tropical North Queensland operates under hierarchical brand architecture. Accordingly, as noted above there are DMOs at national, state, regional and local levels. These DMOs direct and fund marketing activities and campaigns for their associated geographic region. This hierarchy is typical of DMO structures across Australia and other parts of the world. For instance, Portugal, USA, Britain, France, etc. operate under a similar hierarchical structure with national, regional and local DMOs. The UNWTO (2009) identify that it is typical of DMOs to change their destination brands over a three-year period, based on personal and political preferences. Congruent with this finding, Tropical North Queensland’s brand has changed several times over the past fifteen years. The brand and slogan for Tropical North Queensland at the time of this study is “Tourism Tropical North Queensland - Adventurous by Nature”. This brand was established in 2009. The brand was launched two years prior to the commencement of this thesis. This period allowed time for the brand to be established in the minds of operators and consumers. Accordingly, operators included in this study are owners or upper-management that were well established in the TNQ region (5+ years) and had experience with both the past and present brand. This study is therefore able to identify how the brand building process influences the operators. This study is also able to explore the established governance mechanisms and their impact on brand buy-in.
1.4 THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The following section explains the practical and theoretical significance of this research. This section also identifies how this thesis enhances existing tourism literature, and how the research can be utilised by practitioners to develop the destination brand.

1.4.1 Importance of research

Although destination branding is receiving growing attention from academics and practitioners, researchers highlight that one of the main weaknesses with destination brands is they lack consistency (Hall, 1999; Morgan, et al., 2011). Despite this, consistency is deemed as central to competitive advantage (Blain, et al., 2005; Gnoth, 2002; Morgan & Pritchard, 2004). In addition, there is little exploration into ways to stimulate collaboration and consistency (Wang, Hutchinson, Okumus & Naipaul, 2012). Internal brand management may be a way to promote collaboration in destination branding, however, this research has been limited to internal DMO application (Hankinson, 2012) and quantitative assessment (Bregoli, 2013). As such, there is currently paucity in the literature in regards to the operator’s assessment of brand governance. Furthermore, previous research fails to reveal why operators develop perceptions of the destination brand and management practices. Several academics highlight the need for a greater focus on stakeholder evaluation of destination brands (Campelo, Aitken, Thyne & Gnoth 2013; Del Chippa & Presenza, 2013; Hankinson, 2007; Zehrer, Raich, Siller & Tshiderer, 2014). For these reasons, this thesis is important as it explores multiple stakeholder perspectives of destination brand governance identifying practical tools to help develop consistency in the destination brand experience.

1.4.2 Theoretical contribution

This thesis advances theoretical understanding of destination branding, employing a resource-based view. There is a scarcity of destination brand research in terms of the governance and management of destination brands and ways to enhance buy-in to destination brands. As such, this thesis uncovers the multiple resources that influence destination brand buy-in and destination brand governance from a multi-stakeholder perspective. By applying the multi-stakeholder approach, this thesis builds on previous
internal destination branding work (i.e. Bregoli, 2013; Cox & Wray, 2011; Hankinson, 2012; Kemp et al., 2012). In addition, this thesis considers the unique composition of a destination brand through the exploration of the resources that are utilised to create the destination brand. Understanding these resources is critical because they are used by DMOs to generate competitive advantage. Furthermore, through the examination of network structure, this thesis builds on Beaumont and Dredge’s (2010) work by identifying the governance tools that are applied to the network structures and the impact that these are having on the brand buy-in. This thesis applies a more holistic approach to the exploration of the destination brand and the relationship structures that govern the brand than existing studies. The findings and insights from this thesis inform future destination brand management studies by providing depth that previously has not been reached.

1.4.3 Practical contribution
This thesis provides practical insights into governance tools that can help brand managers gain buy-in from operators in the destination brand network. Furthermore, the interpretation improves understanding of barriers to collaboration between DMOs and operators, thus, developing understanding of the complex relationships that exist in this relationship and how they impact the governance of destination brand network. Indirectly, by developing an understanding of the internal management and governance issues of destination brands there is the opportunity for DMOs to enhance the destination brand experience. In doing so, this approach aims to foster brand buy-in and stimulate a consistent quality brand experience, resulting in a competitive brand.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODS
This thesis employs a sequential, mixed methods study, utilising qualitative and quantitative empirical material to explore the governance of a destination brand. The contributions of this study are predominantly drawn from the qualitative phases of the research. Therefore, this thesis adopts terminology that is reflective of the qualitative approach, consistent with the approach proposed by Jennings (2010). The initial phase of the study used in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders of the destination brand. Interviews were conducted with state, regional, and local DMOs, as
well as with tourism and hospitality operators that are members of the regional DMO. These interviews explore the relationships and governance mechanisms that are in place to develop, implement and evaluate the destination brand. The next phase of data collection and analysis is a quantitative survey. This phase of the research utilises existing consumer based brand equity scale items determining consumer’s perceptions of the destination brand through the use of an electronic questionnaire. Data was then turned into a report that was sent to the participants interviewed in phase one. The final qualitative phase re-interviewed the participants from phase one to explore their perspective of the consumer perception of the region. Responses from both interview phases (one and three) are then discussed.

1.6 DELIMITATIONS

It is important to identify the boundaries to this research. Firstly, this thesis focuses on destination branding rather than place branding. The focus is on tourist visitation to a geographical region, rather than the broader marketing of a place for tourism as well as other economic drivers, such as manufacturing, education, information technology etcetera. The benefits of destination branding concentrate on maximising tourism expenditure in the region (Hanna & Rowley, 2008). This thesis therefore focuses only on organisations that are the primary stakeholders to the tourism destination. Although it is acknowledged that businesses that are not members of the regional DMO, such as some retail outlets, restaurant and other service providers, contribute to the tourism experience, they are excluded from directly participating in this study as they are not active destination brand network stakeholders. Given the large number of these active members in Tropical North Queensland (approximately 440), inclusion of all stakeholders is beyond the resources and capabilities of this study. For this reason, this study focuses on a sample of primary stakeholders, across all membership levels, that have an active relationship with the regional DMO. Thus, this thesis focuses on members’ interactions with the regional DMO and visitors, rather than stakeholders on the periphery of these activities.

In addition, the focus of this thesis is on branding. The researcher acknowledges that from the discussion in this thesis there are wider reaching destination management implications however the empirical materials collected are brand focussed. The
primary concern of the research is about the aftermath of the destination brand. That is, exploring the brand buy-in when a brand has been implemented. Although the development of the brand is taken into consideration it is done so as a reflection by operators identifying the role that the history of the brand has on the level of brand buy-in. Neither the decision making process of brand development nor the ownership of the brand are of focus in this thesis however, these are important factors that could lead to future research. Given the focus on brand buy-in in an established it was important that participants were familiar with the destination and that they have a strong understanding of operations within the destination. As such, the sample of participants reflects a group of established tourism and hospitality operators that were present in 2009 during the re-branding of the destination.

Another boundary impacting this study is the concentration of a single destination, that is, Tropical North Queensland, Australia. This case was selected as it represents a typical regional tourism destination that has similar traits identified in other destinations across Australia and the world. Yet, consistent with other single location research studies, the local contextual issues should be considered before generalising the findings to other geographic locations.

1.7 THESIS OUTLINE

The format of this thesis is consistent with accepted practices (Evans, Gruba and Zobel, 2011). This thesis consists of seven chapters. This introductory chapter lays the foundation for the thesis exploring the background to the study. This chapter also identifies the research objective and research questions, gives a methodological overview of the thesis and justifies both the theoretical and practical contributions of the thesis. Finally this chapter explains the delimitations and scope of the research and outlines the proceeding chapters.

Chapter Two is the theoretical positioning; this chapter overviews the research paradigm of the thesis. Chapter two outlines the ontology, epistemology and axiology of the thesis and discusses the theoretical perspective and key assumptions that the thesis is guided by.
Chapter Three is the literature review. This chapter explores the evolution of destination marketing and the use of destination branding as a marketing tool; the role that stakeholders have in the destination brand experience and the complications that exist based on the myriad of stakeholders are also examined. Chapter Three then outlines core theoretical underpinnings of the thesis, reviewing tourism marketing theories, in particular those theories relating to destination brand governance, as well as other marketing and governance theories that inform this research. These theories include stakeholder-agency theory and internal brand management. From the literature review, core gaps in the research are identified and, thus, areas for exploration in this thesis are highlighted.

Chapter Four is the methods chapter. This chapter overviews the methodological approach of the study, outlining the three stages in the research process. Chapter four then provides discussion of the empirical material collection processes, the analysis and the interpretation methods applied. In addition this chapter summaries the ethical processes followed by this thesis.

Chapter Five describes the study’s context. This chapter profiles Tropical North Queensland as a tourism destination. This chapter outlines the typicality of the destination against others providing the geographic boundaries to the study and an understanding of the visitation and the economic contribution of tourism to the region. This is important as it provides an understanding of the role of tourism in the region.

Chapter Six presents the interpretation of the interviews collected in phase one and three of the research process. The chapter explores the key empirical material interpretations in alignment with the research questions.

Chapter Seven provides further interpretation, discussion and conclusion. This chapter compares and contrasts the economic dominant logics and approaches to destination brand governance used by different stakeholders in relation to the key literature in Chapter Three. It discusses the influences on, and proposes a framework of, destination brand buy-in and explores the impact of stakeholder-agency theory and internal brand management practices on the resource contribution to the destination
brand. Finally, this chapter concludes this thesis with the theoretical and practical contributions of the research and then identifies the limitations and areas for future research. Following Chapter Seven is a comprehensive reference list and appendixes.

1.8 CONCLUSION
This chapter introduces the thesis, outlining the research aim of exploring destination brand governance from multiple perspectives and the research questions that direct the focus of this study under a resource-based view. In this chapter, the structure of the thesis is presented and the scope for the research is identified. The next chapter outlines the research position of this thesis, explaining the post-positivistic research paradigm and the ontology, epistemology and axiology that direct this thesis. In addition, the next chapter overviews the key assumptions of a resource-based view that guides the research.
2. INTRODUCTION
This chapter explains the research position and key assumptions for this thesis. First, it outlines the research paradigm that is adopted alongside the key ontological, epistemological and axiological beliefs and how they influence the methodological approach to this thesis. This chapter then highlights the core theoretical perspective that this thesis adopts, identifying the assumptions that direct the proceeding chapters.

2.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM
The research paradigm “is a basic set of beliefs that guides action” (Guba, 1990, p17). Research paradigms provide an overview of the researcher’s understanding of the way the world works (Jennings, 2010). Consequently, the chosen research paradigm influences the researcher’s methodological approach and actions throughout the thesis. This thesis is positioned under a post-positivist paradigm. Post-positivism emerged from positivist scientific research, when the criticism of the neutral thinking, dualism and the rigid approaches associated with positivist research, initiated a shift in thinking (Letourneau & Allen, 1993). In contrast to the positivist paradigm, that follows specific scientific methodologies to establish universal laws and causal relationships, under a post-positivist paradigm the researcher has more flexibility and does not identify a “correct scientific method” (Wildemuth, 1993, p451). Therefore, post-positivism is an approach that advocates methodological pluralism (Lapid, 1989; Letourneau & Allen, 1993; Walker, 1987). Post-positivists argue that the research method selected should be based on the research questions (Wildemuth, 1993), enabling the researcher to reject the dichotomy of qualitative and quantitative research by applying the methods that best suit the aims of the research (Crossan, 2003). Authors attest that through a post-positivistic paradigm, researchers are “removing the choice between value laden, qualitative, research or value free, quantitative, research” and can freely move between them (Letourneau & Allen, 1993, p623). Positivist research in tourism aims to generate a clear explanation and ‘rules’ of the phenomena being studied (Jennings, 2010). However, the formulation of ‘rules’ generates the assumption that there is a rational explanation of all behaviour and that those involved
in tourism are homogenous, and bound by the same beliefs. By approaching tourism under a positivistic paradigm a researcher may simplify the complexity of the situation. Given consumer evaluation and competitive advantage being derived from the destination as a whole, and inter-firm configuration providing greater importance than individual performance, holistic exploration of destinations is necessary (Denicolai, Cioccarelli and Zucchella, 2010). Therefore, given the complexity of the multiple organisations that combine to create the destination brand experience, a more flexible approach to the exploration of the brand is required. Saraniemi and Kylänen (2011) argue: “it might be worth moving from oversimplifying image work and implementation of one-sided managerial tactics toward a long-term sociocultural analysis of this multi-actor and multidimensional task” (p133). As such, the scientifically defined positivist approach is unable to fully explore or acknowledge the intricacies of a specific tourism situation, but rather facilitates the collection of a large amount of data to observe reality. Conversely, interpretivism facilitates the understanding of ‘reality’ from the view of the participant but does not consider the influence of researcher on the reality. Thus, the use of post-positivism that allows more methodological freedom utilising core positivism and interpretivism methodologies to explore such complexities is preferred. Under a post-positivistic paradigm the results may not be generalisable however, the research adds to the existing body of knowledge through the exploration of the complexities of social situations (Clark, 1998; Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011), exploring situations to identify common patterns and enhance understanding (Morgan, 1990). By taking an exploratory approach, the researcher moves beyond the acknowledged limitations of traditional tourism inquiry and enables the researcher to extend destination brand knowledge (Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011). This research therefore supports the argument of Letourneau & Allen (1993) who posit that post-positivistic research should be employed to complement the limitations identified in existing research. Yet, employing a post-positivistic approach leads to limitations of its own including the researcher running the risk of generating empirical materials that are not generalisable. Under an interpretivism paradigm, researchers are said to reject the idea of generalisability, suggesting that ‘it is unachievable, unimportant or both’ (Huberman & Miles, 2002, p172). Conversely, positivistic researchers seek large samples with the intent of generalising to the population (Jennings, 2010). Within this
thesis the research aims to provide a detailed methodology and interpretation of empirical materials, not with the intention of generalising to the wider population, but rather to enable future research to draw on the findings and methodological approach to explore the research in different contexts, thereby reducing the limitation of generalisability. In addition, post-positivism is criticised for blurring epistemological boundaries, thus leading to a confused view of the world (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The researcher is mindful to this criticism and clearly outlines the epistemological and ontological perspectives that guide this research, generating a more robust approach. These criticisms, however, tend to be derived from staunch positivist or interpretivism researchers. The researcher acknowledges the strengths of the research such as the flexibility of the semi-structured interviews and the large collection of data achieved through the questionnaire. Weaknesses are also acknowledged including the complexity of interpretation and the rigidity of the questionnaire. Chapter Five outlines the strengths and weaknesses in more detail, yet guided by post-positivistic epistemology and ontologies the researcher advocates methodological pluralism as the most fitting approach for this research.

Under a post-positivist paradigm it is important for researchers to be honest, critical and transparent within their research (Henderson, 2011). A key recognition within post-positivism is the assumption of potential bias within the research (Jennings, 2005). This differs from positivist research that aims to be fully objective and value neutral, not trying to eliminate bias, or interpretivism that encourages subjectivity and reflexivity (Crotty, 1998). As such, under a post-positivist approach it is important to acknowledge and identify the bias within the research and how this influences the interpretation of empirical materials. Rather than being entirely value neutral, post-positivists identify that human interactions can be affected by and can affect other’s behaviour (Borland, 1990; Sias, 2009). Given this reasoning, it is acknowledged that the context of study cannot exist independently of the researcher, and the researcher’s background, knowledge and values drive the research and the interpretation of materials. Under a positivist paradigm this would be considered a major weakness of the research design, with scientific methodology trying to remove the researcher from the context. Yet, post-positivist research identifies that social and historical circumstances direct the researcher and interpretation (Jennings, 2010). For example,
the changing of the TNQ destination brand in 2009 had a significant impact on stakeholders’ perceptions of the brand. Their opinions on the brand are based around the extent of their interactions with the brand and the process that was utilised by the DMO during this time. Although knowledge is underpinned by historical and social contexts, it is important that the researcher does not allow preconceived notions and value-laden assumptions to direct the research. In doing this the researcher can potentially ignore key issues within the context. Despite the acknowledged bias the post-positivism approach reflects the nature of the research, it allows for a combination of qualitative and quantitative research, not in search of “absolute truths”, like positivists, but rather to gain a deeper understanding of a context (Clark, 1998); therefore, developing “warranted assertions” (Letourneau & Allen, 1993).

These warranted assertions are considered “modest truths”, they provide an understanding of society at the time and place of research (Wildemuth, 1993). Due to this, the researcher, under a post-positivistic paradigm, seeks to provide good evidence for the existence of phenomena rather than creating universal laws as in positivist research (Corssan, 2003). In contrast to positivist researchers phenomenologists seeks to create rich descriptions of lived experiences by engaging in dialogue with the world to understand the subjective dimensions of experience thus, considering objectivity – which is highly valued by positivists- as impossible and irrelevant (Markula & Silk, 2011; Stierand & Dörfler, 2012). In contrast, post-positivism accommodates the natural setting to identify meanings and purpose whilst remaining within parameters of positivist research, thereby taking a more structured research approach than phenomenologists whilst maintaining some flexibility unlike positivists (Markula & Silk, 2011). In addition, under a post-positivist paradigm it is understood that other situations may have similar findings, however these are not considered the truth of society and thus, the empirical materials may not be applicable to all situations. These warranted truths are utilised to help define possible solutions for complex problems within leisure research (Henderson, 2011).

A post-positivistic paradigm recognises that quantitative and qualitative methodologies are not diametrically opposed but can be used to support each other (Clark, 1998; Crossan, 2003; Wildemuth, 1993). O’Leary (2007) suggests that post-positivism rejects the traditional approach to research and opens up alternative
possibilities for knowledge. This is due to the ability of post-positivist research to apply methodology more flexibility, and a more detailed and comprehensive exploration of phenomena. Positivist research applies quantitative research that seeks to theorise and quantify, often not attributing enough detail to the complex relationships that exist within tourism (Bryman & Bell, 2011), whilst interpretivism takes a more complex view of the destination, observing how participants define their reality, thereby constructing multiple realities rather than observing the destination as a whole (Jennings, 2010). These shortfalls are addressed through post-positivists methodological pluralism, by enabling the research to employ both quantitative and more flexible qualitative methods. As such, the post-positivism paradigm is considered a more encompassing way to examine real world problems (Henderson, 2011). There is more restraint and objectivity placed on post-positivist research than interpretivism or participatory paradigms; yet more freedom and subjectivity than seen in positivist research (Jennings, 2010). For these reasons authors (i.e. Ryan, 2006; Stewart & Floyd, 2004) attest that post-positivism better reflects the lived experiences of people that other paradigms can. This is achieved through the multiple perspectives and inclusion of context that the paradigm can employ, and through the packaging of multiple methods to encompass multiple perspectives (Letourneau & Allen, 1993). Through a combination of professional experience, expertise in the field and a search of existing literature the researcher was able to identify the importance of combining multiple perspectives to develop an understanding of brand centred challenges destinations face. This approach of research design based on experience and research is similar to the selection criteria councillors apply to their research decision-making (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano & Morales, 2007). Further justification of the research methods employed can be seen in Chapter Five.

Within the context of this thesis, the post-positivist paradigm has guided the researchers approach to the exploration of the destination brand in terms of governance mechanisms and relational ties. Some existing tourism research focuses on singular methodologies and stakeholder groups such as quantitative surveys (e.g. Hankinson, 2012; Kemp et al., 2012; Line & Runyan, 2014) or qualitative interviews (e.g. Beritelli et al., 2007; d’Angella & Go, 2009; Naipaul, Wang & Okumus, 2009; Zehrer et al., 2014). Although these help extend the understanding of specific
stakeholder groups they do not enable the researcher to understand the complex interactions that exist within a destination brand network (Saraniemi & Kyliänen, 2011). As such, studies including mixed methods are becoming more common and widely accepted (e.g. Beaumont & Dredge, 2010; Bregoli, 2013; Denicolai et al., 2010; Garcia, Gómez & Molina, 2012) as ways to explore multiple perspectives of DMOs and operators within destination networks. However, often the researcher’s assumptions are not clearly acknowledged in their methods, thus minimising the transparency of the research findings (Henderson, 2011). Consequently, under a post-positivistic paradigm the researcher, driven by their history in the tourism industry and understanding of destination networks, is able to explore the role of the multiple interactions that destination brand success is dependent on. This researcher aims to explore multiple stakeholder perspectives’ of destination brand governance, examining complexities associated with the heterogeneity of stakeholders and identifying practical tools to develop brand buy-in, under the assumption that the relationships explored are influencing the destination brand and are complex, multiplistic and interactive (Letourneau & Allen, 1993).

2.2 ONTOLOGY
Ontology is the reality of the nature of existence (Crotty, 1998; Jennings, 2010; Lancaster, 2005). Ontology represents the conceptual approach to research that supports the paradigmatic assumptions (Lancaster, 2005). Under the post-positivist paradigm the researcher accepts that truths are fallible, taking a largely critical realist approach (Corman & Poole, 2000; Lancaster, 2005). Realists attempt to identify the structures that exist within society, they tend to be associated with a positivist paradigm and seek to look for grand theory to explain society (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Critical realists do not believe that one overarching theory can define or explain society. In addition, they do not believe that the researcher is separable from the reality they are observing. Consequently, critical realists suggest that it is impossible to find ‘truth’ in the world due to human’s imperfect sensory and intellectual capacities (Letourneau & Allen, 1993). Instead, through critical examination, the post-positivistic paradigm facilitates the understanding of reality as closely as possible, developing warranted assertions of reality (Letourneau & Allen, 1993). Reality is considered the social structures, the network values and beliefs that
drive the lived experience, reality is complex and no research can offer an absolute truth or what reality is or how it was created (Maxwell, 2013). The researcher acknowledges that the current reality is not just born; it is shaped over time through experience (i.e. stakeholders time with and commitment to the brand), interactions (i.e. stakeholders interdependencies and organisational structure) and values (i.e. value systems of stakeholders). It is therefore, important to consider the way that the reality has evolved. In addition, the researcher bias also influences the way that society is perceived. Maxwell (2013) argues that it is impossible to remove all researcher bias in qualitative research. Instead, researchers should understand this bias and how it influences the methods and conclusions will be drawn to reduce the impact of such bias. In this study, the interactions that the researcher has with participants determine the level of engagement and understanding that the researcher is able to draw from the context. As previously discussed, this can be seen as a strength of the research, enabling the researcher to develop rapport with those participating but still endeavouring to analyse the empirical materials more objectively.

Within destination branding, this ontology means that the researcher is aware that the information provided by participants is based on their own set of complex interactions and subjective understanding, and is shaped by their own history and value systems. Furthermore, these stakeholder perceptions are reflective of the stakeholders’ current feelings and emotions toward the brand. Despite this acknowledgement, the researcher is aiming to explore the shared understanding among participants in relation to the destination brand network. These perceptions and shared understandings may change and evolve over time through interaction and are socially constructed (Corman & Poole, 2000). As such, the researcher accepts that the system of analysis, the destination brand governance, is open for interpretation (O’Leary, 2007).

2.3 EPISTEMOLOGY
Epistemology refers to the philosophical study or theory of knowledge and the organisation of knowledge into theory (Daymon & Holloway, 2011; Lancaster, 2005). Epistemology takes into consideration where knowledge is derived from, the scope of knowledge and general bias associated with the research (Crotty, 1998). Furthermore,
the epistemology of research provides ‘a philosophical grounding for deciding what kind of knowledge is possible’ (Maynard, 1994, p10). Therefore, knowledge is built with the understanding that the researcher has an impact on the reality and the development of knowledge. Given the researcher’s previous work within tourism destinations and educational background in tourism management, the researcher determined the importance of interviewing a selection of tourism and hospitality representatives that can generate a broader understanding of the brand network.

Under a post-positivistic epistemology the researcher remains an outsider (etic) to the research subject to maintain some objectivity, rather than becoming an insider (emic) to the research as identified in interpretivism paradigms (Jennings, 2010; Lancaster, 2005). The etic perspective in this case, means that the researcher has no history with the region, nor with any of the participants. The researcher is approaching the research with a fresh perspective. By approaching the research from a fresh perspective, the researcher is able to explore the reasoning and history that shape the situation (Ryan, 2005). Being etic may mean that the researcher is not able to get as close to participants and therefore not receive the detailed level of discussion that taking an emic position may provide. As such, being an outsider is also a weakness, as the researcher does not have a strong relationship with participants; a key element of the initial interviews with stakeholders therefore, is the development of rapport with participants. This rapport shapes participants willingness to share detailed perceptions of their truth and the influences to these perceptions. The researcher’s position as an outsider to the knowledge of the destination brand network influences the methodology and processes in the research. Taking a post-positivism approach to research the researcher is able to utilise both etic and emic perspectives, employing an emic position to relate to participants and discuss key topics with them but withdrawing to an etic position to explore and report the empirical materials (Jennings, 2010). Thus, applying objectivity to the interpretation of the empirical materials but not assuming a detached factual approach that is devoid of context toward empirical material collection.

The epistemology also influences the structuring of the interview, with the researcher needing to ask a number of probing in-depth questions to explore the core relational
influences that are important to the context. Topics for discussion are developed from the existing knowledge of the researcher, derived from in-depth reading on the topic (see Chapter Three) and through experience. As knowledge evolved through discussions the questions also evolved to ensure the researcher was able to gain the most detailed information and learn from participants (Borland, 1990). Consistent with a post-positivism approach the researcher is in a learning role rather than a testing position (Ryan, 2006). It is important through the qualitative approach to gain the trust of the participants in order to gain deeper follow-up interviews; especially given the follow-up interviews are conducted over the telephone rather than face to face. To gain the information about consumers to the region, the researcher adopts a quantitative method. The aim of the quantitative phase of data collection is to develop a report of consumer perceptions to stimulate further discussion with the DMO and operators. Based on the aim of this phase, such depth of answers is not required and the researcher seeks to test the strength of the brand rather than learn about how the brand is constructed, as such the e-questionnaire enables the researcher to gain sufficient information for the purposes of providing a clear report of consumer perceptions to the interviewees. In a method similar to double loop learning the researcher’s aim from the results of the testing of brand strength is to provide participants with suitable information to help them become internally committed. This quantitative method is designed to generate valid and useful information for participants, it involves sharing power and offering materials that will help participants (Argyris, 1976). In addition, the results are then open to scrutiny by participants allowing them the opportunity to discuss key findings to facilitate greater understanding of the consumer perceptions to the region.

Taking an etic stance to the research yet understanding that the researcher influences the empirical material collection and interpretation is a core epistemological belief, inherent in the research. The research utilises robust methodological approach (see Chapter Four) to reduce some of the weaknesses of this methodological pluralism approach. The research is also guided by values and ethics associated with the post-positivist paradigm.
2.4 AXIOLOGY

Axiology refers to the researcher’s values and ethics (Jennings, 2010). Coherent with the post-positivism paradigm that this thesis is guided by, the researcher views objectivity as an important consideration (Corman & Poole, 2000). The researcher strives to be unbiased in the interpretation of empirical materials. However, unlike a positivist paradigm, under a post-positivist paradigm the fallibility of the researcher is acknowledged (Jennings, 2010). Therefore, the researcher identifies that the research is not value free but instead, as mentioned, the research is driven and shaped by historical and social values. Through the clearly defined research process, a systematic approach to the interpretation of empirical materials (see Chapter Four) and an awareness of self, the researcher aims to be as objective as the methods enable.

Within this thesis, and across this chapter, the researcher outlines the key assumptions that this thesis is shaped by. Therefore, the researcher aims to be transparent in her processes in order to enhance the value of the research. The thesis was initiated by the researcher’s interest in the topic. Furthermore, the destination was selected as it is an appropriate context to explore destination governance, given the researchers interest in the region and its traits. The known bias within this research is honestly stated and outlined. Through the research process outlined in Chapter Four, the researcher aims to bring authenticity and trustworthiness to the research and, increase the objectivity of the research.

2.5 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Across any paradigm there are many different “schools of thought” (Morgan, 1980, p605). These schools of thought offer multiple ways of exploring different concepts or situations (Bell, Whitwell & Lukas, 2002). The school of thought for this thesis determines how the researcher explores the situation, destination branding, and what the researcher is looking for in a situation, the relational ties and structures that influence the destination brand buy-in. The school of thought is influenced by the paradigm values associated with the post-positivistic paradigm. The following section first outlines the key theoretical underpinnings and assumptions of a resource-based view, the school of thought applied to this thesis. It then examines what the research-based view means for this thesis in the context of destination branding.
2.5.1 Resource-based view

The resource-based view emphasises that the root of sustainable competitive advantage (greater economic value than competitors) resides in the strategic resources of an organisation (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Resources can be tangible or intangible assets that are attached to an organisation (Fang, Palmatier & Grewal, 2011; Wernerfelt, 1984). Resources are anything that are a strength or a weakness to an organisation (Wernerfelt, 1984). There are multiple types of resources these include physical, financial, human and organisational (Kozlenkova, Samaha & Palmatier, 2013). Examples of organisational resources include brand names, knowledge, employment of skilled employees, capital etcetera. (Wernerfelt, 1984). Furthermore, from a marketing perspective, resources can also be market-based assets including relational assets – such as consumer and stakeholder networks- and intellectual assets – for example internal knowledge and knowledge of the competitive environment (Srivastava, Fahey & Christensen, 2001). Strategic resources are the resources that enable an organisation to achieve a strategic goal (Barney, 1991). Therefore, in contrast to, for example, the market orientation perspective (Ruekert, 1992) that focuses on the needs and wants of consumers to gain competitive advantage (Day, 1999), the resource-based view takes an ‘inside out’ approach to examining the root of competitive advantage within the organisation (Srivastava et al., 2001).

Barney (1991) suggests for strategic organisations to determine the resources that achieve their goals they need to evaluate their resources. Resources can be assessed in terms of the value, rarity, inimitability and substitutability (Barney, 1991; Black & Boal, 1994; Coff, 1999; Hart, 1995). A valuable resource is one that is able to take advantage of an opportunity in the operating environment or is able to neutralise a threat (Barney, 1991). The rareness of a resource reflects the perceived value of the resource and what it is able to contribute toward the strategy that other resources cannot. Furthermore, rareness can also reflect the physical rareness of the resource (e.g. in the case of limited skilled employees) (Black & Boal, 1994). Imitability refers to how specific the resource is to the industry or organisation and the difficulty that competitors have imitating the resource, thus the easier the resource is to imitate, the less value it has (Amit & Shoemaker, 1993). Finally, the substitutability considers if there is another resource that brings the same results, substitutes in cases maybe
similar (e.g. hiring talented employees) or maybe starkly different (e.g. a charismatic leader or structured organisation that can both achieve the same strategic goals) (Barney, 1991).

The fundamental assumptions of the resource-based view’s competitive advantage are resource heterogeneity and imperfect mobility (Wernerfelt, 1984). Resource heterogeneity identifies that not all firms (or destinations) have the same resources (Preim & Butler, 2001); it is the difference in the resources that can create the advantage (Kozlenkova et al., 2013). Within tourism brands the different resources are dependent on both the geographical (physical) resources of the destination and also the resources (tangible and intangible) that individual operators have. Imperfect mobility suggests that for a resource to lead to competitive advantage, resources cannot be traded, or if trades are made, that the value is not the same to the new owner. Within tourism, given the destination brand is linked directly to immovable resources (often the name of the destination), it is not possible for destinations to trade their brand. Consequently, it can be seen that the destination brands fit the two core assumptions of the resource-based view. However, to achieve competitive advantage it is not enough for the destination to just have strategic resources. Ray, Barney & Muhanna (2004) posit that something must be done with the resources in order to generate competitive advantage. Sustained competitive advantage is therefore dependent on the organisation’s ability to identify and utilise its resources effectively (Kozlenkova et al., 2013). That is, the organisation has the capability, the internal ability, to engage with their strategic resources, thus developing competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Within destination brands, as the guardian of the brand (Pike, 2007), it is the DMOs’ responsibility to demonstrate the capability to balance resources to generate competitive advantage.

Resource-based view is criticised for the emphasis it puts on competitive advantage, making the priority achieving competitive advantage rather than the management process that leads to this competitive advantage (Charabaghi & Lynch, 1999). Therefore, managers often nurture static resources, rather than evolving resources to remain relevant in changing industries. It is important to consider competitive advantage and resource management as dynamic concepts that evolve over time. In
order to remain competitive, organisations (and DMOs) need to evolve their resources and capabilities over time to meet the changing needs of the market (Helfat & Peteraf, 2003). Tourism destinations are considered dynamic structures and it is important to explore the complexities of tourism based on this understanding (Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011). Managers also need to remain open to the value of new resources, integrating new resources into their portfolio that help them to remain competitive (Charabaghi & Lynch, 1999). Identifying and evolving strategic resources is a major challenge within tourism, as resources are spread across a wide geographic region with independent owners (Campelo et al., 2013). Further criticism of the resource-based view stems from initial iterations that are considered too narrow, suggesting that strategic resources should be owned by the organisation, thus failing to acknowledge how organisations that draw on resources from multiple stakeholders gain competitive advantage (Charabaghi & Lynch, 1999). Despite criticism of the resource-based view failing to recognise multiple stakeholders in the provision of the service, resource-based view is utilised as one of the main frameworks to analyse destination competitiveness (Dwyer & Kim, 2003).

For the purpose of this thesis, consistent with destination literature, the brand is considered both a capability and a resource that is available for the DMO to utilise effectively to create a consistent and competitive destination position and experience (Denicolai et al., 2010). This approach follows the argument of Helm & Jones (2010):

"...a strong brand creates superior value and competitive advantage that is sustainable and, if well managed and nurtured, can be a long-term source of future value. Although other key resources may have finite lives knowledge assets and research and development will be amortised, key people may leave and proprietary technologies become commodities – a successful brand is a long-term strategic asset (p 545)."

Within this argument there is a strong focus on the management and nurturing of the brand and the resources that are needed to create the brand experience. In tourism, destinations are considered dynamic and are being constantly produced and reproduced through complex management practices and multiple tangible and intangible resources, owned by different stakeholders (Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011). A destination is considered complex based on the large number of elements (and
resources) that are interacting in an interdependent way, these elements can build in a dynamic and non-predictable way that generates behaviours and structures that are not straightforward (Baggio, Scott and Cooper, 2010). Consequently, Baggio et al., (2010) conclude that governing such a complex system requires an adaptive approach that responds the changing dynamics and the changes to the external environment and the resources available. Resource utilisation across the combination of operators is therefore complicated to achieve yet important in facilitating common goals, such as the delivery of the destination brand experience (Haugland, Bjørn-Ove Grønsteh & Aarstad, 2011). Thus, destinations require a holistic approach to exploration due to the complexities of the interactions (Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011) and the complexities associated with the power within the multi-stakeholder destination require further analysis (Marzano & Scott, 2009). The relationship between those involved in the delivery of the brand network are therefore a key interest to this thesis. Srivastava et al. (2001) claim that relationships reside at the heart of the network and are fundamental to competitive advantage. It is important to take a network approach to the exploration of resource distribution and utilisation to understand the influence of multiple actors to generate competitive advantage. By adopting a network approach, in addition to viewing the relationship as a resource (consistent with Gouthier & Schmid, 2003) the DMO needs to consider the management of the relationships it has with all operators as a capability in order to attain strong channels to transfer the flow of other strategic resources (Lavie, 2006). In addition, under a resource-based view, there must also be strong governance over the resources, without governance the network of businesses may fail to realise the benefits that can be derived from their combination of resources and therefore competitive advantage may not be achieved (Barney, Wright & Ketchen, 2001). As such, different governance approaches are explored to determine the impact that this has on the selection and allocation of strategic resources (Denicoloai et al., 2010). The history of the organisation and the resource allocation is also a key determinant of competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Known as path dependencies, the competitive capabilities of an organisation are derived not from an organisation at a point in time, but rather from the evolution of strategic resources and capabilities over time (Barney 1991). It is important therefore, to consider the history of the destination brand and its social structures in order to understand the current capabilities and strategic resources.
The resource-based view is heavily criticised in academic research (Connor, 2002; Fiol, 2001; McGuiness & Morgan, 2000). One of the main criticisms is that there are no managerial implications implied through the resource-based view (McGuiness & Morgan, 2000). Furthermore, it is suggested that the resource-based view assumes that managers have total control over resources and that managers can utilise all the resources. However, Kraaijenbrink, Spender, and Groen (2010) argue that the resource-based view helps to explore the reasons for sustained competitive advantage and the impact that resources have on this. For this thesis, it is understood the DMOs have very little control over the resources utilised in destination branding (Baker & Cameron, 2008; Hankinson, 2007). Yet, it is the responsibility of the DMO to leverage these resources to create a brand experience (Pike, 2005). As such, under the resource-based view, the researcher is able to explore multiple resources and phenomena simultaneously to understand the performance of a destination (Kozlenkova et al., 2013). Under a post-positivist paradigm the researcher is also able to explore the historical influence (path dependencies) of the resources within the destination brand network, across all small, medium and large organisations, to identify the impact on the brand.

The resource-based view is criticised for being too limited and only applicable for large firms that are trying to seek sustainable competitive advantage (Connor, 2002). However, Runyan, Huddleston and Sweeney (2007) successfully apply resource-based view to small retail organisations within a downtown network, thus purporting the relevance of resource-based view for the context of a destination brand network. In this thesis it is understood that the primary goal of the DMO is to enhance their competitive position (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Tsotsosou & Ratten, 2010). By taking a resource-based view, this thesis is able to develop an understanding of the resources and governance of the resources that contribute to the success of the destination. Another common criticism is that the focus on sustainable competitive advantage is too strong and sustainable competitive advantage does not last forever (Fiol, 2001). Despite this criticism Kraaijenbrink et al. (2010) attest that this does not matter as sustainable competitive advantage remains a powerful strategic concept and is a core goal for many organisations and DMOs.
Acknowledging the criticisms, the resource-based view is still considered an important frame of knowledge for exploring and predicting organisational performance (Barney, Ketchen & Wright, 2011). Kozlenkova et al. (2013) identify that the resource-based view is often used in connection with other theories to discuss why managers fail to exploit the full potential of their resources. Given the strong rational approach that the resource-based view utilises and the strong political influence that influences resource allocation within destination brands (see Beaumont & Dredge, 2010; Marzano & Scott, 2009; Ooi, 2002), this thesis also utilises additional theories to explore the brand. The resource-based view and the combination of the destination’s capability and strategic resources is utilised to explore the practical tools of destination brand governance such as stakeholder-agency theory and internal brand management. The thesis considers the physical resources that make up the destination brand and that the DMO must manage, including the tourism infrastructure and natural attractors examining how these influence destination brand buy-in. This thesis identifies the role the financial resources have on the brand by exploring the impact the funding structure has on the destination brand and destination brand buy-in. It studies the organisational resources, identifying the structure of the DMOs and the impact this has on the destination brand. Finally, a core focus of this thesis is the human resources, examining the relational structure of the network of stakeholders and the operators’ and DMOs’ perceptions of, and contribution to, the destination brand.

2.6 CONCLUSION
This thesis is conducted under a post-positivist paradigm that informs the researchers ontology, epistemology and axiology. Taking a resource-based view, this thesis proceeds under the assumption that it is the combination of resources that are impacting the destination brand’s performance and operators’ buy-in to the destination brand. The following chapters explore the role of the destination’s resources in the development and provision of the destination brand. Chapter Three overviews key literature in destination branding and destination brand governance, identifying key trends and gaps in the literature that this thesis aims to contribute to.
CHAPTER THREE
LITERATURE REVIEW

3. INTRODUCTION
Destination competitiveness is becoming increasingly intense (Crouch, 2011). This is due to the accessibility and rise in number of viable destinations competing for visitors (Hanna & Rowley, 2008). Given the increase in competitiveness, destination branding has become central to the marketing of tourism cities and destinations across the world (Hudson & Ritchie, 2009; Kozak & Andreu, 2006). Emergent literature suggests that destination brands can create and enhance the image of the destination in the mind of the consumer; therefore a strong destination brand can lead to sustainable competitive advantage in terms of enhanced visitor numbers and satisfied consumers (Kemp et al., 2012). Scholars identify that consistency plays an important role in branding (Beckman, Kumar and Kim, 2013; d’Angella & Go, 2009; Kavaratizais, 2007; Wheeler, Frost & Weiler, 2011). Therefore, the success of tourism destinations is reliant on the DMOs coordinating and collaborating with operators who provide the destination experience, ensuring the image created by the DMO is inline with the reality provided by operators (Bornhorst, Ritchie & Sheehan, 2010; Haugland et al., 2011). Despite the understanding of operators’ contribution to brand success, competitiveness is predominantly viewed as a whole from a destination perspective, rather than exploring how the myriad of organisations contribute to destination success (Line & Runyan, 2014). A resource-based view of destination competitiveness claims that the competitive advantage of a destination is derived from the overall inter-organisation configuration rather than through individual competences (Denic平ai et al., 2010). This is because consumers evaluate a destination as the sum of their experiences rather than each service encountered separately (Morrison, 2013). Similarly, Beckman et al. (2013) note that consistent experiences for consumers lead to positive emotional attachment to destinations. Yet there has been little empirical research into how to create a strong and consistent destination brand, approaching branding from an inside-out perspective (Hankinson, 2011; Ind & Bjerke, 2007). One of the major challenges within tourism is the coordination of operators and their resources to create a consistent image (Haugland et al., 2011). However, there is limited research addressing influences on co-
ordination of the brand experience that is determined by how the destination brand is governed. This thesis explores a destination brand from a governance perspective exploring stakeholder-agency theory, consumer based brand equity and internal brand management as destination brand governance tools from varying dominant logics. This exploration follows the assumption that different governance mechanisms have differing influences on the use of capabilities and resources (Denicolai et al., 2010). This thesis examines the strategic resources and capabilities of the DMO considering ways to enhance stakeholder buy-in and ways to create a more consistent destination experience.

This chapter explores existing literature on the evolution of destination marketing. This chapter contextualises the thesis, an overview can be seen in Figure 3.1. The chapter begins by overviewing of destination branding and discusses the myriad of stakeholders involved in the destination brand process. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the complexities involved in the brand experience. Following this is an exploration of buy-in to the destination brand, examining the current literature on how DMOs and operators can engage with the brand. The complexities of the destination branding process are then outlined and the importance of brand governance explored. Finally, the dominant logics of governance and practical governance approaches are overviewed in the context of destination branding. Figure 3.1 also outlines the link between the literature discussion and the research questions proposed in Chapter One. The chapter concludes with the identification of key themes and gaps in destination branding literature; these are further explored throughout the chapter.
Figure 3.1: Chapter overview

- Governance of destination brands
- Governance
- Destination brand
- An overview of destination
- Brand management
- Agency theory and internal approaches (f, stakeholder)
- Governance structures and

Sections 3.4-3.6

- Destination stakeholders
- Destination branding
- Destination brand
- The delivery of the DMO and their role in the
- Operations and their role in the
destinations

Sections 3.2-3.3

- Background to ROI
- Background to ROI
- Background to ROI

Section 3.1

- An overview of why destination branding is important in the marketing of destinations
- An overview of what destination branding is and why it is
3.1 DESTINATION BRANDING

This section outlines the definition of the destination brand, explaining the core concepts that are examined throughout this thesis. Furthermore, this section explores the purpose and importance of the destination brand.

3.1.1 Defining the destination brand

The definition of a destination brand is debated within academic sources (Blain, Levy & Ritchie, 2005; Hankinson, 2011; Pike 2009; Pritchard & Morgan, 1998; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Skinner, 2008; Tasci & Kozak, 2006). A number of definitions are applied within destination branding literature, many of which (e.g. Henderson, 2007; Qui, Kim & Im, 2011) focus on the economic-based definition of a product brand. The most common base definition is Aaker’s (1991) definition of a product brand, “a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers” (p. 7). Essentially, the destination brand name is the name of the destination; a brand slogan is also utilised by brand managers as an indication or articulation of the brand strategy for the destination thereby, distinguishing the brand from others. Destination brands are bound by geographic locations: these can be at multinational (Scandinavia Tourism), national (Tourism Australia), state or county (Tourism Queensland or Tourism South East England), regional (Tourism Tropical North Queensland) or local (Tourism Port Douglas and Daintree) brands. As destination branding evolved Pike (2004) argues in relation to the simplicity of Aaker’s definition that “it is important to recognise that such public symbols are part of a broader brand construct, which also includes a demand-side perspective” (p102). These public symbols demonstrate unified and directed nationalism that may have positive or negative impacts on those that are involved in the destination. For example not all involved in the provision of the brand may be able to identify with the strong imagery and values associated with the symbols of the brand. For example, a number of state tourism offices in the Midwestern United States have a challenging task to present a unique, appealing image of their states, which are seen as predominantly agricultural and lacking natural beauty, finding it difficult to create an image and values that operators in the region are willing to accept (Mak, 2011). These views may consequently impact on the brand buy-in among operators. As such, relational approaches to destination branding became
commonplace, identifying both tangible and intangible benefits in their destination brand definition (Pritchard & Morgan, 1998). Pritchard and Morgan, (1998) utilising a relational approach define a destination brand as, “[a] unique combination of product characteristics and added value, both functional and non-functional” (p.216). However, both of the early definitions fail to account for the complexities of the destination brand, in particular, the multitude of stakeholders (DMO, operators, residents and consumers) involved in the branding process and the vast geographic spread of the brand (Pike, 2005). Therefore, a more comprehensive definition of destination brands is proposed:

*a name, symbol, logo or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination. Furthermore it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination that serve to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience, all with the intent purpose of creating an image that influences consumers’ decisions to visit the destination in question, as opposed to an alternative one. (Blain et al., 2005, p333)*

The Blain et al. (2005) destination brand definition infers that destination branding is a tool to create a point of differentiation and, that from the consumers’ perception it indicates the type of experience they can have. Morgan, Pritchard and Piggott (2002) posit that the perception of experience culminates from the functional and symbolic attributes that are linked to the brand in the mind of the consumer that combine to form the brand image. As such, the importance of the operators delivering on these experiences is implicitly implied in this definition. In addition, Blain et al. (2005) identify the role of the destination brand in stimulating action, rather than just intention to act. Ensuring that visitors are making the decision to travel to the destination rather than DMOs just utilising a brand to create consumer awareness. Branding and marketing success is ultimately measured by the ability of the brand, and the associated marketing activities, to convert intention into action (Hanna & Rowley, 2008). Thus, traditionally the number of visitors to the destination quantifies branding success in tourism, and motivates DMOs to utilise a brand strategy (Riley & Love, 2000). The recent shift in focus towards sustainability in tourism destinations has resulted in additional measures of destination success beyond counting visitor
numbers. Other statistics, such as duration of stay, repeat visitation and expenditure per day are starting to be measured by DMOs to determine destination performance. Furthermore, Blain et al.’s., (2005) definition identifies the importance of the brand post-consumption, thereby, reinforcing the experience for visitors. Visitors reminisce about their experience through memories, images, review sites (e.g. Trip Advisor) or through travel blogs, thereby, comparing or reinforcing the experience that they had with others. Although the Blain et al. (2005) definition gives a more detailed understanding of the role of the destination brand for consumers, based on the demand perspective that it adopts the definition does not explicitly identify the role that tourism and hospitality operators have in the delivery of the brand. Hankinson (2011) takes an internal perspective stating:

*Destination brands represent a unique combination of buildings, businesses and venues managed by a multiplicity of autonomous organisations. Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), the public sector organisations charged with the responsibility for destination branding, must consequently work in partnerships with a network of private and public-sector organisations that deliver the services represented by the brand.* (p967)

This definition explores the internal role operators play in the development and delivery of the destination brand and the complexities of the management of the destination brand experience. That is, it takes the involvement of a multitude of internal stakeholders of the destination brand network to deliver the destination brand promise. Prior to Hankinson’s (2011) definition, the wider inclusion of internal stakeholders has previously not been explicitly considered in the definition of destination branding. Yet, the definition does not identify the role of the brand for the consumer, solely focusing on the internal building of the brand and the brand infrastructure. The lack of reflection on the impact of the brand on the consumer suggests a firm-centric approach, putting the destination before the consumer (Heding, Knudtze & Bjerr, 2009). This thesis draws upon both the Blain et al. (2005) and Hankinson (2011) definitions, combining the internal and external perspectives, this study defines a destination brand holistically as:

*A unique set of associations and images in the mind of past, present and future customers and stakeholders that serve to delineate and differentiate the destination from its competitors. The brand experience is created through a*
combination of autonomous organisations and physical attractions that operate in association with the DMO to offer a unique combination of products and experiences for consumers. A destination brand conveys the promise of a memorable experience and the promise of value, invoking an image that motivates consumers to visit the destination above others. Through the provision of the experience the network of organisations involved in the delivery of the destination brand help to reinforce the brand image and consolidate the brand for consumers.

3.1.2 The role of the destination brand

A destination brand has three main purposes (Pike & Bianchi, 2013). First, destination brands build awareness of the destination. Second, brands help to educate the consumer of benefits that competitors do not have. Third, destination brands encourage visitation to the destination. These three factors are measures of brand success, that is, the ability of the branding activities to pull new and repeat visitors to the destination above other competing destinations (Hanna & Rowley, 2008). These brand roles have a strong economic approach that is reflective of DMOs economically driven goals (Denicolai et al., 2010; Riley & Love, 2000). However, these purposes fail to identify the role that the brand has in generating expectations and quality that are identified in the brand definition as key outputs of the brand or the role that the brand plays for operators within the destination.

For operators, if developed effectively the use of a destination brand creates a sense of place (Campelo et al., 2013). Authors suggest that this sense of place is developed by attaching cultural, heritage and historical traits to the brand, making an authentic representation of the destination brand (Santos & Campo, 2014). If DMOs manage to achieve an authentic representation of the destination, authors claim that operators can identify value in the brand, enhancing local pride and generating positive connections with the region (Campelo et al., 2013; Sortori, Mottironi & Coigliano, 2012). However, this suggests, based on a consensus approach that the majority of operators value the same attributes (resources) within the destination, they perceive the same ‘authentic representation’ and are willing to buy-in to the brand in the same way. Although buy-in to brands is a term used frequently (Virgo & de Chernatony, 2006;
Phillips, Freeman & Wicks, 2003), there has been no clear definition of this concept. For the purpose of this thesis buy-in refers to the DMO and operators understanding and mindful acceptance of the brand and their willingness to operate in a way that supports and delivers the brand values. Moscardo (1997) explains mindfulness as an individual’s ability to interrupt pre-defined structures or scripts taking into consideration the situation at present to enhance judgement, decision-making and control over a situation. Eisenhardt (1989) identifies that organisational behaviour is enhanced through mindfulness as managers able to make better decisions through enhanced control and consideration of the external environment. Conversely, mindlessness refers to an individual following a script or routine, not paying attention to timely information but allowing behaviour to be directed by existing routines (Moscardo, 1997). Furthermore, brand buy-in among operators acknowledges that through the input of their resources (such as knowledge) and the resources of the DMO, that a consistent brand experience can be provided. Given the heterogeneity of the organisations involved in the provision of the destination brand experience getting buy-in to the brand from the majority of stakeholders is difficult to achieve (Garcia et al., 2012). As such, it is important for DMOs to understand stakeholders’ goals within the destination brand network to identify how to stimulate greater buy-in to the brand. Furthermore, DMOs need to understand the effective use of the brand to develop brand success.

3.1.3 Using the destination brand
It is not enough for a destination just to establish a brand; a destination brand must be a part of the destinations strategic plan (Blain et al., 2005). A number of ineffective strategies are often noticed in practice due to a lack of understanding of the complex nature of a brand and the network of stakeholders involved in the provision of the brand (Murphy Moscardo, & Beckendoff, 2007); these strategies include the DMO deeming only a logo and tagline a cohesive marketing effort (Blain et al., 2005). By focusing on just a logo and tagline the DMO is neglecting the link between the brand and the experience, thus the brand promise may not be delivered to visitors. Another criticism is some DMOs haphazardly piece together a variety of tourism experiences without considering the strategic implications, such as incomplete tourism experiences (Tasci & Gartner, 2009). An incomplete tourism experience reflects the
inability of operators within the destination to provide the expectations of experience provided through the marketing of the destination and through the brand promise. Incomplete tourist experiences maybe derived from a lack of consistency across the brand network that, in turn, affects the destination image and brand associations and overall experience of the destination for consumers (Balakrishnan, Nekhill & Lewis, 2008). These ineffective brand strategies in turn may have an impact on the success of the destination, as it is has been recognised that only destinations that are well managed are able to gain competitive advantage (Buhalis, 2000). It is therefore important to explore the ways in which the effective management of a destination can be realised among the multitude of stakeholders involved in the brand network (Blain et al., 2005).

3.2 DESTINATION STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholder is a term that originated in organisational behaviour research and is commonly utilised within tourism research (e.g. Jamal & Getz, 1995; Presenza, & Cipollina, 2010; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005) and specifically destination branding research (e.g., Blain et al., 2005; Bussy & Kelly, 2010; d’Angella & Go, 2009; Garcia et al., 2012; Gustafsson, Larson & Svenson, 2013; Konecnik & Go, 2009; Pike, 2005).

In early stakeholder research Donaldson and Preston (1995) define stakeholders as individuals or groups with a legitimate interest in an organisation’s activities. Jones (1998) considers that the term stakeholder applies, to groups who are direct consumers (customers), employees of the organisation and also subgroups of customers and subgroups of employees (e.g., floor staff and managers). These groups may have diverse (and competing) interests, thus, Jones (1998) argues that firms that contract (formally through their managers) their stakeholders on the basis of mutual trust and cooperation will have a competitive advantage over firms that do not. Stakeholder theory denotes that the people and groups (DMOs, operators and consumers) involved have the power to affect or have an interest in the destinations performance therefore stakeholder theory attempts to prioritise relationships based on strategic importance (Freeman, 1994; Jones, 2008). Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997) observe that in order to achieve certain ends organisations must pay more attention to specific stakeholders. In the context of this thesis, the organisation refers to the tourism network within a destination. Authors identify that there are a myriad of stakeholders involved with the
tourism network within a destination (Crotts, Buhalis & March, 2000; Jamal & Getz, 1995; Konecnik & Go, 2008; Pike, 2005; Scott & Marzano, 2009; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2004). These stakeholders are charged with the provision of the destination brand experience. Tourism stakeholders within a destination typically include the DMO, tourists, local residents, business owners, governments, social agencies, special interest groups and tourism planners (Jamal & Getz, 1995). Clarkson (1995) categorises stakeholders as primary stakeholders and secondary stakeholders. Within tourism primary stakeholders are those parties that are integral to the success of the destination and without whom the destination would not succeed. These stakeholders are typically DMOs and tourism and hospitality operators within the destination as well as consumers (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2004). In contrast, secondary stakeholders have an interest in the destination; however, survival of the tourism industry is not dependent on their presence (de Bussy & Kelly, 2010). These can include the media and pressure groups, such as environmental pressure groups that can politically challenge the allocation of resources within a destination (Ryan, 2002). This thesis concentrates on primary stakeholders to the destination brand because they are the most active members of the destination brand and, thus, have the most impact of branding outcomes. Secondary stakeholders have limited relational ties with the DMO and, therefore, brand governance has little impact on their brand buy-in and brand related actions. This thesis also further classifies stakeholders, employing Konecnik and Go's (2008) classification that defines stakeholders in terms of supply-side and demand-side. Demand-side stakeholders are ‘front of house’ in the consumption of the experience. In this thesis, the demand-side stakeholders are referred to as visitors. Supply-side stakeholders are those who are actively involved with the internal or ‘back of house’ development and provision of the destination brand and destination brand experience. These supply-side stakeholders are principally the DMO and tourism and hospitality operators.

As outlined in Chapter Two, a precursor of marketing success in destinations is the understanding of the strategic resources and how these can be balanced and managed (Denicolai., et al, 2010). It is the responsibility of the DMO to balance the resources within the destination that are spread across a wide range of operators (Haugland et al., 2011). Capabilities within a destination brand network are predominantly focused
on the DMOs ability to coordinate the various operators and their resources and the implementation of a strong image and brand (Hauglan et al., 2011). The roles of the DMO and operators are now be further explored.

3.2.1 DMOs’ role in destination branding
There are four main structures that DMOs take (see Table 3.1). The most common approach, and the focus of this thesis, is the DMO operating as a dual funded not-for-profit organisation charged with the responsibility of stimulating visitation to a destination. DMOs achieve this by creating a unique and sellable image of the destination (Prideaux & Cooper, 2002). Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the DMO to lead the operators within the destination toward the goal of a consistent destination brand (Hanna & Rowley, 2008). DMOs have significantly less marketing funds available than seen in major corporate brands because they are typically reliant of government funding (Pike, 2005); meaning that DMOs performance measures are usually focused on economic indicators, such as increased visitor numbers and expenditure (Riley & Love, 2000). In order to achieve these economic goals DMOs need to facilitate the delivery of the brand across operators and visitors (Bregoli, 2013). Consequently, DMOs are considered the ‘guardians of the brand’ based on their role of stimulating visitation and leading operators (Kozac & Baloglu, 2011; Pike, 2007).
As brand guardians, the DMOs are responsible for the development, implementation and evaluation of the destination brand (UNWTO, 2009). DMOs across different levels (national, state, regional, local) may have different influences at different stages and different DMOs employ different approaches. An overview of each stage is explored in more detail.

**Development**

The DMO is responsible for creating a brand that often encompasses a large geographic region and a myriad of services (Gretzel, Fesenmaier, Formicia & O’Leary, 2006; Haugland et al., 2011). The DMO’s transparency in the branding process is considered integral to engage stakeholders in the development of the destination brand (Kompppula, 2014). Yet, transparency is often difficult to achieve due to the diversity and geographic spread of operators. Operators may not have the same level of understanding of the branding process and therefore information may be misinterpreted, or operators may not have the desire to engage with the DMO (Breen, King & Walker, 2010). The large spread of operators also complicates buy-in as it often means that there is less face-to-face contact than would exist in corporate branding. Thus, generating a brand that is a strong representation of the region and one

### Table 3.1 DMO structures, funding and control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DMO Approach</th>
<th>Funding Structure</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government Agency</td>
<td>Allocated budget by the government</td>
<td>100% Government</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Funded Non-Profit</td>
<td>Government; Supplemented with visitor</td>
<td>Separate business entity with latitude</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>taxes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual Funded Non-Profit Organisation</td>
<td>Government; Subscriptions; Grants/Charity.</td>
<td>Leaders reconcile members; marketing main mission</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members Only Trade Association</td>
<td>Purely self funding by organisations</td>
<td>No government support</td>
<td>Small countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Adapted from Wang (2011)
that is accepted by stakeholders is considered a major challenge for DMOs (Pike, 2005). The lack of transparency in the branding process among operators may be accidental, with the DMO unsure of how to reach operators, or it may be a deliberate strategy to cause information asymmetries and reassert the DMOs position (Sheehan, Ritchie & Hudson, 2007).

There are two ways that DMOs can approach brand development, through top-down or bottom-up approaches. A top-down approach involves control of the branding process being with top management (the DMO). With a top down approach there is little engagement with wider stakeholders; thus, a top down approach to brand development tends to result in little consensus among employees, creating tensions between stakeholders (Gyrd-Jones, Merrilees & Miller, 2013). However, the top down approach provides management control and is a quick and easy approach to brand development (Ind, 2001). Conversely, a bottom-up approach seeks to take a collaborative approach to brand development, identifying and including the needs and wants of stakeholders in the creation of the brand. Thereby, taking a bottom-up approach is perceived to enhance to level of engagement with stakeholders and create a more representative brand than the top down approach achieves (Gyrd-Jones et al., 2013).

Both top-down and bottom-up approaches are recognised practices within tourism literature and destination brand development (e.g. Gustafsson et al., 2013; Wheeler et al., 2011). Top-down approaches are often synonymous with destinations that are seeking economic goals or boosterism through their brands, for example Oregon and North East Victoria (Curtis, 2000; Wheeler et al, 2011). By approaching branding from an economic perspective goals are economic in nature looking at driving visitor numbers (Curtis, 2000), seeking increased investment (Wheeler et al., 2011) or generating an extended tourism season (Gustafsson et al., 2013). Approximately 70% of DMOs globally are held accountable in quantitative ways, thus economic development is a key goal (Sheehan et al., 2007). These economic commitments fail however, to identify how operators are able to deliver these brands, compromising the values and tradition of the region and satisfaction of stakeholders. Furthermore, the focus on a DMO’s economic goals creates a sense that the DMO is pursuing self-
interest rather than achieving goals that support the entire region; therefore adopting a top-down strategy appears counter-productive (Garcia et al., 2012).

Although commonly utilised within tourism, top-down approaches are observed to create tensions and develop brands that are not representative of destinations. Table 3.2 highlights some of the key literature on the top down and bottom up approaches to destination development and branding. For example, North East Victoria, Australia is considered to not effectively represent tourism offerings and is not congruent with local community’s identity (Wheeler et al., 2011). In this case, the brand was developed with only economic goals in mind, there is no evaluation of operator buy-in to the brand and there is dissonance within the region as the brand does not reflect regional values (Wheeler et al., 2011). By not including operators in brand development it can lead to a lack of acceptance and empowerment among operators and therefore a lack of willingness to further engage with the brand (Newsome, Moore & Dowling, 2002). An example of the impact of top-down branding is Brand Oregon in the 1980’s. The brand was a state-wide initiative that involved no involvement with the local communities. Communities were simply told to utilise brand materials; no brand evaluation was conducted and there was little brand buy-in or commitment by the community (Curtis, 2000). In the 1990’s a change in politics within the state and a new brand director identified that the top down approach was too narrow and excluded too many stakeholders. As such, Oregon implemented a bottom-up approach to brand development through the destination rebrand. The new brand was ‘work-shopped’ with the community and flexibility was applied to the branding process enabling operators to use the brand in the way they thought fitted with their brand rather than in the prescribed manner previously adopted by Oregon’s DMO. After the re-brand evaluations of the brand were employed that identify the brand was considered a stronger fit with the identity of the destination and that quality lifestyle aspects were key to stakeholders. Rather than a restrictive and bureaucratic approach to brand management identified through the initial Oregon brand, the new brand was considered to be flexible, supportive and a stronger fit. This example demonstrates that the use of a bottom-up approach can generate a stronger brand that in turn can also provide a greater return on investment (Curtis, 2000).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Success Measures</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bramwell &amp; Sharman (1999)</td>
<td>Annals of Tourism Research</td>
<td>Hope Valley – United Kingdom</td>
<td>Interviews with key participants</td>
<td>Bottom-up</td>
<td>Focus on tourism policy - workshops were run</td>
<td>Knowledge of tourism marketing activities are utilised to influence DMO stakeholder decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtis (2000)</td>
<td>Journal of Vacation Marketing</td>
<td>Oregon pre 1990's – United States</td>
<td>Case Study, Secondary data</td>
<td>Top-down</td>
<td>ROI; Visitor numbers</td>
<td>A new brand was developed to consolidate economic and tourism goals. A new brand was decided to collaborate with stakeholders to enhance the brand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d’Angella &amp; Go (2009)</td>
<td>Tourism Management</td>
<td>Barcelona - Spain</td>
<td>Comparative case study, Personal Interviews</td>
<td>Bottom-up</td>
<td>Number of visitors; DMO funding; Knowledge sharing</td>
<td>Barcelona DMO includes operators in decision making. Collaborative tourism marketing activities are used to encourage sustainable strategies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Author

Journal

Vienna Austria

Destination

Methods

Case study

Tourism
Management

New Zealand

d’Angella & Go
(2009)

Journal of
Brand
Management

Comparative case
study
Personal interviews
Secondary data

Morgan,
Pritchard &
Piggott
(2002)

!

Pre 2010
Top-down,

Approach

Success
Measures

Key findings

Post 2010
Bottom-up

Hoteliers are obligated to support the DMO,
given the organizational structure and power
which rests with the authority to allocate
resources. But they were neither represented in
the supervisory board nor formally involved in
the decision-making processes. Thus creating
isolation and negativity among operators.

Process changed in 2010 leading to
collaboration through acceptance of hoteliers
and tourism firms' proposals and by including
them, where appropriate, in working groups
together with the DMO staff for the
development and implementation of the
tourism strategic plan creating more acceptance
and support for the project.

Number of
overnight
visitors;
DMO
funding;
Knowledge
sharing

Bottom-up

Before TNZ created its brand vision for NZ,
they initiated a series of research projects that
surveyed local businesses, regional economists,
destinations with similar programmes and
previous visitors - as well as tourists who had
never actually been to NZ. Brand developers
assessed the image of NZ compared to the
identity, they found a gap between the image
and the reality that needed to be bridged. The
NZ brand was based on a vision founded
though intensive stakeholder, consumer and
competitor research and which is expressed
with care and discipline in everything that
communicates the brand's personality. Success
of the brand is built from stakeholders
understanding of the brand values and vision.

%%!

!


imporant to stakeholders.

Victoria’s High Country – North East Victoria (NEV) - Australia
Case study over the period June 2005 to September 2008.

Direct observation; Participant interviews; Secondary documentation data

Top-down Boosterism Tourism
Greater Melbourne – Townsville
Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing
(2007)

Key findings

King Valley – Victoria, Australia
Brand community – bottom-up
United by their common interest in the culture and heritage of the region. The identity of the community is defined by its differences from other communities, the brand growing organically from these differences. Through the branding process the unique attributes of the region were championed rather than cannibalised.

and buy-in to the brand

South Downs – United Kingdom
Questionnaire Focus groups Interviews

Bottom-up

The branding process for South Downs’ tourism businesses would be willing to meet the suggested branding criteria as businesses predicted that over the next five years a local South Downs Tourism Branding programme would be very significant for them. The research has indicated the importance of in branding schemes to identify the issues that are important to stakeholders.
Despite recognition among academics that bottom up brand building should be utilised for DMOs (e.g., Bregoli, 2013; Curtis, 2000; Kemp et al., 2012; Naipaul et al., 2009; Runyan et al., 2007; Woodland & Acott, 2007), bottom-up brand building is still not a commonly applied approach although the benefits are clearly identified (see Table 3.2) (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride, 2011). Some examples of bottom-up approaches are evident within tourism for example in the USA, Oregon and in Europe South Downs and Scandinavia and the findings of these case studies indicate that through the collaboration with a wide variety of operators in the development stages there is greater acceptance of the brands (Woodland & Acott, 2007). Furthermore, through the provision of guidelines and resources, rather than directives, an inclusive approach is more likely to empower operators to utilise brand resources (Curtis, 2000). Authors attest that through a bottom-up approach DMOs can facilitate acceptance of the brand among operators and develop a brand that is a strong representation of the traditions and values of the destination (Blain et al., 2005; Konecnik & Go, 2008). Evidence from King Valley, Australia supports the notion that bottom-up brand building facilitates a more authentic and positive representation of the values and traditions of the region (Wheeler et al., 2011). King Valley has a large Italian migrant community with strong traditions and values that predate tourism; consequently, mutual emotional bonds and a sense of community are exemplified in the brand that was built with the collaboration of the destination (Wheeler et al., 2011). d’Angella and Go (2009) also confirm the importance of a bottom-up approach, identifying in the city of Barcelona, brand operator buy-in is enhanced by the DMO through the inclusion of operators in decision-making processes, committees, working groups, conferences and meetings. In return, for the DMO, brands that are authentic representations of the destination help to bring positive returns on investment (Curtis, 2000; Wheeler et al., 2011). However, bottom-up brand building is difficult for DMOs (Byrd, 2007). Often the involvement of many operators is challenging to balance, giving operators the same level of input is a risky strategy for DMOs as not all operators have the capabilities to effectively contribute to the process (Byrd, 2007). Furthermore, the process of operator engagement is complicated, some operators may be disengaged until late in the development and then show dissatisfaction, others may claim that there was no engagement despite DMO attempts to gain operator support (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999). Operator
satisfaction was a major issue in Hope Valley, England where only approximately half of the operators were happy with the DMO’s approach although the DMO had attempted to engage with operators, dissemination of information was hard to achieve and thus a number of operators felt neglected (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999). Furthermore, not all operators have the skills and resources required to contribute to the development process, a collaborative bottom up approach can be considered a burden with the DMO having to spend additional time and capabilities on engaging with those that are willing to be involved (Arnaboldi & Spiller, 2011). Although a complicated and time consuming process, the bottom-up brand building is recognised as legitimising outcomes of the branding process through operator support, thereby reducing the likelihood of long term conflict by gaining operator buy-in from the outset (Arnaboldi & Spiller, 2011). By working collaboratively with operators, DMOs can achieve brands that are strong reflections of the brand identity, thereby facilitating the acceptance and buy-in of the brand among operators (Byrd, 2007; Kemp et al., 2012; Naipaul et al., 2011; Wheeler et al., 2011; Woodland & Acott, 2007).

Regardless of the DMO’s decision to create a top-down or bottom-up approach the DMO still need to communicate the brand effectively to operators so they are able to buy-in to the brand and deliver the brand experience. With a bottom-up approach this communication is considered less time consuming as the brand is already a strong representation of the values of the destination (Wheeler et al., 2011). Whereas, with the top down approach the brand needs to be clearly outlined and positioned to operators (Sheehan et al., 2007) as such, it is important that the DMO foster and develop strong relationships with operators across the brand building process.

The resource-based view outlined in Chapter Three highlights that relational position of the DMO is a key strategic resource. Thus, the DMO’s relationship with operators can be consider a resource-based on the reliance on the operators to provide the destination brand experience (Wheeler et al., 2011). Relationships between the DMO and operators are intangible assets that are tied semi-permanently (usually through memberships) to the firm (i.e., the DMO). These relationships are also valuable because they facilitate the delivery of the destination brand experience. Relationships within a destination are difficult to replicate given the unique combination of operators
within a destination, therefore they cannot be sold or transferred. The DMO-operator relationship is a strategic resource for the destination and may provide a point of competitive advantage for the destination over its competitors (Gouthier & Schmid, 2003). The DMO is the broker of resources (Sheehan et al., 2007) and as such should monitor and maintain relationships across the destination from the outset to ensure that the brand can be delivered with consistency and so the destination can achieve competitive advantage.

**Implementation**

The role of the DMO during the implementation phase is to actively encourage operators to participate in the destination brand (Sortori et al., 2012). Thus, facilitating the provision of the destination brand experience by operators to the consumers (Sheehan et al., 2007). Hankinson (2004) argues that operators are the heart of the implementation of the destination brand because they deliver the destination brand promise. In contrast, the DMO have very little interaction with the consumers (Pike & Page, 2014); therefore, failure of the DMO to gain buy-in from operators means that there can be a lack of congruence between the brand image and reality (Hankinson, 2004). For this reason, several authors (e.g., Byrd, 2007; Cox & Wray, 2011; Kemp et al., 2012; Marzano, 2008; Sheehan et al., 2007; Woodland & Acott, 2007) argue that gaining brand buy-in through a collaborative approach between the DMO and stakeholders is essential to successfully delivering the destination brand experience. It is the responsibility of the DMO to ensure that there are suitable internal brand promotions that inspire operator’s commitment to the brand (UNWTO, 2009). Yet, the academic literature or practitioner manuals offer little guidance or exploration of how commitment is achieved across destination brands. Blain et al. (2005) argue that through strong coordination with the DMO and destination stakeholders a common vision is generated among stakeholders, leading to brand buy-in among operators. The shared vision is derived from the inclusiveness and collaboration of the DMO and operators (Marzano, 2008). However, the idea of ‘common vision’ implies that stakeholders are able to agree on goals or are willing to be active participants of the brand network. Other authors (e.g., Arnaboldi & Spiller, 2011; Bregoli, 2013; Denicolai et al., 2010; Hankinson. 2012; Sheehan et al., 2007) claim it is knowledge sharing that facilities collaboration and brand buy-in; suggesting the DMO should
educate operators to inspire buy-in, providing them with sufficient knowledge and up-skilling where required (Cox & Wray, 2011). It is therefore assumed that DMOs have the capability to inspire and include all operators in the brand implementation and create shared vision among operators. Shared vision is deemed to create consistent visitor experiences that deliver the brand promise by providing visitors a high-quality destination experience. However, Denocolai et al. (2010) finds that the level of collaboration, or shared vision, does not lead to strong performance. Furthermore, although knowledge sharing increases the level of awareness of the destination brand, it fails to increase brand commitment (Bregoli, 2013). These studies question the value of creating a shared vision and, collaboration in the delivery of the destination brand experience. Therefore, this thesis furthers these studies by exploring ways that effectively engage operators with the destination brand at all brand touch-points.

Brand touch-point research stems from customer relationship management (CRM) whereby managers use multiple front and back of house technologies to provide a common view to customers (Fickel, 1999). Touch-points are able to enhance value for consumers through their unified image, thereby maximising relationships for the organisation (Chen & Popovich, 2003). During the brand experience the interactions with the brand provide the visitor with value in four forms: pre-purchase, purchase, post-purchase and influencing (Davis & Dunn, 2002). Pre-purchase touch-points are generated through advertising, word of mouth and increasingly, the internet. The DMO has most control over this level of touch-points that are reliant on the DMOs’ capabilities in marketing and their knowledge and understanding of the tourism destination they are marketing. Purchase touch-points in a destination context are experienced within the destination itself, the mix of products and services available in the destination, the supporting resources (such as transportation systems), the service at each outlet and also the interactions with the operators across the destination. The touch-points are reliant on the operators’ consistency in their interactions with consumers. DMOs’ have little control over this form of touch-point. The capabilities of the DMO are evaluated by consumers at this stage with the image they portrayed pre-purchase compared to the experience that consumers have at the destination. Post-purchase touch-points are generated through relationship marketing, keeping in contact with the consumer post visit, satisfaction surveys also consolidate the
experience that they had within the destination and any souvenirs or reminders that
they have of the destination (Davis & Dunn, 2002). DMOs can regain some control
here, however they often have little or no interactions with consumers after they have
left. The final touch-points are influencing touch-points, that indirectly influence the
visitor’s perceptions. These touch-points in corporate branding traditionally influence
in the form of annual reports but in destination brands influencing touch-points are
determined through the interactions that visitors may have with the local people at the
destination and also with past and present visitors. The DMOs’ are reliant on the
brand being a strong representation of the local people enabling the brand to be
delivered across interactions with local people and other visitors, yet a major
challenge comes as these interactions are out of the DMOs’ control.

A DMO’s lack of formal control over operators is therefore considered a major
challenge to destination branding (Bregoli, 2013; Hankinson, 2012; Line & Runyan,
2014; Naipaul, et al., 2009). This lack of formal control means that the DMO is unable
to use measures that are common within corporate brands, such as human resource
management and disciplinary actions, to engage with stakeholders and inspire
collaboration and commitment to the brand. Furthermore, the lack of formal control
reduces the DMO’s ability to maintain a consistent level of quality across all brand
touch-points (UNWTO, 2009). Naipaul et al. (2009) posit that the DMO needs to
ensure that they are able to pro-actively communicate the benefits to operators to
promote a consistent quality brand experience. However, often DMOs are hindered by
limited financial and internal resources and, as a result, often do not have time or
resources to engage with all operators (Haugland et al., 2011); thereby, further
complicating the implementation of the brand.

**Evaluation**

The final role of the DMO is to monitor and evaluate the use of the destination brand
(Morgan et al., 2011). Yet despite the understanding of the importance of brand
evaluation, one in three DMOs globally have no plan to evaluate their brand strategies
(UNWTO, 2009) As a result, DMOs are often unaware of the effectiveness of the
destination brand over time (Pike & Bianchi, 2013), and, therefore, unable to re-
allocate resources to respond to changes within the industry. Under the assumption
that organisations need to continually evolve, this rigidity may cripple their competitive advantage (Helfat & Peteraf, 2003).

Criticisms of the DMOs approach

It is understood that the DMO has an integral role to play in the development, implementation and evaluation of the destination brand. However, there are a number of criticisms of DMOs. Some DMOs are criticised for being focused on self-interest rather than focussing on collaborative goals of the destination (Wang, Hutchinson, Okumus & Naipaul, 2013). In these cases, the DMO is not operating to enhance value for all operators, instead are focused predominantly on economic returns (Sheehan et al., 2007). By not considering the relationship with operators the DMO risks a lack of buy-in to the brand and consequently, inconsistent delivery of the brand promise. In contexts where network relationships are important to collaborative success there has been a call from authors for managers to shift their focus from an economic to a relationship approach (Gouthier & Schmid, 2003). Although this paper was conceptual and based on service marketing not destination branding the understanding of the role of relationships in a consistent network draws parallels to the destination brand context, thus it can be asserted that a similar focus is suitable for DMOs.

The role of politics both internal and external to the DMO is also deemed to play a significant role in brand development, implementation and evaluation and is a concern for a number of operators within destination brand networks (Baker & Cameron, 2008; Ooi, 2002; Pike, 2005; Wang et al., 2013). Several authors (e.g. Beritelli & Laesser, 2011; Timur & Getz, 2008) identify that DMOs often prioritise the needs and wants of ‘powerful’ stakeholders due to the resources and capabilities that they hold (Wheeler et al., 2011). DMOs define these stakeholders by the resources (financial and knowledge) they contribute to the destination rather than their contribution to the branding goals and destination values (Sheehan et al., 2007); by, assessing the strategic value of the resources and prioritising stakeholders DMOs’ perceive they are able to gain sustained competitive advantage (Denicolai et al., 2010). By prioritising stakeholders, authors contest that smaller, more isolated operators may be marginalised (Bramwell & Meyer, 2007; Marzano & Scott, 2008; Timur & Getz, 2008). Thus, DMOs are creating issues with brand buy-in and
inhibiting the consistency of the brand. To ensure engagement and buy-in among operators authors identify that DMO’s need to actively manage their governance structure to ensure engagement across the destination brand network, not just with larger operators with perceived ‘power’ (Beritelli et al., 2007). However, the active management of stakeholder relationships and governance mechanisms is often not achieved creating tensions in the destination between the DMO and operators due to the lack of evaluation applied by the DMO to the destination brand network.

These criticisms of the DMO’s approach largely stem from the governmental structure of the organisations. This government structure creates a number of constraints based on the administrative focus and rigid structures. Thus, these criticisms of the current simple, unitary DMO model that is centrally controlled suggest the need for a new approach or model for DMOs that offers a more pluralistic and inclusive leadership style. Approaches, such as the tourism clusters proposed by Gardiner and Scott (2014), could accommodate this outcome. DMOs could also benefit from strong collaborative partnerships and mutual commitment with members that encourages trust and fair distribution of resources across the network.

A pluralist, inclusive approach such as the cluster approach has the potential to mitigate a number of the issues identified in the rigid, administrative, government led approach by creating an industry lead focus to destination management. However, such an approach would require a dramatic change as well as up-skilling of operators and DMO employees and the development of tourism clusters with strong leadership. These changes should harness the passion of participants towards collective outcomes (Gardiner & Scott, 2014). Although such clusters are evident in some destinations, they are not the norm, thus this thesis will maintain a focus on the centrally controlled DMOs.

3.2.2 Operators' role in destination branding

Scholars identify the role of operators as being integral to the success of the destination brands; as such, several studies explore how operators contribute to the success of destination brands (Baker & Cameron, 2008; Bornhorst et al., 2010; Garcia et al., 2012; Komppula, 2014; Mariani, Buhalis, Longhi & Viouladiti, 2014). Garcia et al. (2012) posit that to achieve brand success the DMO needs to work on
coordinating local operators. In order for the DMO to leverage the relationships of the operators, the operators need to buy-in to the destination brand, identifying the value of the brand. When exploring the value of being part of the destination brand a number of the small and medium operators will consider assessing the transactional risks and costs associated with their involvement (Denicolai et al., 2010). Part of the risk associated with the brand is the level of authenticity of the brand, as it is the role of the operators to deliver this authenticity, they are therefore seeking a brand that is a strong representation of their culture and values (Konecnik & Go, 2008; Peters, Siller, & Matzler, 2011). Often operators may not buy-in to the destination brand due to an inability to see the authenticity of the brand, a lack of financial stability, lack of time or an inability to identify the reciprocal benefits of their involvement (Haugland et al., 2011). As such, internal brand building to communicate the value in the brand, gaining operator support for the brand is considered paramount to the success of the destination brand (Hankinson, 2012). Yet, exploration of the impacts that these internal brand-building activities have on operators are lacking with a focus on quantitative assessment of operators leading to limited understandings or a focus of the DMOs perception rather than operators.

For successful delivery of the destination brand, operators are evaluated by consumers across multiple brand touch-points (Davis & Dunn, 2002). These points of contact should provide a consistent brand experience to visitors (Campbell, 2008). Customer experience comes from the accumulation of interactions with every service offering both intentionally or indirectly, pre-purchase, during the visit and post-purchase (Inglesias, Singh & Batista-Foguel, 2011; Meyer & Schwager, 2007). Therefore, without a consistent experience across all brand touch-points visitor satisfaction is compromised (Eknici, Sirakaya-Turk, Preciado, 2013; Middleton & Clarke, 2001), as the output of tourist satisfaction is derived from the effort that comes from operators producing the experience (Prebensen, Vittersø & Dahl, 2013).

Considering the role of operators in delivering a consistent brand across all brand touch-points, operator understanding of and buy-in to the destination brand is paramount for the success of the brand (Baxter, Kerr & Clarke, 2013). Operators involved in the destination brand network often have different backgrounds, levels of
knowledge and experience in the tourism industry; consequently, the DMO needs to take the differing capabilities into consideration in the management of the destination brand (Beritelli & Bieger, 2014). Hankinson’s (2007) theoretical overview of the relationship between DMOs and operators identifies the smaller operators were seen to be seeking a cooperative forum where their concerns can be shared and they feel support from the network structure. Thus, by ignoring the needs of these smaller operators DMOs are inhibiting the trust within the network as it is well-established that trust is a prerequisite for network success (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010; Denicolai et al., 2010; Haugland et al., 2011).

Often operators know and understand the destination brand, yet despite acknowledging their role in the brand success, many operators refuse to adopt brand guidelines (Bregoli, 2013). Therefore, it is important to consider why operators are not willing to buy-in to the brand. Baker and Cameron (2008) claim the lack of buy-in from operators is attributed to operators focussing on their own business’ brand success rather than the success of the destination brand. However, there is an absence of empirical research exploring ways to promote operator buy-in to destination branding and, in particular, how DMOs balance stakeholder relationships throughout the branding process and in the delivery of the brand experience.

3.2.3 The brand experience

Visitors interact with numerous operators including hotel staff, tour guides and shop owners within a destination (Cox & Wray, 2011; Morrison, 2013; Moutinho, Alpayrak & Caber, 2012). A successful brand that creates visitor satisfaction is considered to embed value within every experience a consumer has with a brand (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). The visitor’s value and experience is not just about the destination itself. Expectations about the experience are built prior to visiting the destination and evaluation and reminiscing about the experience can occur long after the visitor has returned home. These stages are further examined.

Pre-purchase

Prior to purchase destination brands are used as a tool to enhance the marketing process of a destination as they engage potential visitors with an impression of what
visiting a destination may be like. Weaver and Lawton (2010) explain that the use of a brand within the early stages of destination decision-making is more important than within a product decision-making process, as the risk associated with a vacation is much higher due to the inseparability of the production and consumption. The brand builds expectations in the mind of the consumers as to the type of experience and activities that they can have in the destination (Balakrishan, 2008). Engagement with the brand therefore creates trust with the consumer, under the assumption that the destination can deliver on this promise (Trembath, Romaniuk & Lockshin, 2011). Cai (2002) theorises that the assumptions and set of expectations created can be the difference between a potential visitors selecting one destination over another. Thus, DMOs need to identify the resources that differentiate the destination from its competitors and can provide the best lived experience. The destination brand also aims to appeal to target consumers more than other destinations targeting similar markets. The use of the brand logo as a pre-purchase touch-point is recognised as a tool to help reduce the decision-making time (de Chernatony & Riley, 1998). Logos achieve this by aiding in the creation of awareness of the brand and developing an image and expectations in the mind of consumers about the type of destination and experience that is expected. Blain et al. (2005) identify that it is more difficult to achieve a salient logo within destination brands though as marketers need to reduce an entire destination of experiences into one concise logo and tagline. However, some destination brands, such as the ‘I ♥ NY’ brand, are considered highly successful and recognisable among consumers. Other destination brands (e.g. ‘Jamaica – Get Alright’) struggle to understand their resources and experiences and condense these into a salient brand logo thus, not generating a strong pull to consumers to visit their destination (Blain et al., 2005).

The brand experience
The brand image evoked through the pre-purchase touch-points may direct some of the behaviours of the consumer, having created the image of what activities the consumer should be experiencing within the destination. The provision of experience is essential in the as consistency across touch-points associated with the brand can enhance loyalty of consumers (Inglesias et al., 2011). Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009) argue that the service brand experience is reliant on the human
brand touch-points and the interactions that consumers have within the destination. The brand experience needs to be consistent with the values that the DMO promised pre-trip, touch-points need to be accessible to consumers and they need to feel that they were genuinely ‘invited’ to the region (Inglesias et al., 2011). Failure to achieve these across brand touch-points can lead to consumer dissatisfaction. Consideration therefore needs to be given by the DMO to the representation of the brand in relation to the authenticity of the destination, ensuring that the destination brand is reflective of the resources the destination hosts. Furthermore, the DMO needs to consider the interactions between operators and consumers and how the brand values can be consistently delivered.

*Post-trip experience*

Post visit the destination brand consolidates and reinforces the visit in the mind of the consumers creating a positive or negative evaluation based on how close the reality was to the expected experience and the associations created (Cai, 2002). Post-purchase, the associations linked to the brand may generate various reactions (Till, Baack & Waterman, 2011); brands may either add preference and purchase intent or repel consumers by evoking negative associations and images (Ford, 2005). The positive or negative reaction is dependent on the interactions that the consumer has within the destination, and the overall value that they perceive from their experience.

At the post-purchase stage the DMO can disseminate images and communications to reinforce the destination in the mind of the consumer (Cai, 2002; Blain et al., 2005). Visitors are reminded of their experience when they see their photographs, when others talk of the brand or they see the brand in the future. Moutinho, et al. (2012) suggest that if consumers are satisfied with the quality and the value of their brand experience then they are more likely to act positively in their post purchase behaviour, in particular through positive word of mouth. Increasingly, visitors express their satisfaction on social media (Keitzmann & Canhato, 2013). See-To and Ho (2014) identify that positive Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) can enhance trust among consumers. Consequently, positive word of mouth can spread quickly resulting in free advertising for the destination (Kietzmann & Canhoto, 2013) and increased purchase intention from those that view the comments (See-To & Ho, 2014). As a managerial
technique, Eknici et al. (2013) suggest that DMOs should create online forums to stimulate discussion about the destination to engage with visitor, this can also help enhance positive images being created of the destination and to enhance the positive eWOM.

3.2.4 Destination branding research

There has been a noticeable focus by scholars on visitor perceptions of destination brands and how to enhance the visitor perception of the destination, utilising consumer based brand equity analysis (Boo & Busser, 2009; Chen & Odonchimeg, 2010; Dioko & So, 2011; Lee & Beck, 2008; Pike, 2007). Consequently, a greater focus on developing an understanding of internal (DMO and operators) brand management of destination brands is advocated (Baker & Cameron, 2004; Bregoli, 2013; Naipaul et al., 2009). In addition, most existing tourism stakeholder research applies a singular approach to destination branding (Kim, Han, Holland & Byon, 2009; Chen & Myagmarsuren, 2010; Gartner & Ruzzier, 2011; Hankinson, 2012; Pike & Bianchi, 2013), or examines the brand under the assumption that all stakeholders have the same goal (i.e. Beritelli et al., 2007; Bregoli, 2013). A number of studies apply a focus on ‘powerful’ stakeholders rather than exploring the buy-in of both the DMO and a range of operators within a destination (e.g. Beritelli et al., 2007; Gustafsson et al., 2013; Hankinson, 2012; Marzano & Scott, 2009; Sheehan et al., 2007). However, the heterogeneity of the tourism industry is well stated in the literature (Hardy, 2005; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). Exploiting destination branding from a singular perspective, such as Hankinson’s (2012) and Naipaul et al.’s, (2009) evaluation of DMOs ignores the complexities of delivering the brand experience that exist due to the heterogeneity within the destination brand network. Furthermore, there is little focus on identifying how or why there is buy-in to the destination brand. Given the paucity of research in this area there is little attention paid to what can be done by DMOs to encourage greater levels of brand buy-in.

3.3 COMPLEXITIES IN DESTINATION BRANDING

Destinations are considered an agglomeration of facilitates and services to meet the needs and wants of consumers (Saraniemi & Kylänien, 2011); therefore, the diverse network of stakeholders involved in the provision on the brand makes destination
branding a complex process (Laws, Richins, Agrusa & Scott, 2011). In particular, the complexities arise due to the role of human experience within the destination (Saraniemi & Kylänänen, 2011). Dredge (2006) therefore identifies that network approach fits tourism well due to the multi-dimensions of public and private interest and considers that actors of a tourism network maybe involved in multiple networks at any time, with network roles varying in destinations. It is considered the DMOs responsibility to ensure that the network is representative of the stakeholders’ (DMOs and operators) interest (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010). Based on tourism networks within South East Queensland, Beaumont and Dredge (2010) examined three network structures, finding that the most successful networks were the ones that actively engaged with the group of stakeholders, involving them in decision-making and keeping them up-to-date with developments. Furthermore, within the successful networks there is a focus on flexibility, empowering operators to follow opportunities. Conversely, the networks that inhibit operator buy-in to the network and create disengaged operators fail to connect with and involve operators. Although this study is not exploring the buy-in to a brand it examines the importance of the DMOs role in engaging operators. Thus, this thesis builds on the Beaumont and Dredge (2010) paper by exploring the role of the DMO and operators in regards to the specific activity of branding, taking a detailed look at engagement mechanisms.

Additional complications with the destination brand network arise from the relationship between the levels of DMO. Naipaul et al. (2013) explain that branding incentives must often filter through each level of DMO (i.e., national to state, state to regional, regional to local) before being implemented. Thus, often the brand decision makers are not interacting with operators or visitors and therefore have limited understanding of the consumer needs and wants. Although regional DMOs have some understanding of consumers to the destination, the further detached from the destination, such as state and national DMOs, the less interactions they have with the regional visitors (Naipaul et al., 2013). Despite this detachment the DMOs have a central role in the provision of the destination brand and facilitating the buy-in among operators.
Operator buy-in is considered a major challenge in destination marketing and branding (Naipaul et al., 2009). The challenge stems from stakeholders not realising the true value of the collaboration due to a lack of education and high managerial turnover among stakeholders (Cox & Wray, 2011). It is therefore important that DMOs create and communicate mutual benefits for collaborating in the brand network (d’Angella & Go, 2009). Bregoli (2013) identifies that although operators know the brand and their role in the success of the brand they often do not operate in a way that supports the destination brand. Thereby, positing the need for increased attention to communication, formal roles and interlocking directorates and social norms within the brand network to enhance buy-in (Bregoli, 2013). This research focuses on DMO interviews and operator questionnaires. Consequently, the research may not reflect all of the complexities, inhibiting factors and relational ties that impact the buy-in. By exploring operator perspectives through multiple interviews this thesis aims to address this gap in the literature.

The role of the DMO is considered integral to developing operator buy-in; if a DMO only has economic goals (i.e. increasing visitor numbers) this can be counteractive to the development of operator buy-in (Garcia et al., 2012). Instead, it is important that the DMO recognise operators as a key strategic resource fostering relationships to gain advantage rather than purely focusing on the economic goals (Runyan et al., 2007). Yet, the economic focus of DMOs is prevalent across destination research (Haugland et al., 2011; Riley & Love, 2000). Through the comparison of a successful and unsuccessful destination brand strategy Lodge (2002) posits that without agreed purpose across DMOs and operators then it is difficult to stimulate brand buy-in. Whilst DMOs focus on economic goals, operators are conceived as placing more value in social capital (such as trust and reciprocity) and creating positive experiences (Woodland & Acott, 2007), thus seeking relational and co-created value rather than economic goals (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010; Beritelli et al., 2007; Denicolai et al., 2010). Social exclusion is also noted to have a negative impact on the success of brand buy-in (Beritelli et al., 2007; Bronhorst et al., 2010; d’Angella & Go, 2009; Kavaratzis, 2007) due to the contradiction in goals between the DMO and operators. As such, it is important that all stakeholder needs and goals are considered when facilitating a destination brand.
3.3.1 DMOs conflicting position in the destination brand

Due to the role DMOs play in the development and implementation of the destination brand, the DMO perceive that they are the focal or central organisation within the brand network (Rowley, 1997; UNWTO, 2009). This assumption of centrality is derived from the DMO disseminating the brand and resources involved in the provision of the brand to those involved in the delivery of the brand. In addition, the DMO control knowledge and resource dissemination. As such, the DMO is responsible for ensuring that all operators use the brand correctly across promotional material. Operators within the destination of the DMO are invited to become members of the regional, local, or multiple DMOs, these memberships contribute to the funding available for the promotion of the region. This membership process is controlled by the DMO and reinforces their position of formal or authoritative power as the ‘focal organisation’. However, within networks, the central organisation may not always be perceived by others in the network with the same level of importance (Baggio, Scott & Cooper, 2010). Although the level of control the DMO has may indicate that they are formally the ‘central’ organisations, not all operators within the destination attribute the same level of importance to the DMO. Gustafsson et al. (2013) identifies that it is important that as a central organisation the DMO do not act as a gatekeeper to the network, by keeping actors out of a network the success of the network maybe at risk. The negative impact of gatekeeping is evidenced through the lack of support in the Åre Christmas Markets, the gatekeeping of larger ‘powerful’ organisations saw smaller, more authentic businesses, unable to participate in the event (Gustafsson et al., 2013). It is evident across existing literature that the governance of the multiple stakeholders (DMOs and operators) that combine to create the destination brand is complex and requires careful and unique attention and control. As such, brand governance is further explored.

3.3.2 Destination brand governance

Governance is a relatively new concept in tourism research (Ruhanen, Scott, Ritchie & Tkaczynski, 2010). Tourism governance often alters over time due to changing political contexts and other circumstances and as lessons are learnt from previous approaches and policies (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). Within tourism literature,
governance research typically draws on corporate governance literature (Beritelli et al., 2007). Corporate governance is defined as “giving an overall direction to the enterprise, with overseeing and controlling the executive actions of management and satisfying legitimate expectations for accountability and regulation by interests beyond the corporate boundaries” (Rhodes, 1996, p654). Yet, this definition of corporate governance does not encompass the multiple complexities that are associated with a destination context. Within a tourism destination, Beritelli et al. (2007) consider governance the rules and policies that govern the destination marketing and management through the inclusion of multiple operators. This definition takes a very economic approach to “managing” operators. As such, this thesis builds on a combination of the Rhodes (1996) and Beritelli et al. (2007) definitions, providing a less economic focused definition of destination brand governance as:

> the process and structure given to the balancing of destination resources and capabilities. Specifically the facilitation of the overall direction of the destination brand in its development, implementation and evaluation in order to satisfy the expectations of stakeholders responsible for the delivery, consumption and evaluation of the destination brand.

Based on this definition, destination brand governance is about facilitating destination brand networks, the social structures and relationships within the networks and understanding how these impact on the delivery of the destination brand experience (Dredge & Jamal, 2013; Gustafsson et al., 2013). Governance features may include policy-making, planning and coordination of actors (Dinica, 2009) whilst tools of governance include but are not limited to communication, knowledge sharing, trust and leadership. Such features and tools of governance can support the destination brand and encourage brand buy-in by introducing policies to the destination that are in alignment with the brand values and identity and empowering operators through certain tools (see 3.5.2 for further discussion). It is important to consider that governance can occur at different levels, multinational, national, regional and locally often assuming different roles, leaders and outcomes (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). Thus, governance is a capability of the DMO (at different levels) that can be utilised to
leverage resources (such as the relationships and physical resources) effectively to develop a consistent brand experience. The governance approach, governance features and tool of governance adopted by the DMO can influence the level of brand buy-in and the willingness of stakeholders to participate in a brand. Given the myriad of stakeholders involved in the brand, it is important to consider the multifaceted nature of governance.

Predominantly in destination branding, given the governmental structure of the DMO, a hierarchical approach to governance is utilised (Meulemann, 2008). Hierarchy governance implies a top down approach to brand management where one organisation is focal and all other organisations are dependent on the one organisation to develop, implement and evaluate the brand (Meulemann, 2008). Hierarchical governance adopts a linear, functional attitude to governance by a single leader. This hierarchical type of governance is often categorised as being iron fisted or likened to a dictatorship based on the single leader, top-down managerial approach (Spyriadis, Buhalis & Fyall, 2011). In the case of a destination, hierarchical governance is evidenced in the DMOs economic approach to control over destination development, policy and marketing efforts. The DMO is responsible for the growth and marketing of a destination and often take a top down, hierarchical governance approach (F.Yüksel, Bramwell & Yüksel, 2004). Yet authors argue that a hierarchical approach to governance is ineffective in a tourism context, suggesting that the organisational approach is wasted due to the plethora of stakeholders involved (Nordin & Svensson, 2007). Dredge and Whitford (2011) argue that difficulties can arise in governance of tourism events when a multitude of stakeholders, with differing interests, roles and responsibilities are working together to reach a collective understanding. Without suitable practices in place such as a dialogic space, trust among stakeholders and awareness of the roles and relationships with other stakeholders' pressures within the network can be exuberated. A hierarchical approach to governance does not facilitate a dialogical space or encourage communication among members. Rather, information sharing is controlled by a central authority, often determined by perceived power, resulting in a negative influence over stakeholder engagement. Findings from Morocco and Tunisia identify that in addition to the lack of trust, ineffective information sharing discourages stakeholder’s participation in governance under a
hierarchical governance approach, leading to negative influences on the use of the destination’s resources (Caffyn & Jobbins, 2005). Therefore, alternative governance approaches need to be considered.

Meulemann (2008) also identifies two other governance approaches, market and network that offer alternatives to the centralised hierarchical approach with limited flexibility in terms of management style. Market led governance is characterised by the competition. Stakeholders within this style of governance are often considered highly competitive and independent (Meulemann, 2008). Like hierarchical governance, market governance also takes an economic approach, but, unlike hierarchical governance that has a single ‘leader’, in market governance, there are multiple focal organisations where power changes between based on the legitimacy of the stakeholders. For instance, Scott, Cooper and Baggio’s (2008) study of power influence in the destination network of Gold Coast (Australia), identifies that market governance is evident with larger organisations within destinations being given power in decision-making. These larger organisations tend to be multinational hospitality chains (Sheehan et al., 2007), that are able to operate autonomously and are competing for profit rather than supporting the overall destination goals (Scott et al., 2008). However, multinational hotel chains are given power by the DMO based on the financial resources and level of knowledge that is synonymous with such organisations. Thus, by enabling the multinational organisations to have greater input in the development, implementation and evaluation of the brand the DMO are prioritising their needs above the rest of the operators (Sheehan et al., 2007). Drawing on the findings of previous studies, by prioritising operators, DMOs run the risk of marginalising smaller operators by acting as gatekeeper and therefore not being able to effectively utilise the destination’s resources and compromising the authenticity of the destination (Gustafsson et al., 2013; Runyan et al., 2007; Sheehan et al., 2007).

The final type of governance is network governance (Meulemann, 2008). This approach is where trust and diplomacy is formed across stakeholders who are operating through mutual understanding toward common outcomes, thus creating strong prerequisites for stakeholder engagement (Runyan et al., 2007). Network governance therefore relies on knowledge and resource sharing to build trust and therefore to create a successful network (Meulemann, 2008). This form of governance
is considered more effective for tourism as network ability is integral in getting stakeholders to work together, thus engaging with the destination brand (Voggler & Pechlaner, 2014). The network approach to governance assumes that all stakeholders have goals that can align and that they are willing to become involved in the destination brand network. This is idealistic within tourism due to divergent knowledge, skills and goals from network members (Dredge & Whitford, 2011). Within a destination common goals for stakeholders could include showcasing the destinations resources to visitors and generating a strong visitor experience (Woodland & Acott, 2007). However, given the unequal power dependencies identified across tourism networks, (see Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Bregoli, 2013; Byrd, 2007; Marzano & Scott, 2009) network governance with equal power and facilitation of mutual goals alongside cohesive brand implementation appears illusive. Dredge and Whitford (2011) identify governance will remain little more than rhetoric that empowers corporate interests and extra-local rule systems unless government embrace and facilitates a discursive public sphere.

Within tourism destinations, the DMO acts as the meta-governance body (Beritelli et al., 2007). Meuleman (2008) defines meta-governance as the role of governing the governance, ensuring that there is a balance between the three (hierarchical, market and network) governance styles and that they are used effectively based on the situation. It is the DMOs responsibility, as the agent of meta-governance, to facilitate communication among stakeholders, creating policies, plans and marketing strategies that enhance the region and lead to competitive advantage (Spyriadis et al., 2011). The balancing act between governance approaches is often difficult to achieve given the complexities of destination marketing and the governmental structure of the DMO. It may take mechanisms of democracy or actors lobbying for change to succeed in influencing governance changes (Dinicia, 2009) However, Beritelli et al. (2007) identify that DMOs should actively try to manage the governance structures of their destination, particularly given the ever changing and evolving network of stakeholders involved in the destination (Dredge & Jamal, 2013). Balancing governance styles destinations can enhance the level of cooperation among operators (Pechlaner, Volgger & Herntrei, 2012), which, can, in turn, lead to higher levels of innovation and engagement from stakeholders due to interactive decision-making.
(between DMOs and operators). Congruent with a resource-based view, the balance of governance style can also influence the leveraging of resources, enabling DMOs to gain competitive advantage through strategic resource use, this occurs when trust is developed across the network due to strong governance mechanisms, facilitating dialogue and engagement among stakeholders. Furthermore, multilateral ties between DMO and operators can be supported through the balancing of governance approach and therefore greater levels of dialectal capacity and knowledge sharing can be obtained than with dyadic ties associated with the use of hierarchical governance (Meuleman, 2008). Failure to use effective governance can lead to a negative reputation for the destination by the development of an inconsistent experience (Laws et al., 2011). Poor governance can lead to a lack of destination knowledge, coordination and shared value among operators, resulting in a lack of brand buy-in and engagement. Thus, effective management of governance styles is important as it enables DMOs to have a better understanding of resources and how to utilise these to gain competitive advantage and buy-in among operators (Denicoli et al., 2010).

A major problem associated with the governance of tourism destinations is derived from the conflict between different government levels (Richins, 2011). DMOs are predominantly governance funded (refer to Table 3.1); therefore their distribution of resources is often politically influenced (F.Yüksel, et al., 2004). DMOs contend with funding politics associated with difference levels of government and often there are differences between federal, state and local government funding policies and requirements causing conflict in approaches and contribution. Accordingly, it is difficult to achieve consistency due to contradictory policies and political perceptions on different issues across the various levels of government, resulting in a lack of input or knowledge among stakeholders of the destination (Richins, 2011).

At another level, problems with destination governance may emanate from goal displacement between DMOs and operators who fail to align their governance goals (Beritelli et al., 2007). This displacement can result in conflict within the network and hinder the creation of trust between stakeholders thereby, negatively influencing operator engagement and buy-in. As such, operators’ perception of governance is integral for the success of destinations – selecting a governance approach that
promotes trust among actors is likely to enhance the success of the destination, whilst the rigid hierarchical approach that inhibits trust appears to damage the success of the destination (Pechlaner et al., 2012). Accordingly, governance is viewed as a tool to coordinate operators and it is the DMOs role to inspire operators toward a consistent destination brand through their brand governance approach, features and tools. Therefore DMOs need to ensure that a single operator does not dominate the destination branding process through adopting a hierarchical governance approach. By dominating the process the DMO or operators may act as a barrier to cooperation (Komppula, 2014). Instead, DMOs should facilitate the cooperation of all stakeholders in this process and consider the governance mechanisms that best suits the brand network, thus, the dominant logic that the DMO adopts is important to consider.

3.4 DOMINANT LOGICS
Understanding the mind-set or world-view that organisations employ to solve problems is important to create a thorough understanding of the rationale and underpinning to the decision-making of an organisation (Bettis & Prahalad, 1995). This mind-set is known as the organisation’s dominant logic (Grant, 1988). A dominant logic is defined as “the way in which organisations conceptualise the business and make critical resource allocation decisions - be it in technologies, product development, distribution, advertising, or in human resource management” (Prahalad & Bettis, 1986, p490). Dominant logics are developed through operant conditioning, that is, decisions that lead to positive outcomes are reinforced; they therefore become the way that things are done within an organisation (Prahalad & Bettis, 1986). The behaviour then becomes a paradigm or a view of how the organisation should continue to do things. By analysing the dominant logic of the DMO and operators it is therefore possible to understand the approach to destination brand governance, organisational capabilities and resource allocation. The following section explores dominant logics within destination marketing research.

3.4.1 Economic dominant logic
The early literature on destination marketing is based on the established theories on marketing tangible products or goods, thus focuses on promoting the functional
attributes of a destination. Under this logic, marketing campaigns concentrated on selling beautiful landscapes, such as beaches, mountains, etc., and iconic structures, such as buildings, bridges and landmarks (Kozak & Andreu, 2006; Konecnik Ruzzier & de Chernatony, 2013). The goods based marketing approach was founded on an economic dominant logic that assumes managers are motivated by utility maximisation (Heding et al., 2009). Utility maximisation aims to achieve the greatest economic returns for the amount invested. Economic returns for destinations are typically measured in terms of visitor numbers, expenditure and the generation of investment (Garcia et al., 2012; Wheeler et al., 2011). Each party tries to maximise their benefits whilst minimising their costs. Under this dominant logic, operators are considered a homogenous group and, consequently, DMOs utilise a functional, linear communication approach (Heding et al., 2009). The functional linear approach to communication includes DMOs disseminating newsletters that include the economic measures but that are not designed to stimulate dialogue. Thus, approaching communication under the belief that all operators are seeking the same information as the DMO based on their homogeneity. For consumers, traditionally, marketers under an economic dominant logic would push out a message that they expect consumers to respond to if it meets their needs. Given the growth in User Generated Content (e.g. TripAdvisor) and online interactive platforms (e.g. Facebook and Twitter), traditional marketing approaches are being forced to evolve (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). However, less than half of the national DMOs in Europe are utilising interactive marketing tools, instead still preferring the traditional push approach despite the argument that they should evolve their approach (Hays, Page & Buhalis, 2013). Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995) suggest that the functional approach to communication adopted by an economic logic stems from the marketers assuming the role of the ‘middle man’, with little or no interaction with the consumers. The DMO’s little interaction with visitors reflects a ‘middle man’ position; nonetheless, DMOs are responsible for ‘selling’ the region. The marketer is therefore detached from understanding the needs and wants of the consumer. Conversely, internally, although the DMO may have more interactions with operators, not all DMOs develop relationships with operators due to a lack of ability to engage effectively with them (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010).
Given an inability to engage with operators relationships under an economic dominant logic are considered short-term and episodic (Heding et al. 2009). Meaning if operating under an economic dominant logic the DMO only engage with operators when they are needed (i.e. top-down approach) rather than stimulating an on-going dialogue with operators (i.e. bottom-up approach) (Wheeler et al., 2011). As such, Bagozzi (1974) identifies that power shapes relationship under an economic dominant logic. In a destination context among DMOs and operators priorities are given to those that have the most resources (economic and knowledge) rather than operators that are the most authentic representation of the region (Jensen & Sandstorm, 2011). In addition, under an economic dominant logic the responsibility of success (increased visitor numbers and expenditure) is deemed to sit with the marketer (the DMO). Therefore, unsuccessful marketing campaigns burden the DMO, placing the organisation at risk of failure. Negative outcomes might include financial loss and damage to the organisational reputation. Employing the economic dominant logic suggests that DMOs have limited understanding of relational ties within the network and that they maybe influenced and directed by self-interest as opposed the greater good for operators.

Several authors (e.g. Heding, 2009; Jessop, 1997a) attest that economic dominant logic driven decision-making is a top-down process. Within destination branding context, this logic suggests that the DMO makes the branding decisions and informs the operators of the new brand rather than working with operators to create the brand. Although there is little research assessing the impact of dominant logics within tourism, parallels can be drawn to urban spaces, whereby a number of interdependent organisations form a network for success. Poor economic performance in urban spaces is often attributed to economic dominant logic (Jessop, 1997b). Scharpf (1994) contends the lack of success in urban spaces arises from the changing nature of these spaces and the complex network of stakeholders involved in the provision of the experience. Economic dominant logic is unable to consider this change in the network due to the short episodic relationships and the lack of dialogue. As a result, an economic dominant logic mind-set may inhibit success by not facilitating the on-going adaptation associated with competitive advantage (Helfat & Peteraf, 2003). Consequently, given the need for evolution to remain competitive, the dominant logic
within marketing and urban spaces was forced to evolve. Yet, despite the theoretical evolution not all DMOs or operators evolved their dominant logic.

### 3.4.2 Consumer based logic

By the late 1980’s tourism and destination marketing started to move away from the economic dominant logic traditionally applied to product marketing and began exploring a service centred approach based on relationship marketing (Brown, Fisk & Bitner, 1994). The intangibility and inseparability of the services mean that DMOs need to focus on ensuring memorable experiences for consumers and the importance of the operators in providing that experience (Kotler, 2011). Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995) posit that the axioms of relationship marketing are that mutual cooperation leads to greater value for both parties. Furthermore, interdependencies lead to reduced transaction costs and lead to greater quality. These interdependencies firstly include the relationship between those developing the marketing process and those delivering, traditionally that would be the organisation and its employees (Gronroos, 1995), however in this case is between the DMO and operators. Positive relationships can help to ensure effective use of resources (Haugland et al., 2011). Additional interdependencies within a tourism destination include resource dependencies (including tangible and intangible). These resources include physical facilities (e.g. the Great Barrier Reef) finance, skills, knowledge, culture and experience (Line & Runyan, 2013). Often due to the reliance on the same natural resources tourism destinations develop stronger interdependencies than other industries (Palmer & Bejou, 1995). Therefore, through the DMO working in cooperation with operators and by utilising joint resources (i.e. financial and knowledge) mutual benefits are anticipated. To enhance these benefits, establishing trust between parties and creating behavioural routines that support their goals the DMO under these assumptions are able to reduce their costs and create a consistent level of quality across the destination (Sheehan et al., 2007). Consequently, a fundamental part of the consumer based logic (or relationship marketing) is that it takes into consideration all consumers, suppliers and additional stakeholders, thus, widening the scope of marketing efforts rather than focusing on just the consumer as previously seen in economic marketing (Bagozzi, 1974). Through the transition from an economic dominant logic to a consumer based logic, DMOs need to not only see interactions between stakeholders differently (i.e.
shifting from episodic to mid-term relationships), but they also need to widen the scope of what is relevant, that is, understanding the operator and the consumers role in the destination brand and marketing to all stakeholders accordingly (Kandampully, 2006).

Although the consumer dominant logic encourages marketing managers to take consumers into consideration when developing and “selling” their products, this approach is still firm-centric, given the assumption that the firm is able to manipulate marketing mix variables to gain passive consumers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). An additional limitation of the relationship approach is that marketers focus on intangible services, differentiating them from goods, despite services often having tangible outputs (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Thus, some authors and practitioners began to favour a new dominant logic because of the limitations associated with consumer dominant logic (Chathoth, Altinay, Harrington, Okumus & Chan, 2013).

3.4.3 Service-dominant logic and co-creation
Early in the new millennium service-dominant logic gained popularity due to the centrality of relationships to the marketing process and the removal of the distinction between goods and services in marketing (Brodie, 2009; Merz & Vargo, 2009; Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Warnby, 2009). Within tourism, there has been a slow adoption of service-dominant logic (Shaw, Bailey & Williams, 2011). However, the value of a service-dominant logic within tourism lies in the identification and the inclusion of intangible, dynamic resources, and relational, economic and social processes within marketing (Gummersson, Lusch & Vargo, 2010). Service-dominant logic focuses on human interaction whenever transactions are made (Vargo & Lusch, 2008a). Another core assumption of service-dominant logic is the role of operant (intangible) resources contributing to success (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Operant resources are the intangible resources such as knowledge and skills that are utilised by organisations to create competitive advantage (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Within destination marketing, under an economic dominant logic tangible operand resources such as sun, sea and sand are the marketing focus. However, authors such as Crouch (2011) argue that operand (tangible) resources are no longer having the same motivational pull to destinations as they once had. Instead, visitors are increasingly focused on customer experience,
operant, intangible resources. The interaction between tourism and hospitality operators and consumers and the provision of operant resources are considered critical to destination marketing (Line & Runyan, 2014; Shaw et al., 2011). However, these operant resources are not considered under economic and consumer dominant logics. Service-dominant logic has therefore become of increasing interest to tourism scholars and practitioners (Li & Petrick, 2007; Line & Runyan, 2014; Shaw et al., 2011; Warnby, 2009). Yet, not all authors support the predominant focus on operant resources. Campbell, Driscoll and Saren (2013) argue that by placing operant resources as ‘superior’ to operand resources marketing managers are missing the value. They argue that within tourism there is still importance in operand resources (such as heritage sites and beaches). Therefore, it is important that the DMO has the capability to recognise that it is a combination of both the operand (tangible) and operant (intangible) resources that enable them to achieve competitive advantage.

Given the evolution in marketing approaches from an economic to service-dominant logic, bureaucratic organisations are becoming increasingly obsolete and replaced by a network of support. Thus, destinations shift from a hierarchical to a network based governance approach. A strong example of a destination’s shift dominant logics is Oregon, where a shift was made from a dyadic top-down approach to a bottom-up approach that facilitates continual dialogue among stakeholders. A shift to a service-dominant logic in destination brands acknowledges that the DMO is not able to successfully market the destination and deliver a destination experience in isolation, that is, they need the support of their members (operators) and government to work effectively. This is particularly prevalent among DMOs that are operating under government funding (see Table 3.1) and routine based on the interdependencies that their structure requires. Accordingly, the DMOs in this situation need to leverage resources from operators to create sustainable competitive advantage (Line & Runyan, 2014). However, the reality is that this outcome is more difficult to achieve than the organisation centric approach to marketing, as in a number of destinations the DMOs are rooted in tradition and institutionalised in their operating behaviours, as a result of being a government funded institution (Wheeler et al., 2011). The need for DMOs to leverage resources means that organisations cannot keep operators at arms lengths as they do under an economic dominant logic (Bagozzi, 1974). For DMOs this
suggests a need to create long-term relationships with operators in order to effectively leverage opportunities. Furthermore, Lusch and Webster (2010) stress the importance of two-way communication between stakeholders under a service-dominant logic, shifting from dyadic ties associated with economic dominant logic, otherwise value from working together, such as knowledge and resource sharing, is not attained.

An important aspect of service-dominant logic is the concept of co-creation. Co-creation centres on value creation being shared by suppliers, partners, allies and consumers (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Value can be tangible, for instance, receiving financial gain, and intangible, for instance, developing trust and sharing knowledge, skills and culture (Line & Runyan, 2014) Early discussion of co-creation concentrated on dyadic ties between consumers and providers (e.g., Gummesson, 2008). However, it has now been established that co-creation involves all actors who are part of the production and consumption process, a network of ties (Gummesson, Lusch & Vargo, 2010). Co-creation emphasises that there is mutual collaboration that focuses on continual discussion (dialogue) and effort throughout the production and consumption process (Chathoth et al., 2013). Yet, there are difficulties in achieving continual dialogue as it involves stakeholders in the process being aware and willing to contribute time and resources to the process (Line & Runyan, 2014). Therefore, interrelated networks have a greater chance of information exchange, shared knowledge and collaboration (Vallaster and von Wallpach, 2013). Under these assumptions, dialogue among DMOs and their networks is needed (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010) despite the wide geographic spread of stakeholders and their diverse backgrounds (d’Angella & Go, 2009; Naipaul et al., 2009). Another important ingredient of co-creation is access, that is, having the appropriate knowledge and access to branding information to successfully engage (buy-in) with the brand (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004). This means that all those involved in the provision of the destination brand need to understand the brand and how to operationalise it, that is, utilise it in their own operations. Within destination brands this is recognised as difficult to achieve due to the multiple levels of stakeholders (national, state and regional DMOs, operators, employees of operators) and their geographic dispersion (Bregoli, 2013). Risk refers to the co-creator’s evaluation of the risk of negative outcomes for participating in the brand; by evaluating the risk and making an
informed choice, based on low risk stakeholders are more likely to participate in co-creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004). Thus, DMOs need to ensure that operators are able to identify that the value of being part of the brand network outweighs the risk. Finally, transparency is also important to co-creation. Transparency assumes opaqueness in all aspects of the brand, allowing information to be freely available to those involved in both production and consumption (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). As mentioned previously, operator buy-in to the destination brand is attributed to transparency beginning with the development of the destination brand.

Co-creation is argued to be optimised when brands develop organically, that is, brand development is a process of that is constantly negotiated and adapted with stakeholders involved in producing the brand experience (Iglesias, Ind & Alfaro, 2013). Under this premise the DMO need to understand all the resources within the destination and how a combination of these resources can lead to a strong brand (Denicoli et al., 2010). Rather than having a rigid structure, organic brand development and management adopts a flexible approach that involves listening to stakeholders, involving them in the process and adapting the brand accordingly (Ind, Iglesias & Schultz, 2013). Consequently, when adopting a co-creation approach, the role of the leader is to stimulate engagement of stakeholders but helping them to understand their role in brand development through dialogue that provides a platform for ideas and suggestions to be listened to. Thus, emphasising the importance of the dialogue between the DMO and operators in the development and implementation of the destination brand. Gouillart (2014) identifies the importance in generating a rich set of ideas and then helping stakeholders to identify the value in these ideas. In addition, emphasising the role of a network approach to co-creation with dense stakeholder links. Therefore, under a service-dominant logic, brand development should involve key stakeholders taking a bottom-up approach rather than the top down-approach associated with an economic dominant logic.

The role of trust is emphasised in co-creation literature (Ind et al., 2013). Though trust it is posited that there is an enhanced willingness to co-create. Trust can be enhanced where there is information exchange and dialogue in networks. Trust is impacted negatively when brand communication is rigid, formal and antagonises stakeholders
(Vallaster & von Wallpach, 2013). Conversely, trust is enhanced through the stakeholders being emotionally supported (though brand knowledge), action supported (through learning) and cognition-supported (through self-identification) (Payne, Storbacka, Frow & Knox, 2008). Emphasis within the co-creation literature is on the active role of stakeholders and their ability to change the way that a brand is perceived (Christodoulides, 2008; Ind et al., 2013; Vallaster and von Wallpach 2013). Consequently, the managerial implications of this are that brand meaning under a co-created logic can no longer be unilaterally communicated but that DMOs and operators need to be empowered to actively and positively engage with the brand, thus generating reciprocity.

Reciprocity refers to benefits being created for each of the stakeholders involved in the co-creation process and is a central. However, reciprocity is not always the outcome of co-creation, at times parties may act opportunistically and create power differentials in the service (Edvardsson, Tronvoll & Gruber, 2011). For example the DMO providing resources to achieve a certain outcome that only benefits their organisation. Warnby, (2009) identifies that negative impacts should be monitored and addressed to minimise damages to the network of people involved in the provision of the brand and consequently to the brand. In order to achieve this end it is important that the DMO utilises appropriate governance mechanisms to facilitate the development of a sustainable destination brand.

3.5 GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES AND APPROACHES

Based on the established importance of the DMO effectively balancing their resources and facilitating strong relationships within the brand network, it is important to consider ways that DMOs can engage with operators to stimulate brand buy-in.

3.5.1 Stakeholder-agency theory

Stakeholder-agency theory is a subset of agency theory that was first proposed by Hill and Jones (1992). Stakeholder-agency theory proposes that a ‘principle’ employs ‘agents’ to act on their behalf. A principle is the organisation or individual that needs to employ someone outside of the organisation to complete a task, on a temporary basis. There is some discussion within the seminal stakeholder-agency work about the
terminology of ‘principle’ and ‘agent’, suggesting that the relationship is more complex than the initial use of the terminology. The ‘principle’, ‘agent’ terms suggest that the role is clearly defined and structured, yet, this is not always the case. Assuming the DMO as the principle and the operators as the agent, the principle and the agent may at times act interdependently. For instance, operators often advertise their services without the support of the DMO. Furthermore, the principle and agent’s roles may change, with the principle taking on an agent role. For example, the regional DMO is an agent to the national DMO, however a principle to operators. Thus, the strict roles prescribed by the original definition of these terms have become less salient. Although the definition of the terms has evolved, the underpinning notions of a principle and agent remain valid. Therefore, this thesis utilises these terms – that is, principle and agent - to define the role of the stakeholders. Specifically, they are applied to destination branding to differentiate between the brand managers, that is, the DMO as the principle and those that deliver the brand experience, that is, the operators as the agents.

Hill and Jones (1992) note that within networks some stakeholders have a high ‘stake’ in operations and are highly embedded within the network, whilst others can be easily replaced as they do not have specific skills and responsibilities thus complicating the principle, agent relationship. The lack of resources that some operators have access to therefore can create a sense of elitism within destination. Consequently, those that are less embedded, and non-elite, are not perceived as strategic resources by the DMO due to the ease of replication, thus are often treated less favourably or ignored. Within tourism, operators that are highly embedded in the network are considered dynamic with some operators taking an extremely dominant (elite) and active role in the network- such as large multinational organisations with large financial resources - whilst others smaller operators may lie dormant (non-elite) (Dredge, 2006). Hill and Jones (1992) propose that those that are highly embedded may have power over others in the network, thereby, acting as a principle on a temporary basis. One defining feature of stakeholder-agency theory that differentiates it from traditional agency theory is that it recognises stakeholder relationships as being multi-way rather than dyadic and that more than one principle-agent relationship may occur at one time. This reciprocity is identified in tourism networks where stakeholders maybe members of
multiple networks with multiple roles at various times (Dredge, 2006). The differing roles are important to consider within a tourism context, as it previously been discussed, destination brands are made up of a complex interaction between a multitude of stakeholders all offering different services and experiences. As such, the governance mechanism employed within a destination-branding context must take into consideration the multiple relationships that exist both independently and interdependently, yet this is difficult to achieve (Baggio et al., 2010). There can be many differing orientations of stakeholders in the role of principle and agent depending on the level of power and the relationships that the stakeholders assume (Hill & Jones, 1992). Consequently, power differentials have an important influence of the governance of the network.

**Power differentials**

Stakeholder-agency theory claims that power differentials exist among stakeholders (Hill & Jones, 1992). These power differentials are caused by the differing utility functions, that is, stakeholders have different needs and wants that determine their level of satisfaction (Hill & Jones, 1992) often these differing needs and wants are attached to different tangible and intangible resources depending on the dominant logic of the stakeholder. Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1995) identify that the power differentials are guided by the power, legitimacy and urgency of stakeholders influence on decision-making. Power is defined by organisations that have more resources than others, and can utilise these resources to make others within the network do things that they would not normally. For instance, often multinational hotel chains are more powerful within destination brand networks than small independent firms as they have the core resources such as finance and knowledge to drive their actions and contributions to the network. Legitimacy also creates power differentials and is determined by the roles and social structures of the network. History (path dependencies) and institutionalism (i.e., how things are done) play a large role in the definition of legitimacy claims. The DMO’s position within the network and the tradition of the DMO as the driving force of destination brand network cements their legitimacy within the destination. Finally, urgency fuels power differentials, enabling stakeholders to make others within the network act quickly. The speed of action is often based on the strength of their claims. Urgency suggests that
more powerful operators have the skills to make the DMO act more immediately than less powerful operators. As a result, the more powerful operators can stimulate critical actions for time sensitive responses than the less powerful. In destinations, power differentials are often based on the size of the organisation and marketing and political power associated with the stakeholder (March & Wilkinson, 2009), therefore, it is the large multinational organisations that hold the majority of power and legitimacy within the destination because of their knowledge and resource availability (Beritelli & Laesser, 2011; Scott et al., 2008; Jensen & Sandstorm, 2011). Despite this, it is often the smaller organisations whose values and are a closer fit with the brand (if the brand is an authentic representation of the destination), thus by prioritising ‘powerful’ organisations whose values are not as close to the brand, DMOs may be jeopardising the authenticity of the brand (Sartori et al., 2012). Stakeholder-agency theory aims to balance these power differentials and maximise stakeholder utility in terms of satisfaction (Hill & Jones, 1992). DMOs need to understand power differentials and how they can be balanced and utilised in order to harness the full potential of each opportunity.

Stakeholder-agency theory also assumes that there is an unequal dependence between parties involved in the branding process (Hill & Jones, 1992). Within a destination context unequal dependence is noted across the destination with small local businesses, national businesses and international businesses all operating within a confined geographical area (Marzano & Scott, 2006). Marzano and Scott (2006) claim that power differentials within destinations are further emphasised because those with power use it to create a sense of elitism within the destination, thereby creating a destination that operates in their favour. This could be the DMO manipulating resources to better maximise economic goals or multinational hotels pooling greater funds to take advantage of larger marketing opportunities. Conversely, although smaller businesses are noted as being crucial to the authenticity of the destination they are often marginalised as they are considered to be less powerful than the large multinational organisations and therefore unable to manipulate power and resources (Marzano & Scott, 2006). Balancing power differentials to avoid conflicts and create cohesion among the stakeholders is therefore important (Hill & Jones, 1992). This mediation is often the role of the principle, that is, the DMO of the destination. Thus,
the ability of the DMO to balance the different needs and wants and resources of the operators (the agents) is therefore central to destination competitiveness (Alvarez, 2012).

Information asymmetry

Another ingredient that is critical to achieving collaboration between stakeholders and hence destination competitiveness is access to information and resources. Both principle (DMO) and agents (operators) are reliant on intangible resources such as organisational and operational knowledge to successfully deliver the brand experience. Ideally this access should happen equitably, although often, in reality, information asymmetry occurs. Information asymmetry occurs when the ‘principle’ withholds or distorts information that it released to certain agents (Hill & Jones, 1992). Information asymmetry is therefore extremely damaging to a destination, stimulating a lack of trust and support in the destination and can arise for several reasons. First, information asymmetry happens due to a lack of communication between the principle and the agent. Limited access to resources or understanding in the way that information is presented can affect this relationship. For instance, smaller or new operators may not have the same level of knowledge about tourism markets and distribution channels as the DMO (Breen et al., 2010). It is the role of the principle (DMO) to reduce the amount of information asymmetry. Thus, stakeholders should receive information and resources on the brand identity and image that has been designed for the destination by the DMO and, importantly, be able to understand and use this information and resources in their business, to achieve effective collaborative destination branding outcomes. It is also important for the DMO to have a clear understanding of the skills and resources of operators in their network in order to tailor their resources to meet the skill level of operators and thereby, minimise information asymmetry (Arnaboldi & Spiller, 2011).

Failure to achieve information symmetry can lead to a distorted destination identity because of a lack of understanding between the DMO and operators. The lack of understanding may enhance power differentials within the destination resulting in a lack of brand buy-in. Understanding the knowledge levels of operators could also address information asymmetries by enabling the DMO to provide communications
that reinforce the position of the operator in the brand network. DMOs need to be aware that not all operators may have the same level of background or experience therefore they should be flexible in their approach to ensure the message the DMO are sending is received by operators. Failure to do so may result in operators disengaging from the brand and destination marketing network as they are unable to interpret and use the information given to them (Kemp et al., 2013).

Previously organisations have benefited from information asymmetries, however this is shifting (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Instead organisations are now expected to provide more information than they have previously to achieve information symmetry (Campelo et al., 2013). Transparency is important in organisations as it helps develop trust, in this context between the DMO and operators (Ind, 2005). Trust enables stakeholders to identify that what they were promised is implemented, thus, facilitating openness within the network through transparency (Jahansoozi, 2006). Furthermore, transparency enables stakeholders to see that their concerns are listened to and that the principle has respect for their collaboration (Runyan et al., 2007). The branding process, implementation and evaluation under the assumption of trust building need to be transparent and effectively communicated to operators in order for them to buy-in to the brand (Chiang, Chang & Han, 2012).

**Constant change**

Another core concept that influences the buy-in of operators under stakeholder-agency theory is constant change within the brand network. Thus, close attention needs to be paid to the changes within the destination to ensure that the DMO is championing the best resources of the destination rather than their own utility. Constant change is characterised by prolonged periods of disequilibrium or market adjustments where the power differentials between parties are accentuated (Hill & Jones, 1992). These adjustments are characterised by friction, between the principle and agents. The principle tries to slow the power adjustment process by utilising their power over their agents and facilitating strategic investment, thereby, enhancing the power differences between the principle and agents. This adjustment can be achieved by heightening entry or exit barriers, collusion, predatory pricing or through control of legislation (Hill & Jones, 1992). An example of this could the DMO, in cooperation with the
government, investing in or championing new physical resources for the destination, such as a new tourism attraction.

Constant change creates permanent disequilibrium and therefore on-going power differentials between the principle and agents. Based on the disequilibrium, agents may demand the absorption of ex-ante bonding costs in order to demonstrate that the principle is acting in a way that satisfies the interests of the other agents. Ex-ante bonds within organisations tend to include stock options for employees as this has reciprocal wealth benefits (Hill & Jones, 1992). However, within tourism ex-ante bonds may include offers of tax breaks or strategic investments or other incentives (e.g. inclusion in public relations activities) to align values between the principle and agents. This method may cause additional friction by further accentuating the power differentials that exist. This occurs more frequently when the most profitable and powerful stakeholders end up reaping the rewards of the bonds as their values maybe in closer alignment with the principle. Friction is further increased within the network when strategic investment is made into certain businesses that are aligned with the principle through investment in infrastructure, labour resources, etcetera (Eadington & Redman, 1991). Often these resources are invested with the assumption that decisions are made based upon rational thought and with an overall goal of maximising public welfare through the distribution of these resources. Yet, this is not always the case and distribution is often decided through self-interest and ways to maximise power (Eadington & Redman, 1991). Marzano and Scott (2009) consider strategic investment a way to emphasise the power differentials within the tourism industry with multinational companies securing benefits over small local businesses. Additional implications of multinational organisations receiving these benefits include economic leakages that culminate in benefits going to the larger multi-national tourism organisations. Consequently, profits do not remain or are not reinvested in the local area, instead the profits return to the parent company (Lacher & Nepal, 2010). Roessingh and Duijnoven (2005) add that it is not just economic changes that may occur in the region but also social changes, shifting the dynamics and local culture of the region, thereby impacting the local residents and the authenticity of the destination.
Constant change and shifting power differentials within the destination can have a large impact on operator buy-in if not effectively managed. By utilising their power the principle may exclude or marginalise smaller operators consequently resulting in a reduction of buy-in. It is therefore important that the principle (DMOs) pay close attention to power and social changes within the destination, evolving with the destination to provide the greatest benefits to the network rather than maximising their own utility in order to promote brand buy-in (Denicolai et al., 2010). One way that Hill and Jones (1992) propose to achieve a successful balance of power is through credible commitments.

**Credible commitments**

Credible commitments are a practical governance tool that can be utilised by the principle, DMO, to stimulate brand buy-in and reduce the power imbalances within the destination (Hill & Jones, 1992). In using credible commitments, the principle puts a bond on performance. If the agents are underperforming or acting in a way that detracts from the principle’s interests then they lose their bond. It is also possible for the agents to put a similar bond on the principle, through the evaluation of the principles actions. Thereby, agents are able to temporarily reduce the power differentials and equalling the dependence between parties. Hill and Jones (1992) contest that, for these practices to be successful, the credible commitments need to be mutual and should benefit all parties, ensuring that both the principle and agents are willing to act in support of the network based on the commitments they agree to. Hill and Jones (1992) propose credible commitments should be discussed with individual agents to ensure that they are reasonable and are effective. Placing a commitment on actions that do not provide value to both parties is unlikely to yield results (Hill & Jones, 1992). Within destination branding there is an unspoken assumption that operators (agents) of the DMO act in a way that supports the destination and the destination brand, there is however, no formal commitment from either party to act in the way that best supports the destination.

Hill and Jones (1992) consider that enforcement mechanisms, such as credible commitments, should be integrated prior to the any resource exchange between parties as a way to manage and reduce any attempt at maximising one’s own utility at the
expense of the other party. The level of enforcement of these mechanisms often depends on the level of power that stakeholder has within the network. Stakeholders with lesser power than others in the network maybe ignored and mechanisms may fail. Enforcement mechanisms need to be agreed upon prior to engaging in activity and then monitored and applied throughout implementation (Hill & Jones, 1992). If agents know and understand the implications of not adhering to the directives set by the principle prior to commencement agents are more likely and willing to act in a way that supports to overall goal of enhancing the competitive standing of the destination than if this agreement is not discussed.

Understanding the relationship between the principle and the agent allows the DMO to balance the power differentials within the destination and manipulate change. In doing so, they are able to govern the destination to achieve successful outcomes, such as increased visitor numbers and visitor expenditure, because they have created a stable destination with strong comparative advantage. As such, stakeholder-agency theory can be considered as an economic governance framework within destination branding.

3.5.2 Internal brand management

A service-dominant logic approach to destination brand governance focuses on the internal relationships that exist within the destination brand network as well as the external relationships with consumers. Therefore, internal brand management is proposed as a useful tool to understand brand governance under a service-dominant logic. Internal brand management is defined as the process of aligning the employee’s behaviour with the brand identity, that is the way that the managers identify the brand, the ‘who we are’ (Kapferer, 1998; Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006; Burmann, Zeplin & Riley, 2009). In the case of a destination brand network the internal brand management involves aligning the DMO and operators’ behaviour with the brand identity, stimulating strong buy-in to the brand. Henkel, Tomczak, Heitmann and Herrman (2007) suggest that internal brand management supports the notion that employees are integral to the success of the brand, thus is an appropriate tool for destination brands. The use of internal brand management as a governance tool can assist DMOs in creating governance mechanisms such as policies and procedures that improve the consistency of the overall destination brand by ensuring that employees
are aligned with the brand. However, within tourism instead of a focus on a small number of employees, as there would be within a corporate brand, there is a greater number of potential ‘brand citizens’ spread through tourism and hospitality operators (Bregoli, 2013). Interactions between each of these operators (and their employees) with customers are integral to the visitor experience of the destination and ultimately the success of the overarching destination brand (Henkel et al., 2007). Successful internal brand management aims to create consistent brand experiences for visitors throughout the destination that accurately reflects the brand values (Hankinson, 2004).

A core component of achieving brand consistency is gained through brand identity and organisational culture (Henkel et al., 2009). The brand identity specifies what the brand stands for and, thus, how the brand should be projected to consumers (Konecnik & Go, 2007). The brand identity of destinations should be a strong representation of the history, culture and values of the destination – often this is achieved through bottom-up brand building, see Table 3.2 (Santos, Rio-Lanza & Diaz-Martin 2013). Brand identity is also determined by the organisational culture, that is, the personality of the organisation (de Chernatony, 1999) or, in this case, the destination. For example, Great Britain’s DMO suggests that the brand personality of their destination is conservative, pleasant, refined, civilised, eccentric and down to earth (Morgan & Pritchard, 2002). In contrast, Portugal’s DMO defines their destination’s brand identity as contemporary, modern, sophisticated and traditional (Santos, 2014). Brand identity is central to branding success and by understanding the personality of the destination a brand identity can be developed that can help to stimulate employees understanding of the brand values, helping them to identify their operationalisation of the brand. Employees therefore should be able to understand the brand identity and integrate it into their daily operations in order to deliver the consistent quality brand across all brand touch-points (Ghodeswar, 2008). From a destination branding perspective, operators who are able to identify with the brand and its brand values are therefore more likely to buy-in to the brand. As a result, the connection between the identity and the brand values assists in the operator’s successful delivery of the brand experience to consumers (Srivastava et al., 2011).
Researchers consider that internal brand management is more significant and more important for the success of a company in knowledge intensive, co-created, contexts such as tourism - due to the inseparability of the purchase and consumption (Schlager, Bodderas, Mass & Cachelin, 2011; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). In such contexts, competitive advantage can be enhanced through intangible resources such as skills and knowledge (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). This is due to tangible and functional benefits no longer being sufficient to compete in a dynamic industry (Dunn & Davis, 2003). Therefore, the capabilities of the DMO are important to ensure that the skills and knowledge are effectively utilised. Grace and King (2008) posit that it is not just functional benefits (tangible resources) that generate competitive advantage rather it is the delivery of emotional benefits (intangible resources) that gains organisations competitive advantage. Emotional benefits to the consumer may include feeling that the brand reflects their own values and personality and that the brand holds ‘celebrity appeal’, that is that it has ‘bragging rights’ for the consumer (Westward, Morgan & Pritchard, 1999). Internal brand management considers the employees as facilitators of emotional experiences; meaning that through the interactions with the employees consumers should feel an emotional appeal to the brand and a fit with their lifestyle (Schlager et al., 2011). Thus, employee interactions that portray the brand identity to the consumers are preferred (Srivastava, 2011). For the employees to act in a way that provides this emotional appeal, they too must buy-in to the core values that the brand stands for. In the case of destination brands, the experience is not just with one ‘employee’ but it is the combination of experiences across all points of customer contact.

Several authors have applied the principles of internal brand management to destination branding (Hankinson, 2007; Baxter et al., 2013). However, internal brand management of destination brands is complicated by the role of the multitude on independent operators involved in the provision of the destination brand experience (Bregoli, 2013). d’Angella and Go (2009) identify that all of the operators involved in the provision of a destination brand have their own organisational culture and behaviour that is unique to their business, yet, they are also part of the wider destination brand network. Balancing commitment to their individual organisational brand and the destination brand is therefore difficult to achieve.
Brand commitment

Brand commitment is the employees’ willingness to be a part of the brand, their psychological commitment and engagement with the brand (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). Brand commitment is important for brand governance, as it is the ability for the DMO to stimulate buy-in among their operators to the brand. Burmann and Zeplin (2005) identify that discrepancy between personal values and brand values are a serious challenge for internal brand management and engaging employees with the brand. Within tourism networks this convergence of values is harder to achieve as it involves the alignment of brand values from the individual operators’ brands as well as individual employee values to the overarching destination brand. Brand commitment reflects the attitude of the employees toward the brand and is linked to employee behaviour (Burmann et al., 2009). To demonstrate brand commitment Burmann et al. (2009) identify that employees should know and understand the brand, feel a sense of worth from their role in the brand delivery and feel that there is an alignment between their own values and the values of the brand. Xiong and King (2013) identify that if an employee is able to see that they can contribute and have a positive impact on the brand then they are more likely to act in a way that supports the brand. Within tourism, this requires the operators identifying their role in the delivery of the destination brand experience, recognising it is they that create the essence of the brand and, therefore, directly contribute to the success of the destination brand (Baxter et al., 2013). If operators fail to identify and understand how to operationalise their role in the brand, then the destination brand promise cannot be delivered (Hankinson, 2004). Failure to deliver the brand promise can result in inconsistent and unsatisfactory consumer experiences.

In order to achieve brand commitment Burmann and Zeplin (2005) illustrate that employees need to have intangible resources such as knowledge and skills to deliver the brand values. To equip employees with such knowledge and skills, effective communication is required alongside brand training from management to employees (de Chernatony, Cottom & Segal-Horn, 2006). Within destination brands DMOs need the capability to communicate effectively network wide to ensure that operators have the required brand knowledge and the intention to act. However, Bregoli (2013)
identifies that even though operators have the awareness of the destination brand, not all operators are willing to demonstrate brand commitment. Bregoli (2013) also posits that enhanced communication and formal rules helps to enhance brand commitment. Whilst Baggio et al., (2010) identify that formal rules and rigid governance is likely to resource the brand buy-in, rather a flexible approach is considered more appropriate in such a dynamic industry. There is a need for a positive relationship between the employee and the brand, this requires trust, respect and dignity to enhance brand centred behaviours (Xiong & King, 2013). DMOs need to be aware of and respect the operators within the region to enhance their brand commitment. In order to create a positive relationship employees need to feel that their working environment is friendly, trustworthy and cooperative, if not then they argue that brand commitment is likely to be reduced (Xiong & King, 2013). In addition, employees often seek rewards for positive brand behaviour and commitment. These rewards take the shape of both monetary rewards and positive reinforcement from management (Schlager et al., 2011). Through positive reinforcement of strong brand commitment Gregory (2007) reports that employees continue to act in a positive way that supports the brand values thereby generating added brand value. But, within a destination network the lack of control that the DMO has over operators and the lack of formal policies and structures complicates operator commitment. Positive internal branding behaviour facilitated through brand commitment is known as brand citizenship behaviour (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005).

**Brand citizenship behaviour**

Brand citizenship behaviour involves inspiring employees to go above and beyond what is required of them, acting in a way that facilitates the delivery of the brand experience (Burmann et al., 2009). Burmann and Zeplin (2005) attest that brand citizenship behaviour has seven dimensions: the employees willingness to help (to both internal and external customers); brand enthusiasm (showing engagement and innovation in brand related behaviours); brand consideration (acting in ways that support the brand); sportsmanship (not complaining about the brand and willingness to sacrifice for the brand); brand endorsement (recommendations of the brand to others, internally and externally) and striving for the development of oneself (willingness to enhance brand behaviours) and the brand (contributing to brand identity and brand
evaluations). However, Shaari, Salleh and Hussin (2011) argue that brand citizenship behaviour attributes are dependent on context and employee background, instead in their context finding brand citizenship behaviour is only comprised of four key dimensions, helping behaviour, sportsmanship, self-brand development and brand endorsement. Despite differing attributes, both authors concur that brand citizenship behaviour goes beyond social conformity (through courteous and responsive behaviour) and requires management stimulating employees to behave in a way that develops and distinguishes the brand image (Henkel et al., 2007). Therefore, identifying the managers (DMOs) capability as core to engaging with, and delivering, brand behaviours. Authors attest that engagement can be achieved through informal and formal control measures and through the empowerment of employees (Henkel et al., 2007). Management joining employees on the floor on a regular basis is also a strong tool to stimulate greater levels of brand citizenship behaviour (Shaari et al., 2011). Brand centred human resource management is another important tool to stimulate brand citizenship behaviour within corporate brands (Chiang, Chang and Han, 2012). Brand centred human resource management enables organisations to hire individuals who already have similar values and attitudes of the corporate brand. Thereby, reducing the level of convergence required between individual behaviours and brand centred behaviours. Yet, Hankinson (2007) contests that the lack of formal control over operators within a destination-branding context means that establishing employees with similar brand values is not possible to achieve due to destination brand managers not ‘hiring’ employees. It is therefore, more difficult for destination brand managers to influence the values and attitudes of those operating within the region. Consequently, these findings suggest the importance of other ways of building brand citizenship behaviour given the lack of initial ‘employee selection’, such as utilising bottom-up approaches to brand development. In a destination branding context, collaboration among operators is important to establish and develop brand citizenship behaviour (Naipaul et al., 2009), building a community of operators that have similar goals, attitudes and values. Central concepts within collaboration are knowledge and trust (Brown & Keast, 2003).

Knowledge is considered to have a significant positive relationship to the level of brand citizenship behaviour (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). Employees require knowledge
of brand meaning, the consumer’s needs and expectations and understand their role and responsibility in the delivery of the brand promise (Shaari et al., 2011). For DMOs, knowledge about the network and its operators is also important (Beritelli et al., 2007). The stronger the brand knowledge, the more likely employees’ are to demonstrate brand commitment and brand citizenship behaviours (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). It is important for the DMO to implement programs and activities that help provide knowledge about the brand for operators (Bregoli, 2013). Holt and Cameron (2010) argue that interactive forums are important to share brand knowledge, as traditional dyadic communication or ‘brand handbooks’ can stifle creativity, innovation and brand buy-in. By demonstrating commitment to knowledge sharing and education DMOs appear to have greater levels of transparency and accountability. Operators therefore feel more valued and that their opinions are worthwhile, demonstrating more shared commitment (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010). Conversely, by not facilitating brand knowledge DMOs risk not engaging with operators and thus operators lacking brand buy-in and citizenship behaviour (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010).

Authors conclude that brand citizenship behaviour is stimulated by brand commitment and can be enhanced through effective communication and leadership skills (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Burmann et al., 2008; Chiang et al., 2012; Shaari et al., 2011).

**Communication as an internal brand management tool**

Researchers suggest that companies should openly communicate to their employees in a clear manner that is relevant to the employees to encourage alignment with the brand and brand leaders (Lynch & de Chernatony, 2004). Through effective communication employees are able to feel a sense of direction (Michell, 2002). Brand related communications are used develop the employee’s awareness and understanding of the brand identity, values and promise (Baxter et al., 2013). By understanding brand identity and values, employees are more likely to be able to stimulate greater resonance with the brand (Michell, 2002). If employees do not understand the brand identity, values and promise then adaptation of brand citizenship behaviours is likely to be diminutive (Xiong & King, 2013). Omilion-Hodges and Baker (2014) consider
brand managers that fail to have strategic and effective brand communications are likely to generate negative brand based discussions among employees. Furthermore, effective communication is the foundation of the relationship between the employee and the organisation. Internal brand communications help stimulate the building of trust, through knowledge sharing, and brand execution consistency across all employees (Goodman, 2006). Furthermore, openness and sincerity in communication has been shown to develop employee-organisation trust. For instance, Omilion-Hodges and Baker’s (2014) theoretical paper outlines common stumbling blocks identified across organisations, explaining that openness develops trust which is essential for employee’s psychological commitment to the organisation. The development of trust and knowledge is also considered an integral step across co-creation literature (Payne et al., 2008). As well as developing trust, communication can also be used as a tool to rewarded employees for demonstrating brand citizenship behaviour (Berry, 2000), thereby, helping to support positivity among employees and supporting relationship development (Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2014). However, brand communication is complicated within destination brands given the unique structure of the brand and the relationship between the brand ‘employees’. Therefore, it is important to understand the most effective communication methods to enhance the relationships and thus generate consistency among employees.

Authors suggest communication to employees should be formal - through directives and policies - and informal - through word of mouth and instructions (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). Furthermore, communication should come from multiple channels such as formal documents, emails, memos and word of mouth, to have the greatest impact on making employees aware of the brand identity, values and promise (Bergstrom et al., 2002; Thomson, de Chernatony, Arganbright & Khan, 1999). Failure to utilise multiple channels and through the use of only hierarchical communication leaders is considered unlikely to stimulate buy-in, and as a result employees can lack allegiance to the brand (Schultz, 1992). Everyday communications between the DMO and operators need to be dynamic and multifaceted and tailored to the needs to the employees (Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2014). Furthermore, they need to take into consideration the employees psychological concerns (Lynch & de Chernatony, 2004). This consideration stimulates trust and understanding within the organisation.
Moreover, Burmann and Zeplin (2005) identify that patience is necessary in brand communication; it may take a while for the brand identity to be absorbed and integrated into routine of employees, as such, brand leaders need to take it into consideration when trying to stimulate brand buy-in. It is important however, that brand leaders are consistent with their communications and use of rules. Inconsistency can lead to a sense of injustice, thus harbouring brand buy-in (Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2014).

Practical ways to integrate the brand into activities include brand tool kits, training and manuals as ways for the DMO to communicate the brand values to all involved in the delivery of the brand experience (Hankinson, 2012). Baker, Rapp, Meyer and Mullins (2014) suggest that brand communications can be disseminated in multiple formats such as the brand value statement, brand books, newsletters, the intranet and with internal role models. However, Holt and Cameron (2010) argue that these tools take a traditional economic approach to brand management and may stifle the creativity and brand buy-in of employees. They suggest more informal brand communications as more conducive to stimulate brand buy-in than the formal approach to brand communication through tool-kits and brand pyramids. Gill (2011) attests to the value of storytelling in internal brand communications, with narrated messages as a tool to enhance or reinforce values and beliefs. Through storytelling employees are able to put themselves in the picture of the brand, thereby enhancing their buy-in and understanding of the brand. This approach takes a more co-creative outlook, generating a forum where employees can identify their own value in the process and feel an emotional attachment to the brand rather than taking a prescriptive economic approach. Although, the practicalities of this within a destination brand context are questionable.

Another key aspect of communication within internal brand management is the leader of the brand ‘living the brand from the top’, with CEOs acting as role models, communicating and demonstrating the values and behaviours themselves (de Chernatony, Cottam, & Segal-Horn, 2006). This literature suggests that top managers should be seen with the employees demonstrating brand centred behaviours and becoming more accessible to employees (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001; Hankinson, 2007;
Ind, 2001; Kavaratzis, 2007). Prahalad and Bettis (1986, p489) argue: “top management of an organisation should not be viewed as a faceless abstraction”. This quote indicates the importance of the DMO being seen by the operators within the destination. It is not just about being seen though, the importance of listening to employees is also emphasised across literature. Listening to staff brand managers can reduce perceived power differentials and reduce the level of negativity across the organisation (Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2014). In the case of a destination brand this approach would involve key employees of the DMO being seen by operators experiencing the destination, acting in a way that strengthens the internal brand management. Furthermore, it requires the DMO to respond to concerns that operators have, demonstrating that they are listening to the operators and therefore value their relationships.

Within corporate brands, the main form of brand communications come from internal informal communications, often through a ripple effect where the brand is communicated to one group and this is then disseminated across all employees in the organisation (de Chernatony, Cottam & Segal-Horn, 2006). This ripple effect is harder to achieve within destination brands because employees are often geographically spread across the destination and organisations are competitors within the industry therefore less face-to-face time with DMOs than in corporate brands means that some meaning maybe lost. Furthermore, where there are heterogeneous groups involved in brand delivery the communication to employees is considered less efficient than if they were homogenous (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001). As a result, employees of tourism and hospitality operators must represent their employers as well as work with potential competitors as part of the diverse destination brand network. Thus, due to the divergence in values it may take a longer time to stimulate buy-in (Keast, Brown & Wollecock, 2004). In order to demonstrate positive communication skills and the patience required to stimulate operator buy-in, effective leadership is required.

*Leadership as an internal brand management tool*

Leadership underpins a number of the internal brand management concepts. Authors posit that without strong leadership even the best communication can fail (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Vallester & de Chernatony, 2006). As such, DMOs need to take into
consideration their leadership style and the impact it has on brand governance. Authors consider it important that leaders adopt the brand identity and operate within a way that compliments this identity (Baker et al., 2014; de Chernatony et al., 2006). Brand leaders have an important role in the brand building process as well in translating the brand values and promise into a reality for employees and consumers (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006). For example, the airline brand, Virgin, assumes an innovative identity and, therefore, they must ensure that their operations and procedures facilitate innovation within the organisation. Leaders of the brand should ensure that there is a strong value system in place and that routines and rituals support brand values, thus, stimulating commitment and brand citizenship behaviours (Dunn & Davis, 2003). Vallaster and deChernatony (2006) support the importance of leaders integrating the brand suggesting that successful leaders help to imbed the brand values into the routines and systems of the organisation, that they should act as mediators between the brand values and individual values and they ought to facilitate commitment to the brand by showing employees how to be brand ambassadors. However, within destination brands, Bregoli (2013) identifies that despite brand guidelines being in place, not all operators adopt brand centred behaviours. This is due to the lack of formal monitoring and brand acceptance among operators. Thus, there needs to be more attention within destination branding of how DMOs can encourage brand buy-in. It is important that leaders deliver on their promises to employees, and must be able to provide the means and the resources to achieve the branding goals (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2012). For DMOs this begins with ensuring that the brand is an authentic representation of the region and its resources, to enable operators to deliver on the brand promise. To achieve this, Cui, Hu and Griffith (2014) identify from an analysis of corporate brand managers with approximately 12 years experience the key dimensions that leaders should have for success are human, relational and informational capabilities (Cui et al., 2014). That is that their human capabilities provide suitable management expertise, communication skills and networking ability. Through their relational capabilities leaders should have a strong network of relationships both internal and external. Finally, the informational capability should facilitate a strong knowledge of the brand in terms of its image, performance and identity (Cui et al., 2014). Failure to demonstrate these skills can have a negative impact on management capabilities and their ability to stimulate brand buy-in.
It is important for leaders to empower employees to facilitate the brand meaning into their lives and therefore the consumer experience, with a sense of freedom (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). In order to effectively inspire brand buy-in, Vallaster and de Chernatony (2006) discuss the importance of the human touch from leaders; employees want to be able to feel support from the brand leader. Within destination branding this would involve ensuring that there is a face that represents the implementation of the destination brand. Brand leaders need a holistic understanding of the brand values and how they can be integrated into procedures and rituals, as such, the brand leader should be responsible for a brand related area (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006). For a destination brand, this suggests the allocation of a brand leadership role that is promoted internally to the DMO and externally to all operators and brand representatives so they are aware of whom they can turn to with brand related questions.

Leadership is important in the dissemination of knowledge and communicating the brand values to stakeholders, motivating operators to exploit opportunities in their immediate environment as well as in the wider destination brand network (Zehrer et al., 2014). It is important that the brand leader facilitates the understanding of the common goals that bind the brand network (Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos, 2014). In addition, it is the role of the brand leader to ensure the brand message reaches stakeholders (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006). Consequently, DMOs need to find an innovative way to ensure that all operators understand the destination brand identity and values. Brand message and values can be misinterpreted or lost by stakeholders (de Chernatony et al., 2006). It is therefore, the role of the brand leader to check that employees are aware of and understand the brand message (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006). This process is once again complicated by the geographic dispersal of stakeholders within a destination brand.

Authors argue that brand leaders should, through the routines and systems they employ, be able to adopt both formal and informal control mechanisms to inspire commitment and brand citizenship behaviours (Cui et al., 2014; Henkel et al., 2007; Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos, 2014; Naipaul et al., 2009). Formal controls involve
integrating the brand personality and brand identity into the operational policies; ensuring employees are able to deliver the brand experience. Whereas, informal approaches may involve the leaders attitude toward employees that demonstrate brand citizenship behaviour and stimulating buy-in by leading in a way that demonstrates how to use brand citizenship behaviour. Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014) also identify the need for leaders to monitor and track employee satisfaction with the brand.

Internal brand management as a governance tool can be utilised by destination brand managers to contribute to the success of the brand by encouraging stakeholder brand buy-in, by building trust and support within the network and opening into dialogue with stakeholders of the destination brand. It is important across all levels of governance. In this case the DMO, evaluating the stakeholder’s perception of the brand to ensure the message is being received as intended is warranted.

3.6 KEY THEMES AND GAPS IN DESTINATION BRAND LITERATURE
Under a resource-based view it is perceived as the responsibility of the DMO to utilise their internal capabilities to stimulate collaboration among operators and thereby, create competitive advantage (Denicolai et al., 2010). It is collaboration among operators that facilitates the transfer of resources that can be used by the DMO to create sustainable competitive advantage (Haugland et al., 2011). Some authors (i.e. Cox & Wray, 2011; Denicolai et al., 2010; Hankinson, 2007) consider that success of destination networks should be measured in terms of stakeholder perception rather than traditional return on investment. Within destinations, the relationships between the DMO and operators are a core capability that if utilised effectively can enable the DMO to utilise core resources more effectively (Line & Runayn, 2014). Thus, it is important to understand and acknowledge key themes and gaps in the destination branding literature to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how governance approaches influence the development of capabilities (i.e. strong relationships) and the use of resources (i.e., funding) within destination brand networks.
3.6.1 Dominant logic of destination brand networks

Understanding the dominant logic that the DMO and operators utilise to solve problems is important to create a thorough understand of the rationale and underpinning to the decision-making of the organisation (Bettis & Prahalad, 1986). The dominant logic of the DMO guides their approach to governance and the strength of their relationships with operators. As such, the dominant logic of the DMO influences their capabilities and the way in which they engage with resources. For operators, their dominant logic determines how they interact with the DMO, the strength of their relationships and what they need in order to engage with operators. However, existing destination branding research predominantly utilises a singular dominant logic, thus imposing the assumption that all DMOs and operators are bound by similar values and seeking similar goals. There is currently a gap in the literature to explore the dominant logic of stakeholders in a destination brand network and how the dominant logic of stakeholder groups influences brand governance and buy-in. As such, the first research question for this thesis is:

RQ1. What is the dominant logic for DMOs and operators in the delivery of the destination brand experience and how can managers balance these approaches to stimulate a consistent brand experience?

3.6.2 Engaging operators

One of the key themes that emerged across the literature review is a call from authors for DMOs to place a greater focus on how to engage operators with the destination brand (Bregoli, 2013; Cox & Wray, 2011; d’Angella & Go, 2009; Denicolai et al., 2010; Hankinson, 2012; Kavaratzis, 2007; Naipaul et al., 2009; Wheeler et al., 2011; Zehrer et al., 2014). The importance of engagement or collaboration between the DMO and operators is well established (i.e. Arnaboldi & Spiller, 2011; Cox & Wray, 2011; Haugland et al., 2011; Sheehan et al., 2007). Yet, despite the acknowledgement of the importance of collaboration in the destination there is little exploration of how to promote destination brand buy-in across the destination brand network (e.g. Bregoli, 2013). In addition, the existing literature that explores the role of operator engagement within destination networks tends to focus on the ‘powerful’ (as defined by the DMO) organisations (i.e. Beaumont & Dredge, 2010; Beritelli et al., 2007;
By focusing on ‘powerful’ organisations, there has been a lack of representation of how smaller organisations perceive the destination brand and their willingness to engage with the process. However, these smaller businesses are considered an integral part of the destination brand network. Consequently, there is a gap in the literature in respect to examining operator buy-in to destination brands, examining the influencing factors to brand buy-in and taking into consideration a holistic approach to operator buy-in rather than focusing on a single group of ‘powerful’ operators. This resulted in the second research question:

**RQ2. What factors influence internal stakeholder buy-in to the destination brand?**

### 3.6.3 Evaluation of destination brands

Despite recognition from the World Tourism Organisation that brand evaluation is an integral stage of the branding process it is understood that one in three DMOs globally do not evaluate their brand (UNWTO, 2009). In the limited brand evaluation research Wagner and Peters (2009) explore a collage approach to understanding how operators evaluate Alpine brands. Although this method facilitates the understanding of how operators perceive the brand it fails to address why they have this perception and what can be done to strengthen the brand for the operators. A further study by Satori Mottironi and Corigliano, (2012) adapts consumer based brand equity for an internal operator’s evaluation of destination, brand measuring the level of commitment, awareness and loyalty to the brand. The measures enable to the DMO to develop an understanding of congruency between the identity that the DMO is aiming to develop and the identity that the operators perceive. However, this quantitative approach fails to acknowledge the determining factors of these perceptions and if, or how, these perceptions can be altered. Within the DMO, qualitative studies have been utilised to evaluate the DMOs perspective of the brand (Hankinson, 2012). This approach helps to identify the key issues within the DMO and how internal brand management can be used to enhance DMO buy-in to the brand but, has little impact on the wider brand network. Given the limited control that the DMO has over operators within the destination, this approach falls short of addressing the gap in the literature in regards to understanding the evaluation of the destination brand on the
whole. Bregoli (2013) applies a mixed methods approach to establish DMO and operators perceptions of a destination brand. This paper utilises interviews to develop questionnaires to establish the internal evaluation of the brand. By providing operators with a questionnaire Bregoli (2013) limits the representativeness of the inhibiting factors to brand buy-in. Bregoli’s (2013) study does however provide an important foundation to understanding and the applicability of internal brand management to destination brands. All the aforementioned studies (Bregoli, 2013; Satori et al., 2012; Wagners & Peters, 2008) apply a single dominant logic to their approach, suggesting that the DMO and operators are driven by the same underlying goals, even though authors identify that DMOs and operators have divergent priorities (Wheeler et al., 2011). By taking a single managerial perspective to the evaluation of the destination brand the complexities of the brand are being over-simplified (Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011). Revealing a gap in the destination brand literature and the need for a more detailed exploration of the evaluation of destination brands, understanding the governance approaches and the impact of these evaluations on destination brand buy-in. The third and forth research questions therefore reflect the internal evaluation of governance approach and management techniques utilised to stimulate brand buy-in:

**RQ3. How does stakeholder-agency theory inform destination branding?**

**RQ4. What are the implications of internal brand management to destination branding?**

### 3.7 CONCLUSION

This literature review highlights a clear gap in the literature related to the coordination and governance of destination brands, in particular practical management applications and their influence on destination brand buy-in. Furthermore, there is a distinct lack of application of branding evaluation being conducted in industry. As such, this thesis aims to address that gap in the literature through the exploration of multiple stakeholder perspectives’ of destination brand governance, examining complexities associated with the heterogeneity of stakeholders and identifying practical tools to develop brand buy-in. This is achieved through the exploration of destination brand
governance as well as practical governance tools applying multiple dominant logics. This thesis explores the role that governance and destination resources have on the brand buy-in of destination operators. Next, Chapter Four outlines the mixed methods approach utilised to explore the destination brand governance and the key capabilities and resources employed to facilitate brand buy-in.
4. INTRODUCTION
This chapter overviews the methods utilised to collect empirical materials for this thesis. Consistent with Jennings, Kensbock, Junek, Radel and Kachel (2010) methods in this thesis refers to the process used to collect the empirical materials. The selected methods aim to enhance the literature discussed in Chapter Three and, thereby, fulfil the aim of the thesis, to explore multiple stakeholder perspectives’ of destination brand governance, examining complexities associated with the heterogeneity of stakeholders and identifying practical tools to develop brand buy-in. The methods outlined facilitate the researcher’s ability to answer the research questions set out in Chapter One, enabling the researcher to identify the dominant logics of each stakeholder group, exploring ways to balance these approaches (RQ1), examining the concepts that influence destination brand buy-in (RQ2) and finally considering the impact of governance tools (internal brand management and stakeholder-agency theory) on destination brand buy-in (RQ3 and RQ4). This chapter firstly overviews the mixed method approach to empirical material collection. It then describes the qualitative and quantitative phases of research collection. Finally, outlining the ethical considerations and the validity of this research.

4.1 MIXED METHODS APPROACH
Consistent with the post-positivism paradigm outlined in Chapter Two, this thesis utilises methodological pluralism in the form of a mixed methods approach (Lapid, 1989; Letourneau & Allen, 1993; Walker, 1987). Mixed methods employ qualitative and quantitative methods. For this thesis, in view with Miles and Huberman’s (1994) mixed methods classification, the focus is qualitative research with the quantitative phase used as a method to identify issues for further discussion and exploration in the second qualitative phase (Figure 4.1).
The initial qualitative phase explores the relationships and network structure that exist within the destination brand to identify the dominant logic of the DMO and operators (RQ1), the level of operator buy-in to the destination brand (RQ2) and the reasons behind this including an exploration of governance tools (stakeholder-agency theory and internal brand management) (RQ3 and RQ4). The quantitative phase then examines the consumer perception of the brand and determines the congruency between the brand promise and the visitors’ perceptions of the destination. The data collected in the quantitative stage was then sent to the participants of the initial qualitative phase in the form of a five page report (appendix one), then a further qualitative phase gathers the participants’ perceptions of the consumers understanding of the brand. Consistent with phase one, the follow-up qualitative phase considers the dominant logics of the DMO and operator perspectives (RQ1) as well as exploring the level of brand buy-in among operators (RQ2) and the influence of governance tools on the destination brand (RQ3 and RQ4).

Creswell (2009) defines the approach of using qualitative followed by quantitative mixed methods as a sequential exploratory design. Tourism research is increasingly adopting sequential mixed methods research to limit bias associated with singular approaches to research (Decrop, 1999). Applying a sequential mixed methods approach is therefore considered to minimise methodological weaknesses. Based on the minimisation of methodological weakness, mixed methods research is advocated by a number of scholars and is widely applied (e.g. Lapid, 1989; Letourneau & Allen, 1993; Jennings, 2005; Mason, Augustyn & Seakhoa-King, 2010; Teddlie &
Tashakkori, 2009; Uma & Jaloni, 2011; Walker, 1987). Furthermore, a mixed-methods approach enables researchers to provide greater diversity in viewpoints, creating stronger inferences and warranted assertions (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). However, mixed methods research is criticised for lacking reflexivity and theoretical indifference (Lipscombe, 2007). Suggesting that by utilising mixed methods, the underlying beliefs of the quantitative and qualitative approaches are converged in a way that detracts from the rigor of the methods (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). However, as outlined in Figure 4.1, this thesis is not aiming to converge the methods, but is utilising quantitative research as a point of discussion for participants in the qualitative stages. The researcher recognises the strength and weaknesses of each method for exploring different stakeholders in the network. As such, the mixed methods research design supports the post-positivistic paradigm and its associated ontology, epistemology and axiology (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

An exploratory study is useful when a new approach is required to understand complex issues (Mason et al., 2010). Using mixed methods is deemed appropriate as an exploratory method as it enables a more creative approach to the research (Uma & Jaloni, 2011). The use of mixed methods in marketing research supports the development of new ways to explore complex phenomena that exist within social sciences (Damon and Holloway, 2011). Mason et al. (2010) also argue that there are a number of areas within the tourism field that are still significantly under-researched, these include: collaboration in tourism marketing (Naipaul et al., 2009), operator coordination in destination branding (Bregoli, 2012) and the role of operators in place branding (Konecnik-Ruzzier & de Chernatony, 2012), identifying a need for qualitative research to explore these areas. However, research into consumer perceptions is well established (see Boo, Busser & Baloglu, 2009; Chen & Odonchimeg, 2010; Dioko & So, 2011; Konecnik & Gartner 2007; Pike, 2007), thus quantitative research is more appropriate to test consumer perceptions of a destination. As such, an exploratory mixed method study is most suited to this context to explore the under researched fields of operator and DMO evaluation of destination brand network structures and to understand consumer perceptions through established consumer based brand equity frameworks.
4.1.1 Qualitative focus

There is a qualitative focus to this exploratory design; as such this thesis applies qualitative terminology (Jennings, 2010). Qualitative research depends on getting detailed information on a few cases this allows participants to reveal their thoughts and perceptions of the topics ensuring relevant exploration of the thesis (Veal, 2011). This study focuses on one destination. Single destination studies are often employed in exploratory tourism studies (e.g., Bregoli, 2013; Enright & Newton, 2004; Murphy, Pritchard & Smith, 2000). Enright and Newton (2004) argues that restricting a study to a single case can generate a deeper understanding of a topic. A single destination study can also be utilised as an initial exploratory study to help generate a framework that can be tested at a later stage. The use of a qualitative focus to the single case exploration allows for breadth and diversity of subject matter to be fully explored. Gaining depth in the research is particularly important to explore how the DMO and operators feel about the current structure of the destination brand (Brotherton, 2008). Furthermore, qualitative research is arguably best suited to study phenomena that otherwise would not be understood, therefore, is best suited to the exploratory nature of this thesis based on the paucity of literature Chapter Three identifies (Silverman, 2011). Quantitative research, although useful for collecting large amounts of data, facilitates the collection of prescribed answers, thus is suited to testing theory (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The researcher does not have sufficient knowledge of the interactions among participants in the first phase of empirical material collection for theory testing to be utilised. As such, quantitative methods are not employed until phase two of data collection and are only be utilised to develop a consumer based brand equity report for participants of phase one (Brotherton, 2008). In addition, quantitative research does not allow for flexibility and exploration rather, it utilises scientific objective approaches for the explanation of phenomena (Neuman, 2011). It is important for this exploratory study to be open minded and flexible whilst exploring diverse insights from multiple perspectives, making qualitative research the focus of this thesis.

4.2 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH PROCESS

Figure 4.2 presents the research process that is applied to this thesis. This process intends to achieve the thesis aim of exploring destination brand governance from
multiple stakeholder perspectives and to answer the research questions outlined in Chapter One. Figure 4.2 shows the three key stages to this study, (1) the preliminary stage; (2) the research design and; (3) the implementation of the study. The following section provides an overview of each of the three stages.
Adapted from: Aaker, Kumar, Day, Lawley and Sterwart (2007) and Wilson et al. (2010)
4.2.1 Stage one – Preliminary planning

The first stage of the research process is to decide on and define a relevant research topic. A research topic may emerge through interactions with colleagues and friends as well as through the researchers' own employment history or personal situation (Brotherton, 2008). Furthermore, research topics should address a problem in the real world (Bregoli, 2013). The initial thesis idea was derived from the researcher's experience working for major British tour operators across European destinations such as Turkey, Italy and Finland, it was noticed that a number of guests would claim that their holiday had been “ruined” based on inconsistent experiences within the resort they were staying. As such, the researcher’s interest in exploring destination brand experience was created.

It is also important that the topic contributes to and enhances existing literature (Brotherton, 2008). Once the topic was established the researcher undertook a detailed literature review (Chapter Three), to explore existing knowledge on the topic (Aaker, et al., 2007). This process allows the researcher identify how the proposed research integrates to with the existing literature and helps to conceptualise the research (Veal, 2011). Chapter Three highlights a gap in the literature in relation to destination brand governance and ways to enhance the buy-in of the destination brand. The literature review frames the research aim, research questions and highlights key themes and concepts that this thesis considers. These research questions then frame the methods used and research design.

4.2.2 Stage two – Research design

Once the research problem is defined, the second stage of this study involves selecting a research design that enables the researcher to answer the research questions and meet the aims of the study (Brotherton, 2008). This thesis employs an exploratory approach. Exploratory studies are typically highly flexibly and unstructured in their design, thereby facilitating the diagnosis of new problems and the discovery of new ideas (Aaker, et al., 2007). This study uses an extensive qualitative phase to unpack the phenomena being investigated. The qualitative phase then informs the subsequent quantitative and qualitative phases (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Qualitative research facilitates the collection of empirical materials that are a representation of the way that
participants see reality, thereby allowing the researchers to adapt their material collection to the situation encouraging flexibility to the research study (Bryman & Bell, 2011). For this thesis, the focus on qualitative research is derived from the paucity of existing research into the governance and internal brand management applied to destination branding. This thesis employs in-depth interviews to gain a detailed understanding of the key themes facing stakeholders of the destination brand. These in-depth interviews help to explore the dominant logic for stakeholders (RQ1), the factors influencing the destination brand buy-in (RQ2), the implications of stakeholder-agency theory (RQ3) and the implications of internal brand management on the destination brand (RQ4).

In contrast, there is considerable research into consumer based brand equity and the measurement of consumer perceptions in tourism. Thus, the second phase of this study adopts a quantitative survey of consumers because quantitative research is often used to test an existing theory (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As this phase is not a focus of the thesis it employs existing scale items to develop an understanding of consumer based brand equity of the destination brand. It is important to note that this phase of the research is designed as a discussion point for the final phase of qualitative research.

The final phase of the thesis (phase three) utilises qualitative methods through telephone interviews to gain feedback from operators on the data collected through phase two’s quantitative approach. Again, based on the gaps in previous research in the governance of destination brands qualitative research is deemed the best fit. This phase also supports the exploration of the four research questions.

It is also important to consider the researchers training, timeline for completion and budget when creating the research design (Aaker et al., 2007). For this study the researcher had limited financial resources that had to be carefully managed. To increase the skill level of the researcher, workshops were attended that helped the researcher fine tune the skills needed for the research design, empirical material collection and interpretation of materials.

The Griffith University ethics committee granted ethical clearance (protocol number HSL/46/11/HREC) and the research is conducted inline with the ethical procedures.
This protocol includes standardised emails to approach potential participants, informed consent, secure storage of empirical materials and the right of participants to withdraw at any stage of the research (appendix two). The researcher reports the findings accurately and none of the empirical materials or data collected is modified or altered (Saunders et al., 2012). As per the requirements of a PhD at Griffith University, the researcher presented a confirmation seminar where the research plan was presented to the researcher’s supervisors, examiners and academics from Griffith University. Based on the presentation and the submitted research plan the project was deemed feasible and achievable and the researcher was approved to proceed with the study. Post-confirmation, the researcher refined the empirical material collection plan based on the advice of the independent examiner. These changes included reducing the size of the study to a single case, rather than a comparative study, and changing a paper-based survey to an electronic survey to enhance participation rates. The research plan was implemented once the supervisory team approved the changes.

4.2.3 Implementation
The final stage of the study is the implementation as shown in Figure 4.2. At this stage the researcher collects the empirical materials, interprets and reports the results. Further details of the methods follow. Implementation is the most important stage of the research process because the researcher must consider the quality and consistency of the empirical material collection (Wilson, Johns, Miller & Pentecost, 2010). The researcher must also draw on the empirical materials and the literature discussed in Chapter Three to stimulate discussion and draw conclusions.

4.3. PHASE ONE – QUALITATIVE
Phase one of empirical material collection is designed with the aim of exploring the complex relational structures that exist between the DMOs and the operators within the region. It is used to examine the contribution of resources to the destination brand and to explore ways that DMOs facilitate the destination brand buy-in, addressing all four research questions.
4.3.1 Research design

It is important to understand that the research design and methods selected are bound in the researcher’s epistemology and axiology outlined in Chapter Two (Jennings 2010). In-depth, semi-structured interviews are utilised for this phase of qualitative empirical material collection. This style of semi-structured interview enables freedom for the exploration of the detail within the cases probing into issues regarding the relational and social ties, and governance structures that exist within the destination brand network (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Semi-structured interviews were deemed more appropriate to achieve this study’s research objectives. Other qualitative methods, such as participant observation and ethnography, were considered, however the researcher had no prior relationships with the potential interview participants prior to conducting the research, therefore these methodologies were not suitable (Flick, 2014). In addition, Flick (2014) argues that the people are not the focus of the sample in participant observations, however the sample and overview of perspectives is an integral part of these interviews. The in-depth interviews help to create rapport with interviewees as they permit flexibility in the amount of time spent with participants, this was important based on the researcher’s ‘outsider’ status (Veal, 2011). In-depth interviews enable the researcher to spend time fully exploring the core topics and allow the researcher to probe further into issues that are impacting on participants rather than swiftly moving from question to question as with surveys or structured interviews (Brotherton, 2008). Thereby, semi-structured interviews help develop a depth of understanding and gaining robust knowledge of the complexities that exist within the destination brand (Jennings, 2010; Willis, 2007). However, in-depth interviews are more costly and time consuming than quantitative surveys and as such, the sample of participants is smaller than with quantitative methods (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). Generalisability from the interpretation of in-depth interviews is therefore difficult (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Despite this criticism, under a post-positivistic paradigm it is not the intention of the researcher to create ‘truths’ and generalise from the research. But rather, the researcher aims to develop an understanding of the context of study, creating warranted assertions that can be explored in other contexts in future research.
The rapport that the researcher develops with the interviewee over the duration of the interview aids in increasing the amount of detail in participant’s responses especially when the questions pertain to sensitive issues (Jennings, 2010). Although this research is not overtly sensitive in its nature, it does require the participants to give an honest and open opinion about the destination’s brand management, particularly in terms of the power and relational networks that exist within the destination brand network. This research generated discussion about power and relationships relating to the brand that participants may not have previously spoken about. Aaker et al. (2007) note the suitability of in-depth interviews in situations where the topics cover issues that are sensitive to participants such as power, governance and leadership. Gaining rapport with the participants also reduces the risk of participants giving socially desirable answers, that is, responding to the researcher with information that the participant thinks the researcher wants.

It is necessary to recognise that the interviews are a snapshot in time, that there maybe external influences that have arisen that cause the participant to respond in a given way (Jennings, 2010). However, given the exploratory nature of this research and the post-positivist paradigm, the researcher is not trying to generalise to all cases and accepts this as part of the reality that exists between participants (Aaker et al., 2007). The researcher, therefore, aims to develop a better understanding of one destination at one period of time, these interpretations are then explored in regards to the literature to provide an understanding as to how other destinations can utilise similar techniques to develop an understanding of their own operations.

4.3.2 Sample
For the first phase of interviews, the population is defined as the state, regional and, local DMOs, branding consultants that were utilised in the TNQ branding process and primary tourism and hospitality businesses that operate within the boundaries of the Tropical North Queensland region (see figure 5.1), that are members of the regional DMO -Tourism Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ). By becoming a member of the regional DMO businesses are entering a contract with the organisation that creates a number of opportunities depending on the level of membership. There are five levels of membership from Supporters to Platinum members. Supporters were excluded from
the sample as they only receive minimum benefits from their membership package and may not have active relationships with the regional DMO.

From this population a sample was taken across the four levels of membership from Bronze to Platinum as well as across the state, regional and local DMOs, and with branding consultants to the region. Participants across all membership levels were owners or upper-management and had been operating within the region for at least five years. By including all levels of membership among well-established operators the researcher stimulates a representative view across the issues affecting all members of the destination and allows the exploration of differences that businesses perceive due to the level of membership that they hold. The sample grew until theoretical sufficiency was achieved (Bazely, 2013). That is when the researcher deemed that the empirical materials are providing the same theory and understanding of issues impacting the region (Jennings, 2010). To gain access to the population a combination of purposive and snowball sampling tools were utilised.

It is important that participants of this thesis were primary tourism businesses within the TNQ region with an active membership with the regional DMO as such, purposive sampling is suitable (Brotherton, 2008). Although Daymon and Holloway (2011) argue that purposive sampling is a ‘haphazard’ sampling technique, this sampling method ensures that the right type of businesses are selected for inclusion within the study. Not all tourism businesses are regional DMO members and do not have an active relationship with the regional DMO. Consequently, these non-members are not suitable for the inclusion of this thesis. Purposive sampling ensures that a broader picture of the region can be generated from the selection of included participants; it would not be appropriate to use random sampling methods as these may not generate participants relevant to the study or, those that are representative across membership levels (Veal, 2011). Furthermore, it is important when selecting participants that they were willing to share their story, if they were unwilling to discuss their perceptions and issues then a superficial understanding of relationships and issues would be generated (Jennings, 2010). As such, potential participants were given details of the thesis prior to their commitment to the research.
Snowball sampling was also utilised as a sampling method in phase one, this process involves participants identifying other potential participants for the study (Aaker et al., 2007). Participants freely gave the contact details of potential additional participants they believed would be useful for the study and that were likely to share their opinions with the researcher (Veal, 2011). The use of snowball sampling helped the researcher gain access to participants that otherwise may have been unwilling to participate due to the researcher’s outsider relationship with the region. Through personal recommendation this overcomes potential participants hesitation providing a larger sample of participants (Neuman, 2011). Bryman and Bell (2011) criticise snowball sampling for not being representative, however in this instance it is necessary to ensure a strong representation of participants across all membership levels. The use of snowball sampling was important as there is no public database identifying operator’s membership levels and so without snowball sampling the researcher may not have been able to generate a sample across all membership levels.

In total a sample of 23 participants were interviewed (details of these participants can be seen in appendix four). This sample includes representatives of state, regional and local DMOs, branding consultants, a number of small to medium enterprises, and national and multinational businesses across all levels of membership. After 23 interviews the empirical materials were considered to be at theoretical sufficiency, i.e. participant’s answers are overlapping and no new information is identified (Bazeley, 2013).

4.3.3 Procedure
To gain access to the participants a standardised email requesting an interview with regional DMO members was sent to approximately 70 operators within the TNQ region. All operators were identified on the regional DMO website as members. The email overviewed the project and contained an information sheet (appendix three) that outlines the purpose of the study as well as information about the researcher. Those that did not reply to the initial email were followed up with phone calls to gain access, at this stage a number of organisations declined participation in the study. Access to organisations was difficult to gain due to the generic email address provided on the database, the email may not have reached the most relevant manager and following up
through the use of generic phone numbers also proves a challenge to access for the researcher.

Of those that replied and agreed to participate a convenient time was organised when a face-to-face interview could be conducted. The interviews were administered in the TNQ region, with the researcher travelling to a location selected by the participants to meet with them; locations included local cafés or their place of work, thus the interviews can be considered formal in their approach (Jennings, 2005). Whilst conducting the semi-structured interviews a checklist of concepts as a stimulus for discussion was utilised (appendix five) (Wilson et al., 2010). The checklist for this thesis was methodically designed and follows the nature of the topic area, first identifying the participant’s role within the region, their opinions about the brand, relationships with other businesses and the DMO, and finally explores examples of governance mechanisms. The interview process in the case of the semi-structured interview is flexible, allowing the researcher to adopt a style and sequence that is appropriate to the interviewee adopting a conversational style (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Jennings, 2005). The interviews varied in order of content between participants, however the interviewer ensured that all of the topic areas were covered with each participant (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). The researcher’s position within the interviews was as an active participant, facilitating the probing of further information and discussion of issues that arise during the interviews (Markula & Silk, 2011). The benefit of this flexibility is that the interviewee is able to shape the interview, thereby, developing a more genuine understanding of the participant’s world (Aaker et al., 2007). The questions within the interview were posed in a way that encouraged participants to reply with depth and detail (Wengraf, 2001). The flexible nature of the research also enables the researcher to develop a clear flow of information, ensuring that the conversation was tailored to the participants yet was able to cover all important topics (Wilson et al., 2010). This flexibility within the interviews creates variation in the duration of the interviews based on the depth of information the participants are willing to share (Leister, 2005). Interviews ranged in duration from 45 minutes to one hour 45 minutes depending on depth of discussion. The interviews were all recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher for the purpose of interpretation (Wilson et al., 2010).
4.3.4 Interpretation procedure

For the interpretation of the interviews QSR Nvivo 10 is utilised as a tool for the organisation and coding of materials collected from the interviews (Bringer, Johnston & Brackenridge, 2004). Nvivo 10 facilitates the upload of all interviews to one database and then the systematic coding of interviews. Coding is an important part of the analysis process at this point the researcher is able to assign meaning to the materials, furthermore, the coding process helps to evolve the researchers understanding of the empirical material (Bazeley, 2013). At the initial stage of interpretation Nvivo 10 is considered to be at its most useful, the functions of the program allow for codes to be created, searched and cross-referenced (Bringer et al., 2004). This organisation facilitates the researcher’s identification of themes that emerge and common traits that exist among responses. Subsequent to the initial coding process, the use of computer aided text analysis software aids in generating searches on the materials and start to develop theories (Wilson et al., 2010). Nvivo 10 does not interpret the empirical materials; therefore it is important that the user has a strong understanding of how to use the program in order to use it efficiently (Bringer et al., 2004; Wilson et al., 2010). To aid in the understanding of the program and to enable mindful interpretation of materials the researcher took the courses “Nvivo 10 essentials” and “Nvivo 10 advanced” to develop the skills required to effectively navigate the program so consciousness could be applied to the interpretation procedure (Bringer et al., 2004).

The initial process of coding began with a list of topics that the researcher was looking for within the text, these codes were derived from the literature review that was conducted prior to empirical material collection (see Chapter Three). By utilising predefined codes the researcher is able to gain an overview of the empirical materials (Schmidt, 2004). This form of preliminary analysis facilitates the understanding of the interviews and develops the researcher’s awareness of core themes for examination (Sandelowski, 2000). The interviews were then further coded based on interpretation from the meaning given by participants; codes at this stage were developed in-vivo, a method similar to grounded theory whereby, the research identifies key themes that are emerging from the participant’s responses within the empirical material, rather
than through the existing themes (Basit, 2003; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In vivo coding helps the researcher identify themes from words or phrases that participants use in their interview (Richards, 2005). This evolution of coding helps to develop the researcher’s understanding of the interview transcripts (Sandelowski, 1995). The combination of the predefined codes and the in vivo codes is considered to open-up the empirical materials to present the participant’s view in a “traditional qualitative way”, bringing the participant’s voice to the research. Open coding is preferable to solely using predefined codes that can narrow the findings and the impact of the research (Creswell, 2013).

The process of coding involves the researcher firstly emerging in the materials by reviewing the recordings and transcriptions of the interviews, at this stage a number of key discussions from participants were noted. The next stage involved the researcher going through each line of the empirical materials and assigning relevant codes, either from the literature discussed in Chapter Three or as an in vivo code that was identified through the transcriptions and review of interviews, these codes are considered useful for the exploration of key themes (Thomas, 2006). This first level of coding helped to break down the empirical materials to their simplest form (Bazeley, 2013). The researcher then went through the codes that had been assigned (appendix six) ensuring that they were clearly defined and merged codes that had the same meaning; at this stage ambiguous codes were further defined. By assigning meaning to groups of codes the researcher is able to create more focused coding (Bazeley, 2013). Nvivo 10 facilitates flexibility within the interpretation process enabling the researcher to review and redefine codes where necessary (Neuman, 2011). Furthermore, sections of interviews are coded to multiple themes at the same time, through the use of Nvivo 10 the original transcripts are left intact, allowing the researcher to freely make changes to the empirical materials and easily view the original text in the context of the code (Bazeley, 2013). This helped the researcher to ensure that all material was coded effectively and that strong themes were able to develop in reflection of the participant’s view. After the coding process was completed queries and additional analysis were run facilitating the cross-referencing of codes to develop a more complex understanding of participant’s discussion.
Researchers note that there can be problems with the use of computer-aided analysis (Aaker et al., 2007; Basit, 2003; Bazely, 2013). It is possible for the researcher to code in too much detail, to use simple codes rather than linking these further and researchers may code without reflective thinking (Bazeley, 2013). To reduce these negative implications the researcher demonstrated mindfulness throughout the Nvivo 10 coding process by taking notes alongside the coding process, reflecting on the codes that were created, examining how codes were linked and taking note of areas of further investigation. Further analysis was also made through Nvivo 10’s additional tools, thereby, enhancing the depth of analysis. The themes that emerged from the empirical materials can be seen in appendix six. These codes are explored in detail in Chapter Six. In the interpretation of the empirical materials, presented in Chapter Six, each participant is assigned a code to maintain their anonymity. The code reflects their membership level (i.e. B10 is a Bronze member) and the number reflects their position in the interview (i.e. B10 is the 10th participant), see appendix four.

4.4 PHASE TWO – QUANTITATIVE
Phase two is an online survey designed to establish the consumer based brand equity of visitors and non-visitors of the region. The survey (appendix seven) was distributed through the Empowered Communications, a permission marketing company. Electronic surveys are criticised due to the potential of having bogus replies or for respondents perceiving the survey as spam (Jennings, 2010). Through the use of the permissions marketing company these potential risks are reduced as participants are members of the company and are rewarded for their contribution through points that can be retrieved as prizes from the company. As such, there is reciprocity for respondents and the risks associated with the method are lower than if the researcher was to send the survey personally. The aim of this method was to create a report that could be sent to participants in phase one that evaluates the consumer perception of the destination brand and raises questions for further discussion. The electronic questionnaire was developed using existing consumer based brand equity scale items and was published using Qualtrics software. The questionnaire was piloted (n=50) with academic staff members of Griffith University’s Department of Tourism, Sport and Hospitality Management. Scale items were refined based on feedback from the pilot study and Empowered Communications launched the survey. Within 24 hours the
researcher had received 562 responses, this data was then exported into SPSS16 where it was analysed using descriptive statistics, factor analysis and t-tests under a post-positivistic paradigm. This data was then distributed to the participants from phase one in the form of a five-page report (appendix one) that was used as a discussion point for phase three.

4.5 PHASE THREE - QUALITATIVE

The results of the quantitative report were distributed to the DMO and operators that participated in phase one. This final phase of interviews sought to establish the participants’ perception of the report’s results and to raise additional questions about the brand that the consumer survey raised.

4.5.1 Research design

Phase three of empirical material collection utilises structured telephone interviews with the participants from phase one to further explore the four research questions. Furthermore, structured interviews are used to develop an understanding of the stakeholder’s reaction to the consumers’ perceptions of the destination. The interview questions were designed around the key findings that were identified in the consumer-based survey in phase two and all the questions were all asked to participants (Appendix 8). Although the questions were predominantly asked in the same order, the researcher maintained responsiveness to the participants and if participants answer multiple questions in the one answer the researcher moved on to the next question applying some flexibility to the research process (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). The structured nature of the interviews means that the researcher was able to ensure all the specific questions were asked to participants, thereby generating a comprehensive understanding of participants response to the consumer report (Veal, 2011). Neuman (2006) criticises telephone interviews suggesting this method inhibits rapport being developed between the researcher and participants consequently resulting in shallow responses being provided. Given the researchers previous interviews with the participants, rapport had already been established between the participant and the researcher. Establishing trust and building rapport prior to the telephone interview was important as it meant that the participants were willing to spend more time engaging with the discussion than if trust had not been established (Saunders, Lewis &
Thornhill, 2012). The existing rapport reduces the risk of gaining shallow answers, as the participants are already familiar with the researcher and demonstrated a desire to be a part of the thesis. Thus, minimising the concerns associated with this method. Furthermore, the use of phone interview is less time consuming for participants who are busy running their own organisations and who are spread across a large geographical region. Thereby, making the telephone interviews more convenient for participants at this stage of the research.

The nature of the follow-up interview and the information provided to the participants through the consumer report provides a sense of reciprocity to the participants. Through the provision of new knowledge to participants this style of research indicates elements of action research. Action research is defined as

“a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities”. (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 1)

Although demonstrating traits of action research through the provision of knowledge to participants about the level of brand equity within the destination that can utilise the knowledge to enhance the brand within the destination this stage of the research does not implement practical solutions for the community. The follow-up interview requires participants to reflect on the brand practices within the destination, demonstrating respect for their understanding of issues confronting the destination however the interviews do not offer practical solutions to overcome the issues, nor are the issues considered pressing (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood & Maguire, 2003). In addition, although participants are reflecting, this stage does not include the researcher’s reflection on the issue, prompting participants to find the solutions. Rather, this stage of the research provides reciprocity to participants. Daymon and Holloway (2011) identify the importance of reciprocity for participants of qualitative research. The report sent to participants contains information about consumer perceptions that
operators do not always have the time, or for many the funds to collect themselves. The survey results are therefore valuable for some operators within the region as they receive information that can assist in understanding the operations of their region. The report was not valued in the same way by all participants; the larger, often multinational operators, in particular were less engaged with the results than the smaller independent operators were. By providing the participants with the consumer survey information the level of trust between the participants and the researcher is also increased due to the perceived reciprocity (Saunders, et al., 2012). Thus, enhancing the rapport and the willingness of participants to continue with the study.

4.5.2 Sample
Interviews were conducted with the same participants that were involved in the initial face-to-face interviews (phase one), however six respondents did not have the time or were not willing to comment on the information. Therefore, 19 interviews were collected in total across all membership levels, with regional and local DMO representatives, and with branding consultants to the region.

4.5.3 Procedure
Participants were sent the report in a personalised email thanking them for their participation thus far and explaining the report. Participants were then given five days to read the report before the researcher telephoned them. Interviews were conducted by telephone and last between five and 25 minutes dependent on the depth of answer. The interview questions were designed around the key findings that were identified in the consumer-based survey in phase two and all the questions were asked to participants (Appendix 8). Although the questions were predominantly asked in the same order, the researcher maintained responsiveness to the participants and if participants answer multiple questions in the one answer the researcher moved on to the next question applying some flexibility to the research process (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Telephone interviews were utilised for this phase of empirical material collection as they are less time consuming than face-to-face interviews and can be more flexible in terms of the availability of participants (Neuman, 2011).
4.5.4 Interpretation procedure

The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher before being imported to Nvivo 10 for organisation and interpretation.

Consistent with phase one, Nvivo10 is employed as an organisation and interpretation tool. Codes (see appendix nine) were created through a combination of pre-identified themes based from the questions asked as well as invivo codes developed based on the participants’ responses to the questions. In the interpretation of the empirical materials (Chapter Six), the participants of the follow-up interviews are presented with the same code as they were given from the phase one interview (i.e. B10). The codes are explored in more detail in Chapter Six alongside the interpretation of the phase one interviews.

4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The process of this thesis follows the Griffith University Ethical Guidelines, approval was granted by the Griffith University Ethics Committee in 2011 (protocol number HSL/46/11/HREC).

4.6.1 Physical harm

Participants within this study are not placed in any danger. The phase one interviews were conducted within the participants place of work or in neutral settings, such as a café. Phase thee interviews were conducted over the telephone and thus, generate minimal risk. Although it is not possible to foresee all happenings, consistent with existing social science research, there is minimal physical risk associated with this type of research (Jennings, 2010).

4.6.2 Psychological harm

As with any human research the main ethical consideration is to ensure the well being of the participants (Jennings, 2010). During the recruitment of potential participants, participants were invited to voluntarily participate in the study and were not coerced into taking part (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). During the empirical material collection, steps were taken to ensure that participants did not feel stressed, embarrassed or anxious throughout both interview phases (Veal, 2011). To achieve
this the researcher ensured that participants were treated with respect and questions were asked in an appropriate manner. Furthermore, the interviews progressed in a way that ensured there was no harm to the participant’s self esteem, the researcher did not belittle or question the participants’ perceptions instead the researcher listened carefully and probed answers when required (Neuman, 2011). It is important in research that no unnecessary stress is created for the participants (Jennings, 2010), participants were therefore interviewed in a place that they feel comfortable with and participants were made to feel at ease during the interview. Furthermore, materials that participants provided the researcher were freely committed and were treated with care by the researcher (Daymon & Holloway, 2011).

The research does not contain material of an overtly sensitive nature, however it does require participants to discuss their place of work, relational ties with other organisations and power differentials that exist within the region. As such, there is full disclosure to all participants at the beginning of the research so they understood why the research is being collected and the aims of the research (Veal, 2011). Furthermore, participants were informed that they have the right to withdraw from the research at anytime (Veal, 2011). These procedures are in place to help eradicate feelings of anxiety or stress that otherwise may occur (Jennings, 2010). Some participants request viewing of the final copy of the interpretation and understand that they are still able to withdraw after they have seen the final draft.

4.6.3 Legal harm

Participants were not asked to partake in activities that are considered to be illegal or immoral (Jennings, 2010). Furthermore, the nature of the research did not require participants to disclose deviant acts to the researcher nor for the researcher to observe illegal behaviours (Neumann, 2011), nor were participants asked to commit any sensitive resources to the researcher (Daymon & Holloway, 2011).

4.6.4 Other harm

It is imperative that the researcher leaves the site having made no one less able to carry out his or her responsibilities (Jennings, 2010). In discussions with DMOs none of the other participants were exposed in order to protect their identity and maintain their
relationship with the DMOs. When reporting the interpretation of empirical materials all participants are kept anonymous to ensure no damage is done to relationships in the region.

With the interviews the participants were recorded and their interviews transcribed verbatim, full written permission was gained from participants prior to the recording of the interview. The informed consent gained prior interview details that participants are willing to be a part of the study that they agree to their interviews being recorded and they agree to full participation in the study. In addition, verbal consent was gained at the beginning of all telephone interviews, ensuring that the participants still agreed to have their interviews recorded. Participants were provided an ethics kit (appendix two) prior to the interview ensuring that they understand the purpose of the research and how the researcher will use the interviews.

**4.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND AUTHENTICITY**

Qualitative research aims to demonstrate trustworthiness and authenticity through the methods applied for empirical material collection and interpretation. For research to demonstrate trustworthiness it needs to have credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Damon & Holloway, 2011; Decoup, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Authors describe credibility as the equivalent of internal validity (Marrow, 2005). Credibility and internal validity suggest that the participants can identify their position in society within the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The first stage of ensuring credibility pertains to ensuring that methods used to obtain empirical material are complementary to the research paradigm and reflects the goals of the research (Decoup, 2004; Elo et al., 2014). The researcher should also consider if the methods to collect empirical material are aligned with the research paradigm, in this case, the mixed methods approach supports the post-positivist paradigm. In addition the design of the empirical material collection should ensure crystallisation (Damon & Holloway, 2011). Crystallisation of empirical materials refers to the researcher’s ability to view phenomena from multiple perspectives, in the case the destination brand network. The use of the sequential mixed methods design enables the researcher to explore the different stakeholders perspectives, thus is able to gain multiple perspectives of the phenomena being studied. The second stage of credibility is to ensure participants can
identify with the research, to ensure this the researcher sent the findings back to the participants to ensure that they could relate to the interpretation (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Furthermore, ethically the researcher wants to ensure that participants are willing to continue participating in the study prior to the submission of the research (Jennings, 2010). Marrow (2005) attests that the credibility of the research can be enhanced through follow-up interviews. Through the adoption of the additional engagement with participants the researcher aims to develop greater levels of credibility.

The researcher understands that the empirical materials collected are of a point in time and specific to one destination. However, it is important to note the transferability of the research (Damon & Holloway, 2011). Transferability relates to the external validity or generalisability of the research (Marrow, 2005). The discussion (Chapter Seven) of this thesis identifies how the knowledge established within this study maybe transferable to other destinations that are currently operating under similar DMO structures therefore, develops warranted assertions rather than truths that can be generalised to all destinations.

Dependability identifies the levels of consistency and stability of the research process (Decrop, 2004). By ensuring that the processes of investigation are clearly recorded and transparent the dependability of the research is established, this can be observed across the methods chapter. Finally, confirmability refers to the understanding that the research is not completely objective (Marrow, 2005). Confirmability is based on the researcher’s ability to express key findings and tie core concepts together in a way that represent the context as close as possible (Marrow, 2005). Through the detailed procedures and the researchers articulation of the research position (Chapter Two) the researcher has included procedures to enhance the confirmability of the thesis.

Authenticity refers to the ability to make stakeholders’ views heard, raising stakeholders’ awareness of issues within tourism, generating action among stakeholders to change their circumstances and supporting participants so that they have the knowledge to make a positive change (Jennings, 2010). Through the use of descriptive interpretation utilising quotes from participants, the researcher is able to
depict the essence of the situation (Cope, 2014). Within this thesis authenticity is established through the researchers ability to select appropriate ways of reporting participants thoughts, the ability to conduct a fair study and one that helps participants to understand the reasons why things happen (Damon & Holloway, 2011). The researcher adopts a research-based view to facilitate a robust understanding of the destination brand network utilising mixed methods to generate an understanding of the complex phenomena in the eyes of the participants. The researcher purposively selected samples across all levels of membership within the region. This sample ensured the fairness of the research, making sure that operators across all membership levels are represented in the findings (Jennings, 2010). The use of the mixed methods approach and the reporting of consumer perceptions to stakeholders (phase two and three) enables the researcher to increase the participants level of knowledge about the consumer decisions and perceptions of the destination, this has also helped to meet the educative authenticity of the research whilst creating a sense of reciprocity to participants of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

4.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter provides an overview of the sequential, mixed method approach and ethical considerations utilised by this thesis. The researcher selected the mixed method approach that allows suitable exploration of the research questions based on the complexities, such as the heterogeneity of stakeholders and lack of internal evaluation of destination brand, that author identified within destination branding literature. The mixed methods approach supports the methodological pluralism accepted under a post-positivism paradigm and aims to develop a holistic insight and formation of knowledge into the relational structures among DMOs and operators and brand governance mechanisms being explored. This chapter outlines the research process and justifies the three-phase research design. The next chapter identifies the context of the study, Tropical North Queensland, the setting for empirical material collection and the current state of tourism within the destination selected.
5. INTRODUCTION
This chapter considers the context of the thesis, identifying and justifying the destination selected. The decision to use Tropical North Queensland (TNQ) as the destination for this study was made in 2011. This chapter therefore overviews the tourism situation in 2011 when this decision was made and outlines the most recent visitor statistics for the destination, exploring changes to the destination across the time of empirical material collection and interpretation.

5.1 DESTINATION OVERVIEW
TNQ is selected for this thesis, as it is a typical tourism destination with strong domestic and international airport links and a growing network of flights to the destination. In the year ending March, 2013, the key international markets for the destination were China, Japan, USA and the UK, these four origin destinations making up over 70% of the total international market to the destination (Tourism and Events Queensland [TEQ], 2013). Domestically the destination targets both inter- and intra-state visitors, particular those from Victoria and New South Wales. The TNQ destination includes both coastal and hinterland destinations that offer a variety of experiences for consumers. With the draw of two wonders of the natural world (Great Barrier Reef and Daintree Rainforest) TNQ has strong physical resources and attractors for visitation and is uniquely positioned. TNQ is a well-established tourism destination, in the stagnation stage of the tourism area life cycle (Butler, 1980). TNQ has passed through the consolidation stage of the lifecycle, where a major part of the economy is based on tourism; in TNQ tourism is the number one contributor to the economy (Advance Cairns, 2014). Marketing of the destination is wide reaching (global) and designed to extend the tourism season. Major chains are represented in the destination (i.e. Accor, AJ Hackett, Starwood, Shangri La etc.), a key indicator of consolidation in the lifecycle (Butler, 1980). Within marketing efforts the natural resources (i.e. Great Barrier Reef and Daintree Rainforest) have been superseded in marketing efforts by artificial facilities (‘Adventurous’). Furthermore, the destination has become divorced from its geographic environment, focusing on experience instead
(Butler, 1980). However, inconsistent with Butler’s (1980) classification, the residents of TNQ predominantly are happy with the presence of tourists within the destination (TEQ, 2013). Despite this, the current stagnation stage of TNQ makes the destination an interesting case for analysis as the destination is faced with either rejuvenation or decline. The role of the brand has an interesting part in the future of the destination success and competitive advantage. Another defining characteristic of the TNQ is that the destination host’s predominantly small and medium enterprises, and locally owned tourism businesses (Advance Cairns, 2014). Thus, these businesses are considered by authors as more likely to work in collaboration to create the destination experience (Huybers & Bennett, 2003). The combination of small local businesses, a strong pull from core attractions and a pivotal time for the destination makes TNQ an interesting destination for exploration.

For the purpose of this thesis the boundaries of TNQ are those defined by Tourism and Events Queensland (formally Tourism Queensland [TQ]) in association with Tourism Tropical North Queensland in their promotional material (Figure 5.1). As such, the following destinations are considered a part TNQ:

*Cairns, Mission Beach, Cook Town, Daintree, Cape Tribulation, Palm Cove, Cape York, Kuranda, Port Douglas, Torres Strait, Atherton Tableland and Gulf Savannah.*

The TNQ region covers 22% (377,718km2) of the total area of Queensland, yet only 6% of the State’s population (242,139 at June 2006) reside in TNQ. Cairns city contains over half of TNQ’s population (120,433 or 55%). To travel from Cardwell on the Southern most part of TNQ to the Northern most point, Bamaga, is 1,150km and would take approximately 25 hours to drive.
Within the TNQ region, Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ) is the state DMO, and Tourism Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ) is the regional DMO. In partnership TEQ and TTNQ developed the Tropical North Queensland destination brand. There are also sub-regional or local brands and DMOs, such as Port Douglas and Daintree and Mission Beach that are marketed by local DMO. This is the first time that the state and regional DMOs have utilised a corporate style umbrella marketing campaign in

Source: TTNQ (2012)
partnership. This creates a unique situation for the regional DMO and operators, as there is an additional stakeholder to consider, making this a more complex case than in destinations that brand independently. The corporate approach to destination branding is typical of destinations around Australia (i.e. Western Australia and Victoria) and the world (i.e. Portugal, Scandinavia and Great Britain). The use of the umbrella brand is considered to facilitate a competitive positioning within a destination, and helps DMOs to identify and use strategic resources across multiple destinations (Flagestad & Hope, 2011). It is the aim of the regional DMO to enhance their competitive positioning and increase visitor numbers and revenue (TTNQ, 2012).

Given the economic drive of DMOs (Riley & Love, 2000), the following section overviews the economic measures recorded by the DMO over the duration of the thesis. The data illustrated below is sourced from the national and international visitor surveys conducted by Tourism Research Australia. Data is obtained from large and surveys that provide data on a national, state, and regional level. TEQ state that regional results need to be viewed as indicative only due to the variability in the data collected. In addition, TEQ identify that it is likely that not all destination in the region will experience the changes identified on a regional level (TEQ, 2014).

5.1.1 Visitor statistics 2011
Tropical North Queensland (TNQ) received 1,968,000 visitors during the year ending March 2011 (excluding day-trippers) (TQ, 2012). TNQ had an average occupancy rate of 44.7%. This occupancy rate was below the Queensland average of 58.1% in March 2011. The average number of nights per stay was 8.4, which is above the Queensland average of 4.2. This statistic suggests that TNQ is a destination for longer duration holidays rather than the weekend escapes as seen in other parts of Queensland, in particular in South East Queensland destinations, such as, the Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast. Despite the longer duration stays within the destination, tourism expenditure was down 12% on previous year with $2,235 million (TQ, 2012). It is likely that the decline in expenditure and visitation is due to the natural disasters, such as floods and cyclones that impacted the region and state in December 2010 – January 2011. In the year ending March 2011 TNQ held an 8% market share of domestic
visitors, the fifth highest market-share in the state. TNQ also held a 33% market share for international visitors, this is the third highest market share in the state.

5.1.2 Visitor statistics 2012
In the year ending March 2012 TNQ saw 2,205,000 visitors during the year ending (excluding day-trippers), a 14% increase on the previous year (TQ, 2012). This increase in visitor numbers maybe due to the recovery from the 2011 floods and cyclone that had a significant impact on tourism to the destination (Ritchie, 2011). The average number of nights per stay was 8.7, remaining above the Queensland average. Tourism expenditure also grew by 15% with total expenditure of $2,583 million. TNQ had a 9% market-share of domestic visitors, the forth-highest market share in the state. TNQ’s international market share decreased to 31%, but is still the third greatest market-share in the state.

5.1.3 Visitor statistics 2013
In the year ending March 2013, visitor numbers were at 2,244,000, an increase of 2% from 2012 (TEQ, 2013). This small growth in visitor numbers suggests there is some power in the marketing efforts of the destination. In 2013, TNQ held a 9% market share of Queensland’s domestic visitors and a 34% market share of total international visitors to Queensland (TEQ, 2013). This small increase in market has TNQ maintaining the position of third greatest market share for the destination. By March 2013, international visitors were staying for 8.8 nights per stay whilst domestic visitors 4.9 nights, this figure is still below the Queensland average (TEQ, 2013). By March 2013, expenditure within TNQ was down 4.5% from 2012 (TEQ, 2013). This drop in expenditure is a concern for the destination, TTNQ aim to increase expenditure and nights per visit.

5.1.4 Visitor statistics 2014
In the year ending March 2014, the international market identified a growth of 1%, welcoming 696,000 international visitors (TEQ, 2014). Visitors were staying in resort for an average 8.9 nights, an increase in previous years however, this number is still below the Queensland average (TEQ, 2014). Visitor expenditure is down 3.5% on
previous years, however the nightly spend of visitors ($138) is higher than other destinations in Queensland (TEQ, 2014).

Across the years since empirical material collection began there has been instability in the visitor numbers and expenditure within the destination. With such a strong reliance on tourism as a core contributor to the GDP for the destination it is important that the destination maintains a strong market share.

5.2 TOURISM TROPICAL NORTH QUEENSLAND BRAND
This section overview s the brand development and the positioning sought for the ‘Tropical North Queensland – Adventurous by Nature’ brand launched in 2009.

5.2.1 Brand re-structure and target market
Previous brand campaigns within the TNQ destination have been short-lived with “Change Your Latitude” and “Where Rainforest Meets Reef” utilised for approximately five years prior to re-branding. This is in line with the UNWTO’s (2009) findings that indicate that most tourism destinations are being rebranded on a regular basis due to political changes within the destination; thus, indicating TNQ is typical of brand management techniques globally. The latest re-brand was set in motion in 2007 when TEQ reassessed their segmentation model and then built their branding structure around the change in segmentation (TQ, 2009b). The segmentation shifted from a demographic segmentation model to a psychographic model focused on motivational variables (TQ, 2009a). At the time of this study, the regional DMO targets “social fun seekers” and “connectors”. The state DMO describe social fun seekers as consumers looking for a good time when they travel. Social fun seekers are active and like to share the experience with others, with friends and other holidaymakers, they are very “tech-savvy”. Connectors on the other hand are seeking to escape for a chance to connect with the people they love, they often sacrifice their own needs to ensure the enjoyment of those that they are travelling with. This shift in target market was designed to increase the resonance among potential visitors through marketing campaigns. The design allows for emotional advertising to communicate more efficiently and effectively with the targeted consumers (TQ, 2009b). Through consideration of the psychographic consideration of consumer needs and wants, this
strategy indicates a co-creative approach to destination marketing as opposed to the typical economic dominant logic associated with DMOs.

5.2.2 Brand launch
Built from the new segmentation model, a new TNQ brand and slogan, ‘Tropical North Queensland - Adventurous by Nature’, was launched in 2009. This brand focused on consumer’s emotional reaction to the destination rather than physical attributes such as the reef and rainforest. The brand was developed through consultations with key industry and government stakeholders in the destination. It was also designed to fit with the overarching Queensland brand (TQ, 2010b). TEQ consider the TTNQ brand to be supported by the natural attractions, such as the Great Barrier Reef and the Daintree Rainforest, as well as the multitude of adventurous activities that can be participated in within the destination such as canopy zip-lines, scuba-diving etc. The brand is designed to capture the ‘energy, vitality and expansive adventure’ that can be had in the destination (TQ, 2009b). The ‘Adventurous by Nature’ tagline is designed to incorporate all types of adventure both hard and soft from watching the baby tortoises on the beach to jumping out of a plane or soaring through the jungle canopy on a flying fox. The destination promise of Tropical North Queensland- “feel a natural exhilaration in an Australian tropical adventure”- was developed to support the Tourism Queensland promise of “where Australia feels most alive”. The state DMO suggest that each destination brand across Queensland is designed in synergy to create one branding campaign that accentuates the key attractors of the destination yet, is distinctive enough to differentiate the five key destinations within the state (TQ, 2012). The Queensland brand ‘Where Australia Shines’ acts as the corporate umbrella brand that houses Tropical North Queensland, Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast, Whitsundays and Brisbane brands. Tourism Queensland funded a budget of $4.16 million dollars over a two-year period to design and re-launch the Tropical North Queensland Brand (TQ, 2010b).

The regional DMO of TNQ is working in partnership with the state DMO. The state DMO offer support for TNQs branding and management teams. Despite acknowledgement of the regional DMOs role in facilitating the brand there has been a self confessed lack of monitoring across the destinations brands. This is consistent
with the UNWTO’s (2009) findings that indicate approximately one third of DMOs globally do not monitor their brands. Within the TNQ destination there are also a number of local DMOs who further support the implementation of the TNQ brand as well as sub-regional brands. The regional DMO have local DMOs that include: Tourism Port Douglas and Daintree, Mission Beach Tourism and Tourism Cape York. After the empirical material collection, in late 2012, Tourism Cape York gained accreditation as a local DMO.

5.2.3 Dual brand strategy
TNQ is currently operating under a dual brand strategy, utilising the “Tourism Tropical North Queensland - Adventurous by Nature” brand within domestic markets. In international markets the TNQ brand is “Cairns and the Great Barrier Reef, Tropical North Queensland – Adventurous By Nature”. This decision was made in order to emphasise one of the most iconic features of the destination the Great Barrier Reef so that the destination is identifiable in international markets. In domestic markets where there is an assumption of greater market knowledge, the ‘Adventurous by Nature’ brand and slogan is used to highlight other core experiences available to visitors.

5.2.4 Brand membership
Typical to DMO membership structures in Australia, membership of the regional DMO ranges across five levels from supporters of tourism ($380 annually) to Platinum membership ($16,470 annually). All members are invited to attend networking functions, corporate seminars and induction programs in addition to receiving monthly regional DMO newsletters that provide updates on the destination and opportunities for members. Furthermore, Platinum members have the first opportunity for joint marketing campaigns, international trade familiarisations, and sale missions and media contributions. Additionally, Platinum members are invited to attend strategic issue and management briefings, have access to VIP functions, have briefing sessions from the regional DMO executives and receive market updates and communications from the CEO directly. It is also important to note that the local DMOs are fee-paying members of the regional DMO on a Platinum membership, paying over $15,000 annually to the regional DMO.
5.3 INFLUENCES ON TOURISM IN TROPICAL NORTH QUEENSLAND

Since 2011, the introduction of direct routes from New Zealand and China has stimulated the tourism economy within North Queensland with over 700 Chinese tourists arriving each week (McCarthy, 2012). However, the reduction of direct flights from New Zealand in 2013 had a negative impact on visitor numbers to the destination, thus accounting for a proportion of the decrease in numbers identified in section 5.1 (TEQ, 2014). The regional DMO received $689,000 in State Government grants to fund the drive tourism campaign, the TNQ Paradise campaign and a Sport Event campaign (TEQ, 2013). In addition to government stimulus the natural phenomena of the Solar Eclipse in 2012 also helped to boost tourism in the destination, but only for a limited period. The event saw 60,000 visitors to TNQ over the two day period, occupancy across hotels was at capacity and it is understood that travel agencies saw a 90% increase in enquiries about the destination (TEQ, 2012). Although events like this are able to stimulate the economy for a brief period, the performance over the year suggests that it was unable to create a sustainable increase in visitor numbers and expenditure to the destination.

In 2013 the Queensland Tourism Industry Council awards saw 23 awards won by Tropical North Queensland businesses, with a record 52 nominations from the destination. This means that Tropical North Queensland was the most awarded destination in 2013 (Queensland Tourism Industry Council [QTIC], 2013). Media reports also suggest that North Queensland is the fastest growing tourism destination in Australia with one in five tourists now visiting the destination. In addition, it was reported that North Queensland sees the greatest tourism expenditure in Australia identifying Europe – Germany and France- as the strongest market to the destination (Michael, 2013). Destination tourism data has yet to be published through Tourism and Events Queensland to confirm these reports. However, they indicate a strong competitive positioning of TNQ.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter describes the destination that is utilised for study within this thesis. TNQ is a typical coastal and hinterland destination in the stagnation stage of its lifecycle.
TNQ has been impacted by a number of natural disasters since the research started, yet tourism remains a key economic contributor to the destination. The brand change in 2009 makes TNQ an interesting destination to explore for this thesis, as the branding process should be easy to recall for stakeholders. The next chapter is the interpretation of the empirical materials collected during phases one and three in the Tropical North Queensland destination.
6. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the interpretation of the empirical materials collected through the semi-structured face-to-face interviews (phase one) and the follow-up telephone interviews (phase three). The focus of this chapter is presenting the empirical materials in relation to the participants’ perceptions by using verbatim quotes from the interviews with participants. This chapter follows a style similar to qualitative descriptive research, overviewing the facets of the case in everyday language that represents the view of participants (Sandelowski, 2000). This analysis was informed by the theory discussion in the proceeding literature review (refer to Chapter 2). Discussion of these results in given in Chapter Seven. First, this chapter outlines roles and relationships in the destination brand network, examining how these relationships between state, regional and local DMOs and operators influence destination brand buy-in. The roles and relationships of DMOs and operators, and among operators in branding the destination, are also considered. Finally, evidence on how operators connect with the brand and to the consumer is discussed. This section answers RQ1 by identifying the dominant logic of each stakeholder. In addition, evidence to respond to RQ2 is presented, examining the influences on operators’ destination brand buy-in. Following the relationship structure, the approach to governance adopted by the DMO during the development, implementation and evaluation of the brand from both the regional and local DMOs perspectives and then the operators’ perspective is explored. In doing so, this chapter addresses brand buy-in (RQ2), the influence of stakeholder-agency theory (RQ3) and the impact of internal brand management practices (RQ4). The following chapter will then discuss the empirical materials in relation to the theoretical discussion presented in Chapters Two and Three.

6.1 ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THE DESTINATION BRAND NETWORK

Relationships between stakeholders are a strategic resource for an organisation under a resource-based view. However, often, relationships within a destination brand
network are complex due to the myriad of stakeholders involved in the network. The principle stakeholders in a regional destination brand are the state, regional and local DMOs within the destination. These stakeholders, and the operators that provide the brand experience are therefore the focus of this study. This section explores the relationships within the destination brand network. First, connections between various levels of DMO are examined, the relationship between the state and regional DMOs initially, then the relationship between regional and local DMOs. Next, the relationship between the regional DMO and member operators are outlined. Relationships among operators within the destination are then reflected upon. Finally, this section studies the connections between the operators within destination and the consumer experience. This section outlines how the relationships are currently influencing the dominant logic of each of the destination stakeholders (relating to RQ1) and examining the impact of relationships on destination brand buy-in (relating to RQ2).

6.1.1 Relationship between DMOs in the brand hierarchy

Relationship between the state and regional DMO

In relation to the relationship with the regional DMO in the branding campaign Tourism and Events Queensland state “The new brand campaign is the result of a shift in the marketing approach used by TQ and TTNQ by focusing on the tourism experience and the consumer’s emotional response rather than Queensland attributes” (TQ, 2012; para3). In addition, the regional DMO identify “Key strategies: Develop the brand strategy to promote the portfolio of precinct brand names within the TNQ strategic umbrella” (TTNQ, 2011; p12). These quotes and discussion through the interviews indicate that the state, regional and local DMOs are in a formal partnership to develop, implement and evaluate the destination brand. The state DMO takes a leading role, utilising the regional DMO’s destination knowledge to develop the destination brand through a shared funding project. The state DMO adopts a corporate branding approach, that is, has an umbrella brand for the state (Queensland) in turn, the regional brands (e.g. Tropical North Queensland) feed into the state brand. Therefore, the state DMO is at the top of the brand hierarchy with the regional and local DMOs underneath them in the hierarchical structure. Accordingly, the state DMO has the most control over the brand development within the brand hierarchy,
yet they are the greatest distance from the consumers. Typically, the state DMO is located in the capital city of the state. In this case the state DMO is located in Queensland’s capital of Brisbane approximately 1,700 kilometres from the regional DMO in Cairns. Thus, the state DMO does not have the same understanding of local issues as brand network stakeholders located within the destination, such as the regional and local DMOs and operators. To address this geographic issue, the state DMO tries to build connections with the regional destination through working with the regional DMO. A respondent from the state DMO (STO1) emphasises the importance of working in “close partnership” with the regional DMO on the regional branding strategy in order to ensure the regional brand fits with the “global brand for Queensland”, stating, “we do everything through the regional DMO” (STO1). Similarly, another state DMO participant states:

With the [brand development] model, we were consulting with the regional DMO and industry and it gave us the basis then to discuss with them the overall picture...it was important getting the regional DMO buy-in and their understanding that there was a process and creative vision but that it was also grounded in the consumer insights that were provided to us by the regional DMO (STO2b).

Interpretation of the interviews reveals that the state DMO believe they continue to work closely with the regional DMO, especially since the development of the most recent TNQ brand – “Adventurous by Nature”. They claim that they have “not stepped back from the partnership with the regional DMO [and that they are still] working closely [with the regional DMO]” (STO1). This evidence suggests there is a strong on-going relationship between the state and regional DMOs in this destination. This relationship is enhanced through the appointment of a state DMO representative as a Destination Director that frequently visits the destination (e.g. Cairns). They are tasked with working closely with the destination brand network to maintain and continue to foster close relationships with the regional DMO and industry members (STO2a). However, the state DMO charges the regional DMO with the responsibility of stimulating brand buy-in among its operators.
The state DMO identifies several challenges in fulfilling their role, commenting “I guess one of the challenges in being a state DMO is that there are a number of elements that we do not control” (STO2b). The lack of control refers to a lack of control over funding, being reliant on government resources, as well as the number of individual operators that are responsible for delivering the brand experience. Another participant from the state DMO also identifies difficulties working in partnership with regional DMOs (in general) as the brands that they develop are often perceived by stakeholders in the regional destinations (i.e., the regional and local DMOs and local operators) as “pushed on” the destination (STO1). This representative attests that the brand was not pushed on TNQ, that the brand was grown through the research and workshops with the regional DMO and “key stakeholders” (STO1). These key stakeholders were defined by their power and resource contribution (financial and knowledge) and were based on the historical interaction with the state and regional DMOs. Predominantly these are large organisations that have a strong operating history within the industry (although not necessarily the destination).

Despite the idea of a close partnership inferred by the state DMO, the regional DMO feel that the state DMO had preconceived designs of the brand prior to the development, however the regional DMO also identify that the state DMO worked closely with the destination to develop the brand. For instance, one regional DMO consultant comments:

So they picked the big five and they have positioned them all quite uniquely, you know how they have the Fun of the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast is weak, “Naturally refreshing” and they don’t really like it. Brisbane did not fit as it’s not tourism. Whitsundays is fine, here, Adventure is great. So they went work-shopping across all the five regions to find what are the attributes, the standard pyramid workshop and they built them up and brought them back to three or four key attributes (C5).

By identifying that the state DMO had “picked and positioned” the destinations this respondent indicates rather than organically growing the brand it was based on the way that the state DMO saw it fitting in relation to the other regional brands. The
same consultant argues that the state DMO took a top-down, corporate approach to the brand building process that did not enable the destination to develop an authentic brand stating, “so there are two sides to every story but, adopting a corporate branding approach, umm a top-down approach you will, well it doesn’t really let the destination come to its own speech” (C5). Thereby, indicating that by taking the top-down development approach, the brand developed is not a strong representation of the values of the destination. Although supportive of the overall branding approach to this destination, this consultant posits that the collaboration in the process is not as the formal documents suggest. A state DMO also acknowledges the change in formal partnership shifting the blame to the regional DMO identifying “we have no stepped back at all and it is a partnership whether people want to participate in the partnership as much as we would like is difficult” (STO1). One of the major issues that is inhibiting the partnership appears to be the state DMOs use of brand and segmentation concepts that “had a 0% translation to businesses…” (C5). The consultant goes on to state: “And to be honest most of the DMOs don’t get it either it is only a few people – strategic marketers - that get what to do with it”. By alienating a number of partners from the initial stages of the branding process the state DMO are inhibiting buy-in to the brand. From these quotes it is considered that additional knowledge needs to be provided to key partners so that they are able to work with the state DMO to push the brand message to operators. With a weakness in their initial partnership the regional DMO may be less willing to do this.

**Relationship between the regional and local DMO**

The regional and local DMOs also have a formal partnership in regards to the development, implementation and evaluation of the destination brand. In this case, the regional DMO prescribes the brand and its use to the local DMO; the local DMO is then invited by the regional DMO to collaborate in marketing opportunities. Unlike the state financial support for the regional DMO, the local DMO are paying members of the regional DMO and are responsible for their own funding. The local DMO outline their role in the DMO hierarchy with a local DMO participant stating, “we are the local tourism body, so you’ve got Tourism Australia, Tourism Queensland, Tourism Tropical North Queensland then ourselves, under us we have a couple of other small associations that come under our jurisdiction, sort of” (LTO9). The
regional DMO suggest that they work closely with the local DMOs rather than positioning them at the bottom of the hierarchy; one regional DMO representative identifying “those guys [the local DMO] contribute a lot as far as our direction and how we can support the region” (RTO8).

A consultant also notes that there was collaboration between the regional and the local DMO in regards to the development of the sub-regional brands (for example Naturally Refreshing – Tourism Port Douglas and Daintree) and working with the local DMOs to develop their understanding of the TNQ brand (C5). The sub-regional brand work with the local DMOs is identified as being a bottom-up process, including a cross section of businesses of various sizes from across the destination in the development process. A consultant states, “a real cross section you know, someone from nature, someone in this, someone in tourism, someone from the visitor centre, someone from a farm you know” (C5). Thus, the regional DMO was working with the local DMOs and operators to develop brands that are true reflections of the destination but that still fit with the overarching TNQ and state brands. The collaboration of the regional and local DMO partnerships aims to achieve the local DMOs primary goal, which is “to drive visitation, that is [the] number one [goal]” (LTO9).

In regards to the relational ties between the local DMO and other DMOs, the local DMO participant identifies “we are engaged with other key tourism organisations, so the national DMO, state DMO and regional DMO and we work very closely with all of those and we are the voice of tourism in the region” (LTO9). From this quote it appears as though the relationships are harmonious within the DMO hierarchy however, underneath there is competition among operators, destinations and DMOs:

Here there always is [a lot of competition] and it is governed by the amount of money so when you look at what we do with TTNQ for instance, the state DMO do most of the marketing for the whole state, regional DMO is for the whole region but generally it [marketing and funding] is very Cairns centric because the majority of the business is there… (LTO9).

140
This quote indicates that resources, especially financial resources, and power, derived from the level of resource availability, are having a significant impact on the relationship between the DMOs, causing friction in the destination based on the allocation of resources. So, although the design of the DMO is to support each of the destinations fairly, there are financial resource conflicts associated with the structure. One of the main financial conflicts for the local DMO is derived from the local DMO being a paying member of the regional DMO, the local DMO participant stating:

*The interesting thing is we give the money to them [regional DMO] but with the regional DMO we pay them $15,000 a year to be a member of them which seems to be back to front because they get the funding from the top and yet we have to give money to them so why they are not giving us money to promote our region? So that is where there is an imbalance (LTO9).*

This unequal power dependence can have a major impact on the regional and local DMOs relationship over time. These unequal power dependencies demonstrate that there is a lack of reciprocity across the relationship, with the local DMO seeking more, in terms of financial and knowledge based resources, than the regional DMO give them. In addition, there have been a number of changes to the resource contribution from the regional DMO to the local DMO over time. One local DMO identifies:

*Five years ago I used to go to TTNQ [regional DMO] and they would say what can I do for you, what can we do for [destination] this year, we can do a campaign here and a campaign there. But now that just doesn’t happen (LTO9).*

The lack of reciprocity is attributed to a change in resources such as skilled labour and finance by the local DMO “I think that times are tough you know, their [regional DMO] funding is not what it used to be and they lost that skilled labour and they struggled and I think that they have lost momentum” (LTO9). Leaving the local DMO feeling marginalised by the regional DMO and reducing the strength of the relationship between the regional and local DMOs through a lack of reciprocity.
6.1.2 Relationship between DMOs and operators

Operators’ perceptions of the state DMO’s role

The state DMO is based in the state capital city of Brisbane, which is a three-hour flight from TNQ (Cairns). The state DMO is geographically removed from the operators in the regional destination. Yet, a number of operators mention that they have a working relationship with the state DMO, especially those involved in the state tourism award scheme and familiarity programs. The relationship between the state DMO and operators is not bound formally by membership, however the state DMO are in contact with the majority of operators within the region. Among operators there is a polarised opinion of the state DMO and their role within the destination. The majority of operators believe that the state DMO has a pivotal role in the unity of the destination and the development of a strong and cohesive TNQ brand. One such participant states, “I think we get an amazingly good deal out of TQ, I think they do a fantastically good job” (B21). Others identify the state DMO as “very supportive” (P11), thereby, indicating that the state DMO is able to fulfil the intangible goals – of gaining support and knowledge - for the majority of operators across the region.

Conversely, a minority of operators do not see the value of the state DMO, noting that the state DMO do nothing to support the destination. For example, a Bronze member identifies “TQ what a waste of time, they don’t do anything for anyone” (B10). This perception maybe derived from a lack of knowledge in regards to the state DMO’s role or perceiving that the state DMO have little knowledge about the destination, based on their geographical positioning. Another Bronze participant states:

Well they seem to [not understand] it’s like TQ [state DMO] have the same problem [as the regional DMO] it’s just if you look at the people who are important in those organisations very few of them have ever worked in tourism businesses, they haven’t and that’s a really bad thing, they just don’t get it (B20)

For the dissatisfied minority of operators, the role of the state DMO appears to be just the top of the DMO hierarchy; they are geographically isolated from the destination
and have a lack of transparency in their positioning and role for the region. The lack of understanding among operators, in regards to the relationship between the state and regional DMOs and their roles within the destination, also appears to be hindering relationship development within the destination. In addition, operators that are dissatisfied with the role of the state DMO believe there is tension between the state and regional DMOs, suggesting the state DMO coerce the regional DMO into decisions. For instance, one member comments “I am not sure how much of it [the brand] was TTNQ either, I am not sure how it works feeding down from TQ” (UK13). The lack of clarity in the position of the state DMO, in relation to the capabilities and resource of the destination, is observed in this quote as creating tension for some operators who perceive the state DMO as a controlling force over the destination. The state DMO is not perceived to provide reciprocity for the destination by these members, thus, creating tension in the destination network. For other operators, that have more understanding of the role of the state DMO and have received benefits from them, there is a positive relationship. The importance of transparency in the DMOs role and positioning in relation to other DMOs involved in the brand network is therefore apparent.

*Operators’ perceptions of the regional DMO’s role*

Operators pay the regional DMO annual fees based on their membership levels, and in return receive knowledge and access to brand and network related activities dependent on their level of memberships. They therefore, have a formal relationship with each other. Participants perceive there is a strong hierarchical focus within the regional DMO’s approach to brand governance. Operators identify that the regional DMO position themselves at the top of this structure and that depending on the level of membership the operators are at varying levels below the regional DMO. Consequently, the strength of operators’ relational ties with the DMO varies. For example a smaller sized Bronze operator identifies:

* I just don’t think that there is enough rapport between TTNQ and their members. It [the relationship strength] is probably good if you are a Silver, Gold or Platinum member and you are there [in Cairns], there is more to it though they need to remember that it is all the little fish that contribute a substantial amount of dollars
and I believe they [the little fish] are often forgotten about (B22).

This quote indicates that based on the regional DMO’s control of resources (communication, knowledge and support), they are compromising their relationships with members. Demonstrating the DMO is inhibiting operator’s trust through weak relationships and rapport. Operators are unable to identify, or trust, that the DMO is working with the best interest of the whole network in mind. Rather, operators perceive that the regional DMO is driven by egocentric actions that impact the network by marginalising operators. This egocentric approach reflects an economic dominant logic, whereby the regional DMO is operating to gain utility maximisation. The regional DMO act as the focal or controlling organisation and power (determined by those with the most resources) sets the norms and goals for the destination. For example a resource abundant, large, well established operator states, “if we think that they [regional DMO] are giving someone else more favours we will tell them, we will say hang on a second you have to give a balanced picture and you are not giving a balanced picture” (G6).

For a number of other organisations, power differentials within the destination are emphasised by the top-down hierarchical approach to governance. As such, greater benefits (relationship strength, knowledge and communication) are provided to larger more affluent operators, as they are able to contribute larger financial resources through membership fees. These smaller operators within the destination are often unable to compete with the larger operators, as higher membership fees may not be financially viable. Despite the best fit in terms of values and experiences for opportunities, operators identify that there is ‘preferential’ treatment to those that contribute more financially to the destination. Regarding the opportunities available within the destination the regional DMO states, “the higher your membership the more opportunity you get” (RTO8); although, the regional DMO does not define this as preferential treatment. This approach creates utility maximisation and prefers self-interest to group goals by favouring those with more financial resources. Members are aware of this with one Gold participant noting:
We are the second from the top category [in membership] so hopefully we get a few extra perks you know some preferential, not treatment, but I guess motivators like access to the familiarity program, sometimes they go to Platinum but Gold is just one down so I guess that was our main thinking (G13).

Many of the participants do not see the value in the position of the regional DMO as a focal organisation or top of the brand hierarchy. One participant states, “I think from TTNQ’s point they need to acknowledge a little more of the destination and what the destination assists them with, [regional DMO] are not necessarily assisting the others within the region” (B22). This participant identifies the need for reciprocity within the destination brand network and the want from the regional DMO to understand the value of all operators and their contribution to the brand experience. Whilst another Bronze operator states, “but if all the small people got together then I think TTNQ would have a bit of a shock because there would be a rather loud disgruntled voice” (B19). From these quotes it appears that smaller operators perceive the regional DMO to have a myopic approach to the destination, centred around the resource rich and their close geographical location and thus, operators identify the regional DMO are failing to value the diversity of resources across the destination.

The myopic approach from the regional DMO also facilitates a lack of trust between some operators and the regional DMO. A number of operators have a lack of understanding of the role that the regional DMO plays in the destination branding and the decision-making process across the DMOs, highlighting the need for a transparent position in the destination. One operator says “I feel very much TQ and TTNQ there have been some not very well thought out decisions made that have had far reaching effects on the little guys in particular but it goes right up the ladder” (B19). This participant identifies that utility maximisation is a core driver of decision-making within the regional and state DMOs, rather than making decisions that have the greatest outcome for the destination. As a consequence, decision-making based on their own self-interest is marginalising operators due to a lack of value in the decisions made. The interview process identifies a number of dissatisfied operators, one such participant stating:
There is absolutely nothing we get from them [regional DMO]. We get journalists mainly from TQ rather than TTNQ and I think you can count on the one hand the amount of references we have had from TTNQ in the past five years. And what’s really disappointing is when you go into TTNQ and a lot of the people there have never been to the Daintree and you wonder how they can [effectively market the destination], you think it would be in their job to go out and visit the product. A lot of them have never been to the Daintree, it puzzles me they are in a little cocoon of their own and it really disappoints me (B19).

This quote indicates weak relationships between the regional DMO and operators, based on a lack of rapport between members and the regional DMO. Other operators (e.g. B10; B16; UK15), identify that they are not satisfied with the actions of the regional DMO citing elitism and poor resource allocation as primary reasons. In contrast, another operator suggests “they [the regional DMO] need to get away from trying to please everyone, although people on the boards need to represent their destination, decisions should be more central” (B18). In comparison, here the operator identifies that they wish to see a more centralised or focal role of the regional DMO, making the decisions themselves that influence the destination. This is based on the dispersion of board members and a disproportional representation of regional destination within the board. This is contrary to the majority of operators that want more input and collaboration therefore, a less centralised and hierarchical approach to the brand network governance.

Based on their weak relational ties with the regional DMO, a number of operators turn to inter-organisational links rather than strengthening DMO relationships. The need for inter-organisational collaboration indicates operators favouring co-creation goals of knowledge and long-term relationships over economic goals thereby, highlighting the divergent goals and values of the regional DMO and operators. As such, a number of sub-networks exist within the destination that are able to meet the needs and wants of operators, facilitating knowledge and collaboration. One operator that utilises these sub-networks identifies:
We have a local accommodation management group and we have regular get togethers (sic), we share our experiences, we have mentors, if someone is needing advice then we talk to each other…the region itself is very supportive, we help each other out when we need (B22).

These networks bring a number of benefits to the destination and the operators. These benefits are discussed in further detail in 6.1.3.

operators' perceptions of the local DMO’s role
Within TNQ (at the time of the empirical material collection, 2012) there were two official local DMOs; one more has achieved accreditation since the empirical materials were collected. A further tourism board within the destination is currently (June, 2014) attempting to go through the accreditation process to become a local DMO. The operator and local DMO relational structure is similar to that of the operator and regional DMO relationship. Operators pay a membership fee that formalises their relationship and offers a package of membership benefits. Consistent with the regional DMO, there are various levels of membership and each level of membership offers different benefits to operators. However, the membership fees for operators to join the local DMO are lower than they are to join the regional DMO. Operators are not required to become members of both the regional DMO and local DMO, however the majority of participants are members of both organisations.

The interviews identify the value that the local DMO have within the destination. The relational ties between operators and the local DMO appear stronger than between operators and the regional DMO, despite the similar hierarchical and functional governance structure. For example, one Bronze local DMO member says “every employee in [local DMO] are very focused, orientated and dedicated they are dedicated and they are passionate which is great” (B21). Another operator states:

Each one [destination] needs to have their own voice and that system [local DMO] lets us do that…And I think the other thing is that the identities of the region are so different and they need to show that, and [local DMO] do that (B19).
These quotes indicate the smaller size of the local DMO enables operators to create a closer connection to the local DMO, than to the regional DMO. They also emphasise the importance of authenticity in the brand developed, that is, the brand is a true reflection of the strengths and values of the destination. The strength in the relationship between operators and the local DMO highlights elements of a network based approach to brand governance, whereby, the DMO is able to better represent the destination based on the proximity to the location and the interactions that the local DMO has with the services in the destination and the consumers. One operator identifies:

Well [local DMO] at least they are [in the destination] so they are really concentrated so that is all they really do [focus on the destination] which is really great because that is generally the area that we work around and there are a hell of a lot of small businesses up here that are owner operators…so that [the local focus] is important (B10).

From the operators’ perspective the value of the local DMO is derived from the micro focus of their marketing efforts, ensuring that the locality’s awareness is higher than it would be if marketing were only a regional DMO’s role. As such, many of the interviewees show a high level of support for their local DMO. One Bronze member says “I think if they [local DMO] had a bigger budget they would be able to do a lot more here. But for the resources they have, and the dollars they spend and are given they do a really good job” (B22). The local DMO are able to focus on the visitors to the smaller destination and from there can target their marketing efforts to those that they know are likely to travel. In this case the regional DMO has to promote 377,718km², which encompasses 22% of Queensland and 17 unique localities. The local DMO however, has a focus on one or two localities allowing clear objectives and strategies to be formulated. Therefore, the local DMO receives less criticism from participants for ‘forgetting’ or marginalising destinations. The local DMO is able to demonstrate a greater level of knowledge and understanding of the destination they are marketing based on the smaller geographic destination. The local DMO demonstrate a desire to collaborate with local organisations by utilising a bottom-up approach to the development of regional sub-brands. Furthermore, there is more on-
going engagement with the operators in the local DMOs destination than the regional
DMO provides, helping to support the understanding of the destinations resources and
competitive strengths. One satisfied Bronze participant notes “we are lucky to have
[local DMO] they punch well above their weight” (B21). The positive comments
about the local DMO demonstrate a greater buy-in to, and stronger relationships with,
the local DMO and the work they are doing, than there is for the regional DMO.

One of the biggest challenges for the local DMO is limited resource allocation in
terms of marketing funds. The local DMO participant identifies:

We are small money compared to TTNQ I mean we are nothing compared to
them, if they get all the funding that they applied for they will get around $7 million
well between five and seven. We will have $500,000 and we get 1.1 million visitors a
year so that is a significant amount. It is always a challenge (LTO9).

Despite the respect for the local DMO, members identify that politics are reflected in
their operations therefore, there are issues associated with the funding structure and
distribution of resources similar to those identified in the regional DMO. One Bronze
operator noting:

It is sad because there are so many good people in this town yet they are unable
to have their say you know and there is some political stuff that has happened that
God if everyone put their stuff to bed and focused on what is required, it doesn’t
matter who it has come from and they focus on that and then it would just be a
different place. But they are not willing to. They are too proud. I mean I don’t care if
it means that they get money, I don’t give a [expletive] you know, it just doesn’t make
any sense (B10).

The local DMO also demonstrates a sense of elitism where the ‘big players’ get the
largest output. Yet, smaller sized operators rely more heavily on the local DMO for
knowledge and the access to marketing opportunities. Therefore, unequal dependence
in the relationship is evident and, as a consequence, not all operators are happy with
the way that the local DMO is allocating resources and making decisions. In
particular, participants note their disgust in the decision-making behaviour within the local DMO. For example, one participant is unhappy with the political influence that is impacting the way that the local DMO board operate “I once sat on a [local DMO] board, I would never do it again I was disgusted” (B10). It is evident that there is a strong political underpinning to decisions in the destination with an operator suggesting that decisions are made based on personal relationships and ‘handshakes’ rather than best practice for the destination. The local DMO adopts this practice to ensure personal outcomes are leveraged and utility maximisation occurs. The local DMO is therefore, demonstrating an economic dominant logic that is similar to the regional DMO’s dominant logic. Despite most operators seeing value in local DMO membership, their diverse evaluations of the local DMO operations suggest that more transparency is required to provide members with greater insight into decision-making and resource allocation.

6.1.3 Summary of relationships between DMOs and operators and the impact on their brand buy-in
From the empirical materials it is evident that the state and regional DMOs are working under an economic dominant logic, seeking to achieve visitor numbers and expenditure (relating to RQ1). A lack of personal contact and lack of transparency in the structure of the state DMO, combined with their detached geographical positioning, is inhibiting buy-in for a number of stakeholders (relating to RQ2). Similarly, the hierarchical approach to brand governance applied by the regional DMO and the large geographic region that they must represent, is restricting the depth of relationship with operators and is, consequently, inhibiting brand buy-in (relating to RQ2). The local DMO also appear to be operating under an economic dominant logic, however, they have a smaller membership base enabling them provide more support and attention to operators. In addition, the local DMO demonstrate that they are forming more personal relationships with their members as they have a smaller geographic area to represent. The local DMO is able to gain better brand buy-in than the regional and state DMOs are achieving, based on their positioning in the destination (relating to RQ2). The next section examines the relationships and interdependencies of operators within the destination brand network.
6.1.4 Relationship between operators

One of the most important support networks and strongest relational ties that appear within the destination is sub-networks of operators. These sub-networks develop informally and are based on operators with similar values and experiences connecting with each other. They are also based on similar remote geographical locations of operators. Sub-networks are a group that operators can go to in order to share knowledge or get help in operational situations that they face and are unsure of how best to deal with. The sub-networks therefore, support collaboration among members.

These sub-networks are predominantly informal in nature; some have a ‘president’ and formal routine, whilst others are more ad-hoc, meeting when needed. All sub-networks appear to operate under mutual understanding and collaboration. For a number of operators, these sub-networks are a place to share ideas, co-create with like-minded people and operate with a sense of unity propelled by a desire to provide a strong experience for example “so realistically the three of us work together very very closely to provide the destination experience, there is greater value in us working together than there is separately” (G6). The sub-networks therefore provide the opportunity to get the support that operators feel is lacking from the DMOs. One bronze member in relation to support by the state and regional DMO states “no one is Australia does what we are doing here but they [TQ, TTNQ, TPDD] will not support me” (B10) after further probing the participant identifies “there are other helicopter companies in town that are big so they are in their pockets and they pay their silver membership…so we do not rely on anyone…we don’t require them [DMOs]” (B10). Although this participant identifies that support is lacking from the DMO the participant is able to identify the value in collaboration listing around fifteen operators that she collaborates with to create a unique experience for visitors. Driven by the opportunity to provide a strong experience, one member speaks about the collaborative nature of the sub-networks “So I think we [the sub-network] probably look at more delivering an experience suited to the individual…It is about making sure our clients get the best experience, not just here at the hotel but as a whole destination” (B22). This participant identifies that the destination experience is not just about a single operator, but is derived from the combination of operators that
interact with the visitors, thereby, emphasising the importance of a consistent level of quality across the destination brand network.

The use of sub-networks facilitates resource sharing among a group of operators, a bronze participant noting, “if a person rings up and says I want this and that we [operators] will join together ad put it together for them” (B10). Resources shared among operators are both tangible and intangible. Tangible resources include sales of product through cross promotion and cross selling, for instance “I will often say to people [Meereba Heritage Centre] is a lovely place and they have to visit there as well…it is just the type of thing you tell people” (U15). Intangible resources include sharing skills, such as best practice on customer service and problem solving, as well as knowledge-based information such as market intelligence and successful marketing approaches. One remote operator identifies “it is important for me to go into town and speak with other [operators] you know meet up with people to share what is going on” (B21). Operators that are members of the sub-network feel that they can trust others in the sub-network often based on the fact that it is a “small town” (P14; U15; B16; S17; B21). In addition, operators are often working toward common goals of creating unique experiences “that the customers want” (B7). The trust and common goals within the sub-networks are the foundation of the collaboration between operators especially trust in the network in times of crisis, for example one operator states, “the community in Cairns is so close that…without disrespecting [operator] because they are going through a crisis we will jump in and help them out” (U12). With the number of small and medium operators so high within the destination not all have a tourism or business background, as such the support from others with greater knowledge is what a number of operators are seeking from the brand network. Interviews reveal that support is a key ‘want’ from smaller operators within the network, first seeking support from the regional DMO, then from other operators. Often these operators identify that due to the linear approach to communication utilised by the regional DMO they are unable to receive the level of support they are looking for, for instance when asked if they feel supported by the regional DMO a bronze operator states, “not by TTNQ, but I think it is due to a lack of understanding” (B7). Consequently, these operators turn to other operators within the sub-networks to gain the level of support required. In relation to the type of support within the sub-network one participant
states, “we have mentors, if someone is needing advice umm we can talk to each other” (B22). Considering the level of support within the wider network one Bronze participant states, “I think they [regional DMO] hear you out but I think how much they actually take on board I think is another question” (B22). Thereby, indicating that there is perceived to be only a limited level of support available through the regional DMO. Yet, in regards to support among operators within in the destination, one participant considers “yes the region is very supportive of each other from what I see….people will certainly help out or support each other when necessary” (U15). Whilst another participant adds “it [the destination] is very supportive, you would be crazy not to in a destination this size” (P11). Demonstrating the strength of collaboration, support and understanding of interdependencies across all levels of membership within the destination.

Sub-networks stimulate collaboration between operators; they work toward creating shared values across a group of people thereby, instilling a common sense of purpose across the network one participant identifying “you have groups around town that hang out with each other, they catch-up, talk about what they want to do then they go off and do it, getting the results they want” (B10). Collaboration is achieved through not just the support within the destination but also through the level of dialogue, one participant identifies “we talk on a regular basis” (B22). Trust and consistency is built through the constant communication between members therefore, establishing their basis for collaboration. These sub-networks ensure that the value and belief systems are established therefore they help to develop the consistency across the brand. These values may vary across different sub-networks however; they are helping to deliver a more consistent brand experience to visitors.

The level of collaboration among operators highlights the operators’ co-created dominant logic and a network approach to brand governance. Operators are utilising continual dialogue and transparency in their operations thereby, creating long-term relationships with other operators. The most valued form of collaboration is inter-business through the sub-networks, with a limited identifiable role for the DMOs in this process. One operator notes “we are very aware of supporting other businesses” (G13). The sub-network’s operators are able to gain reciprocal benefits from the
network through collective, equal sharing of power, as well as shared resources and goals. Many participants directly note the historical need for collaboration for the success of the destination, one consultant with a long history in the destination states:

*For many years you really had to be collaborative, you know hunt in packs and that sort of thing…when you are coming from a tiny outpost at the furthest destination you could not go globally alone…for a tiny guest house or tour operator in the grand scheme of things to really be up there it really was necessary to collaborate* (C3).

The lack of power differentials that exist within the destination’s sub-networks is a main strength in the collaborative approach. Operators in the destination realise that they are interdependent, that they cannot fully operate alone “it is better for us to work together” (G6). Differing views of the destination’s strengths and weaknesses are acknowledged however, operators identify that they need the strength and support of others within the network to be successful. In part, the collaborative approach appears to have developed from the path dependencies and historical development of the destination. North Queensland has previously been hard to access and perceived as ‘far’, based on its geographic location at the tip of Australia. As such, one participant argues “collaboration is historically a basis for survival in the destination” (C23).

Despite the operators’ collaborative approach, the regional DMO do not seem to fit in this structure. Operators have a focus and a drive to provide the best possible experience to their consumers and showcase their passion for the destination (G6; B7; B10; U12; G13; P14; U15; S17; B19; B20; B21; B22), *no operators overtly mention economic goals*, indicating disconnect between the operator and the DMOs goals for the destination (relating to RQ1). The empirical materials indicate that operators are seeking *intangible resources* from the network such as *network knowledge* and *support*. Operators appear to be seeking co-creative goals from the destination brand network (RQ1), suggesting that through the provision of intangible goals and resources destination brand buy-in is enhanced (relates to RQ2).
6.1.5 Relationship between the brand network and consumers

The role of the consumer in regards to the brand is a focal point of discussion with participants during the follow-up telephone interviews. The consumer survey report directed the follow-up interviews, in particular findings such as consumer awareness to the destination, the brand personality of the destination and the likelihood of consumers to visit the destination within the next twelve months, are considered. The findings were presented to participants prior to the interview to stimulate discussion. Explicit questions on the role of consumers in branding the destination were intentionally absent from the follow-up interview questions, with the intention of deriving an unprompted response from participants. Yet, most participants mentioned consumers in their response to the follow-up interview questions. One of the most noteworthy comments comes from a consultant who in relation to the brand usage states:

*But there is no question [the brand] needs to be utilised more by operators. That is a separate thing in terms of gouging the business communities’ reception to the positioning. So in terms of reporting on whether the industry is behind [the brand] that is a really important thing to report on. In terms of whether the customer sees it as being the region tag line or not it’s not really about that. We are on a journey to get to a position where it as recognised for that, that’s what needs to be reported on and if the industry aren’t behind it (C5).*

It is evident that this consultant sees that the consumer’s response to the brand and slogan is not an important measure; that the internal measures are more important. Yet despite this, there has never been any internal evaluation of the brand to identify ways to get operators to utilise the brand more frequently. Other operators within the destination consider the response of consumers more carefully, suggesting that they are unsure of how the current messages are being received by consumers, but suggesting that it is something that is important for the regional DMO to understand. Operators also identify that consumers are becoming more difficult to reach with marketing and branding activities. One Gold operator suggests that the lack of connection to the consumer stems from a shift in consumer culture stating that:
The people that you are pushing at [consumers] are no longer looking as hard as they used to because they expect regions like Cairns or marketers to reach them rather than them having to go looking for the destination. They are getting the expectation that people [i.e. DMOs and operators] know who they are and what they want and that people will push product out to them, they [consumers] will do their research, they will use online as a research but they are looking for if you like the, not so much the social media but online marketing to reach them and not for them to have to seek it out. So we are going through a very interesting change [in consumer behaviour] (G6).

Based on this quote it seems increasingly important to gain an understanding of how the brand and the slogan are impacting on consumers, to ensure that they are receiving the intended message. Furthermore, it is important to understand if the destination brand is having the impact that it needs in order to stimulate visitation to the destination. The current approach to branding takes a dyadic communication method assuming that consumers react to a message, rather than creating a dialogue and co-creating the experience with the consumers. Under the economic dominant logic of the regional DMO the impact of the brand message needs to be considered. A number of other operators mention the need for re-education of consumers, ensuring that the consumers understand that images of the destination are authentic, that is, a true depiction of the destination. Furthermore, operators want to ensure that consumers are aware of the best time to visit the destination as well as the diversity in attractions that are available to consumer.

One local DMO identifies that consumers are leaving the destination disappointed as localities within the destination are being misrepresented, and that the diversity of the destination is not being conveyed appropriately. For the local DMO:

We did not think that it [the brand] was appropriate because [destination] is a very restful destination, beaches, food, spas as well as the [Great Barrier] Reef, it’s [adventure] about sixth on the list of things to do. So exercise was not high on the list for us (LTO9).
The adventure projected in the brand image, that is not evident in the destination has significant negative implications for the destination, such as loss of repeat visitors and negative word of mouth. Misrepresentation of the Tablelands destination was also prevalent according to operators, whereby the diversity and concentration of activities available within the destination are not acknowledged by the regional DMO. One operator within that destination notes that consumers are being sent to the Tablelands for one day and visitors are finding that they are unable to do all they want in that time. In order to solve the misrepresentation within the destination, an operator states that “[the regional DMO need to] widen their promotional tools and consider the entire destination to ensure consumer satisfaction” (U15). In addition, a Gold member argues “the destination needs to ensure that positive consumer experiences are had as the power of positive word of mouth is more important with consumers than ever before” (G6). The importance of word of mouth comes from the increase in competition but provides unique benefits, such as, trust stimulated between visitors and potential visitors and free advertising.

The overwhelming response from participants is that due to cheap airfares and cheap overseas destinations, competition for visitors is stronger than ever before (C5; B7; B19; LTO8; S17a). One consultant surmises “it is important not to follow the fad of cheap airfares, the focus needs to instead be on the quality of the experience that can be had within the region” (C5). This consultant also suggests that the variety of experiences and the differences within the destination need to be emphasised in order to attract more visitors (C5). The regional DMO, it would appear, need to be able to identify the unique combination of tangible and intangible resources that act as a point of differentiation for visitors thereby, leading to competitive advantage for the destination. Bronze members note that price gouging within the destination creates further barriers to visitation, thus, creating a negative perception of the destination for consumers (B20). Price gouging was prevalent during the researcher’s visit to the destination. A research trip was planned for the week of the solar eclipse but accommodation was double the price of the previous week as such, the researcher changed plans. In discussion with many operators there were plans to increase charges during the solar eclipse, others note that their competitors were increasing prices but they are not planning to. The inflated price within the destination is not associated
with quality or sophistication according to the results of the consumer survey (phase two). Thus, price gouging within the destination can have negative impacts on the brand image, impacting the future consideration of visitation to the destination.

One Silver operator explains that for a number of operators’ high prices are a reflection of the operating environment (S17a). Operators that access the Great Barrier Reef and the Daintree Rainforest must pay fees; consequently, these prices are passed onto consumers. An interesting comment made by the same Silver operator (S17a), is that there are no fees to enter the Daintree independently, organised tours need to be fully eco-accredited, adhere to the by-laws of the Daintree and ensure that they are not damaging the destination whilst, independent travellers are able to drive to and explore the rainforest with no fees and no monitoring of behaviour. Consequently, the high fees for operators leaves them frustrated knowing that they are contributing significant resources for the protection of the destination but, that visitors can travel there cheaply on their own without restrictions on visitor movements or behaviours. Furthermore, these high prices of tours to the destination create dissatisfaction among visitors leaving them with the perception that the high prices in the destination are unwarranted.

Other barriers to visitation acknowledged in the consumer survey, are the perception of the heat and humidity of the destination and the distance from other places within Australia. The consumer report suggests that ‘tropical’ may deter consumers based on the perception of heat, whereas the reality of the destination is not like this. In response, a number of operators mention the need for re-education for visitors, promoting aspects such as the best time of year to visit in order to overcome the barrier of heat. Operators suggest that for a significant part of the year the destination is a fantastic place to visit with a warm climate, many potential visitors however are not aware of this. A Bronze operator perceives that the ‘tropical’ nature of the destination should be used to the destination’s advantage, that it should be used to help overcome potential barriers (B7). These findings indicate the need for strong marketing capabilities within the destination to overcome barriers. The regional DMO need to utilise their core capabilities to emphasise the core unique resources of the region. The use of core capabilities and promotion of unique resources is something
that operators do not feel is currently being achieved by the regional DMO. Operators suggest that more, or better, communication from the regional DMO to consumers is required to overcome the barriers to the region.

6.1.6 Summary of operators’ dominant logic and their consumer relationships

The empirical materials indicate that operators acknowledge the importance of the destination brand matching the experience that can be had within the destination. Without a match between the brand promoted and the experience had there may be dissatisfaction among consumers. Operators in the destination are focused on providing a positive experience to consumers, accepting their responsibility in delivering the brand experience. Operators also view it as the role of the regional DMO to enhance the accessibility to the destination, to promote the diversity of the resources available within the destination ensuring the authenticity of these experiences, thereby, linking the reality and the brand. Operators consider this is gradually becoming more important, due to increasingly discerning consumers. Operators’ acknowledgement and understanding of their role in the provision of the visitor experience suggests that they have the potential of demonstrating strong brand buy-in based on co-creative desires and understanding of their role within the destination (relating to RQ1 and RQ2). However, this section indicates that the there are a number of barrier to visitation and brand buy-in that need to be overcome.

6.2 DMO PERSPECTIVES OF BRAND GOVERNANCE PRACTICES

This section examines the governance practices of the regional DMO across brand development, implementation and evaluation to further explore the dominant logic associated with the state and regional DMOs (RQ1). Furthermore, the interpretation of the empirical materials is used to reveal governance techniques (relates to RQ3) and internal brand management practices (relates to RQ4) that the regional DMO adopts. This section focuses on the DMO perspective, 6.3 then assesses the operators’ perceptions.

6.2.1 Brand development practices and the impact on brand buy-in

Participants from the state DMO describe the brand development process as being a “top down, bottom up approach” (STO2b). The branding process is part of a wider
strategy that integrates all Queensland brands under the one umbrella brand “Where Australia Shines”. The state DMO identify that key-stakeholders within the destination were identified and included in the branding process through a series of workshops, one state DMO participant notes:

So TNQ was Adventurous by Nature and that was workshopped (sic) by a group which we had formed through the regional DMO and a number of workshops were undertaken and we did a lot of work...and they all agreed, well the group agreed (STO1).

The way the state DMO explain the development process suggests a transparent branding structure, including operators within the process. The brand development indicates collaboration based on the involvement of a variety of stakeholders rather than the top-down linear approach to brand development associated with an economic dominant logic. Once the brand had been discussed in workshops with stakeholders in the destination, further state and regional DMO collaboration resulted in the brand being produced by the state DMO in partnership within the regional DMO. The partnership approach was facilitated by dialogue-based communication that aims to generate the combined outcome of the destination brand. This reciprocal process is typical under a service-dominant logic. The state DMO identifies acceptance of the TNQ brand among key stakeholders through the development process. It is also important that the state DMO perceive that the TNQ brand was considered the best ‘fit’ for the region by stakeholders. Thus, the state DMO notes brand buy-in to the brand was strong within the destination from brand development stating:

TNQ is one destination that in the development of that we got to that territory relatively easily and certainly in terms of the stakeholders in the region embraced that saying yup (sic) that’s ultimately what we want to deliver on. It seemed to be that we arrived in a good space ultimately (STO2a).

After the development of the brand a detailed presentation of the brand personality and values and how to operationalise the brand was presented to regional DMO members. Operators from all membership levels (from Supporters to Platinum members) were
invited to this one off brand launch. Furthermore, a brand tool-kit was disseminated online for operators. The presentation of the brand, through one-way communication, demonstrates a shift from the initial dialogue approach in brand development to a less flexible linear communication approach, associated with an economic dominant logic. One consultant to the destination explains that the brand was not just launched but efforts were made to enable the brand to be integrated into business practices across the destination stating, “we also gave them [operators] the tools to understand how to embrace it [the brand] in their own business and how to embrace it at the [local DMO] level” (C5). The brand launch indicates that the regional DMO is aiming to create brand transparency for stakeholders, allowing them access to brand materials and providing members with understanding of what the brand is, and where and when it should be used. However, the use of brand tool kits illustrates a process whereby the brand ‘owner’ (DMO) offer ‘stakeholders’ (operators) tools through episodic exchanges to use the brand rather than encouraging participation through dialogue, this process is reflective of an economic dominant logic assuming homogenous operator buy-in.

A dual brand strategy was developed by the state and regional DMOs included the rebranding of the TNQ destination. The dual brand strategy (as explained in Chapter Five) was implemented by the state and regional DMOs in order to draw on the iconic resource of the Great Barrier Reef, in international markets. Awareness of the ‘icon’ was already considered by the state DMO as high in the domestic (Australian) market so the “Adventurous by Nature” slogan was implemented to develop knowledge of other opportunities and experiences available within the destination. The use of the dual brand strategy is attempting to generate the greatest level of awareness of experiences for the destination, utilising multiple core tangible and intangible resources to best suit the needs of different markets.

Since the launch of the “Tropical North Queensland – Adventurous by Nature” brand in 2009, the state DMO has stepped back in relation to their role of promoting brand buy-in, but remain close partners of the regional DMO. The state DMO is leaving the ‘brand management’ to the regional DMO; by stepping back in the implementation role, the state DMO is generating unequal dependence between the DMOs. One state
DMO representative states, “everyone should know ‘Tropical North Queensland - Adventurous by Nature’ and be fully across it now. But we are leaving the regional DMO to that level [of generating brand buy-in]” (STO1). The quote indicates that the state DMO are approaching the branding process with the assumption that there are a homogenous group of stakeholders (operators) that need the same level of education and communication to buy-in to the brand. This view also arrogantly assumes that the DMOs (regional and local) and operators have enough knowledge about the brand to effectively implement it. Thus, also presuming that the brand development process is unambiguous and transparent.

From the state DMO perspective, the level of engagement brand buy-in is varied among operators. One state DMO participant identifies “the level of exposure to the brand and the time that stakeholders are willing to put in to learn about the brand varies among operators” (STO1). Furthermore, a state DMO representative suggests that a number of the smaller “mum and dad” operators do not have the time to invest in the brand and therefore, do not have the same level of buy-in (STO1). The understanding of the various levels of brand engagement demonstrates acknowledgement from the state DMO that the operators are not a homogenous group. In addition, the state DMO identifies the role of knowledge in the brand process attributing greater knowledge to more brand buy-in. However, there is a lack of flexibility with the branding approach and willingness to spend the extra time with operators that have not ‘bought in’ to the brand, despite the acknowledgement of heterogeneity in the stakeholder network. In the Cairns destination there are around 14,000 small businesses and more than 600 medium sized businesses (Cairns Perfectly Positioned, 2014). With a large proportion of the destination made up of the smaller ‘mum and dad’ type operators the regional DMO need to recognise the heterogeneity of the network members and ensure that the knowledge is disseminated in a way that reaches all members. The state DMO feels that since the launch they have had “less control over the brand and its usage” (STO2a) passing the responsibility to the regional DMO. However, the state DMO attests that “by listening to the concerns of the operators in the development period there is strong [brand] engagement” (STO2a). Since the implementation of the brand the level of engagement of operators to the brand has not been monitored or tested by DMOs at
any level (state, regional or local) therefore, the DMO cannot be sure of the level of engagement, or buy-in, among operators.

From the regional DMO’s perspective, there is “continual education” for operators in terms of informing operators of the value of the DMO, the destination brand and what benefits they brings to operators (RTO8). The continued education reflects an attempt by the regional DMO to ensure information symmetry among operators and create dialogues between stakeholders (DMO and operators). The continual engagement and education indicates that the regional DMO is aware that there is not a strong buy-in to the brand. Consequently, the regional DMO are trying to reaffirm their position and the value of the brand. The regional DMO appear to be following the logic that if the DMO present the right stimuli, then the target group respond in the desired way.

There are a number of operators within the destination, outside the current membership base of the regional DMO, that participants identify are unwilling to join the regional DMO as members. The refusal to become members, one participant attributes to “[a] lack of satisfaction with the structure and the regionals DMOs contribution to the marketing of the destination” (RTO8). There have been a number of regional DMO role changes since operators ceased membership, however a number of operators still have not re-joined. The lack of operator willingness to participate in the network again, despite structural and personnel changes, highlights the importance of history (path dependencies) within destination brand networks. Operators are unwilling to re-join the brand network based on the history and inertia within the region indicating that despite the change of CEO, behaviours are consistent to historical iterations. As such, operators are directed by path dependency, that identifies behaviours are learnt over time. The regional DMO has made little effort to change their operating procedures or approach to marketing despite the understanding that operators are unwilling to become members; instead, mostly the regional DMO discard the relationships. The willingness of the regional DMO to discard relationships indicates a strong episodic approach to relationship building that is typical of economic dominant logic.
Despite actions that indicate an episodic approach to relationship building, a regional DMO participant identifies that “nurturing” the relationships that exist between the regional DMO and its members is important (RTO8). Through networking events and workshops the regional DMO identifies ways to get members together, educate them on the brand and the destination and stimulate greater support for the regional DMO and the brand (RTO8). The networking approach highlights that the regional DMO is attempting to work towards generating support for themselves and creating goal consensus across the destination. However, these processes are for existing members, the regional DMO, on the whole, are not actively attempting to re-engage with operators that have been previously disenfranchised by the politics and processes that exist within the destination.

6.2.2 Brand implementation and the impact on brand buy-in

One of the major focuses and goals for the regional DMO is to build awareness of the destination through the use of the destination brand. This goal is typical of both economic and consumer-dominant logics. The regional DMO is responsible for driving visitor numbers and encouraging people to spend money in the destination. Regional DMOs are constrained by limited funding and, as such, they consider promoting all areas and resources of the destination financially unviable (C5; RTO8). Due to the resource constraints the regional DMO identifies what they consider the most “sellable” features (resources) of the destination and utilise those to drive tourism in the destination (C5). By allocating resources in the way they perceive to stimulate visitation, the regional DMO is able to achieve highest functional benefits. These benefits result in visitor numbers, as a result, fulfilling the regional DMO’s needs under an economic dominant logic. This strategy of brand promotion also helps develop and reinforce strong images in the mind of the consumer and consequently stimulating visitation to the destination under a consumer-dominant logic.

During the implementation of the brand the role of the local DMO is emphasised by the regional DMO. Local DMOs are able to focus on a smaller destination than the regional DMO and thus, the role of the local DMO is strongly supported by operators with a local DMO across the destination. Although those with a local DMO are satisfied with the way that they are building awareness, there are not local DMOs
situated in all of the TNQ destinations. As such, some destinations do not have the additional support that the local DMO is able to provide (LTO9). Unequal dependencies on the regional DMO are established by the lack of local DMOs across the entire destination. Certain localities have greater support and more directed marketing efforts, based mostly on the presence of the local DMO, whilst other destinations rely solely on the regional DMO. As previously mentioned, a proportion of the local DMO budget is being spent on membership to the regional DMO rather than on promoting their destination (LTO9). Therefore, leaving the local DMO resource constraints. The resource constraints, based on the membership contribution of the local DMO to regional DMO, highlights power differentials between DMOs. The local DMO are contributing more to the relationship than the regional DMO. Thereby, trust within the brand network is stifled, as the local DMO are unable to identify the reciprocity in the relationship. The regional DMO placing the local DMO on the membership structure with operators suggests a rigid and homogenous approach to creating and sustaining relational ties within the destination. This approach indicates that the regional DMO are not valuing the local DMOs contribution to marketing efforts. Consequently, the hierarchical governance approach across the DMO network is impacting the brand buy-in among local DMOs.

DMOs’ use of the brand

It appears that there is careful planning and strategy into how the brand is developed and launched. Yet, there is little consideration by the regional DMO as to how operators use the brand after its introduction, apart from the provision of a branding tool kit that contains slogans, images, logos, etc. A consultant to the destination states:

When you talk about branding you cannot just walk into a business tomorrow and make changes you need to work through a pyramid and push it across, there needs to be a new way…it has got to be done…it is all about the practical stuff (C5).

This consultant indicates that there is acknowledgement that the current brand management approach by the regional DMO is challenging. It appears that there is little filtration of the brand through the top management of the regional DMO to front
line staff at the coal-face of the customer experience. Ensuring that the brand filters through all levels of members and their staff is important as it is the front line staff that are charged with the responsibility of providing the destination brand experience.

Another issue with the implementation of the destination brand is that it is not fully adopted and utilised in operations within the regional DMO. One operator in relation to the DMO’s use of the brand identifies:

*If I am being really picky if you go over to the TTNQ boardroom and look at the photos, the big photos are still ‘Change your Latitude’ photos. Now they are nice and pretty, lovely images, but they are not on brand* (G13).

The ‘Change your Latitude’ brand was the brand prior to the ‘Tropical North Queensland – Adventurous by Nature’. The quote and regional DMOs use of old branding indicates that the regional DMO are not using the current brand effectively. Furthermore, in additional research into the destination the researcher identified the minutes from the 2010 Annual Report of the regional DMO contained branding that was out-dated on using the ‘Change your Latitude’ brand despite the new brand having been in place for more than one year. The regional DMO’s lack of brand implementation and use facilitates a lack of buy-in from the operators of the destination and indicates a poor leadership style. Across interviews there was no identification of any misuse from the regional DMO in their own brand application.

**Leadership approach of the DMO**

A strong theme that naturally evolved across the interviews is the role of regional DMO as brand leaders. In particular, the regional DMO perceive that their role, as the focal organisation and brand leader is “to leverage marketing exposure to the region” (TTNQ, 2010).

Despite their perceived role as brand leader, there is no appointed brand manager position within the regional DMO during the period of this research (2012-2014). Previously within the regional DMO, there was an individual responsible for the creation and dissemination of the brand. This person left the organisation the position
and, since then, the appointment has not been replaced (C5). Therefore, leaving a lack of brand ownership to any one person within the DMO, instead responsibilities are spread across various positions in the organisation. The lack of internal brand leadership cements a lack of brand knowledge and understanding among DMO employees and among operators, one consultant states:

So I had my turn [as brand leader] and there was a full induction [into the brand] but no one else around the office will do it, they won’t talk the [brand specific] language, they won’t talk the segmentation language, it is not because they are not great marketers because they are, but on the whole, tourism is just so ingrained, particularly the further north you get with more inbound travel destinations and travel agent relationships, even though that is just decreasing the whole mind-set and experience set that we have, that is just where we are from (C5).

The regional DMO perceive their role as the destination leaders to be an educator to operators, helping operators to understand the benefits that the state and regional DMO are bringing to the destination (RTO8). The regional DMO identify education as an on-going process throughout brand implementation that involves frequent communication with operators suggesting that the regional DMO engage with operators in a form of dialogue. A regional DMO participant states:

It is about educating them [operators] that it is still about the big picture that we are striving for and without that bigger picture there would be no product to sell and there will be no boat that goes out to the reef or no gallery café because no one will be coming here, so it seems simple but a lot of people [operators] get bogged down in their own operations and I get that. So I think it is pretty much that and then parting with money too, to become a member people are really trying to justify where their dollars go these days’ (RTO8).

Yet, the regional DMO apply a rigid, hierarchical (‘elitist’), approach to leadership despite recognition from the regional DMO about the importance of knowledge building within the branding process. A regional DMO representative stating, “we do not have preferential treatment as such, we give Platinum and Gold members more
opportunities but we treat members the same” (RTO8). The hierarchical approach ensures that resources are directed to the more powerful operators (defined by the DMO). The goal of the regional DMO is to distribute resources where they gain the greatest perceived outcome. The regional DMO therefore, utilise power and information asymmetries to maintain their focal position within the destination. Rather than ‘leading’ the operators within destination, the regional DMO ‘manage’ the destination brand and their relationships with operators (RTO8; C5).

*Communication style applied by the DMO*

Communication is also discussed extensively across interviews with the state, regional and local DMOs. Communication is integral to the dissemination of the brand message and stimulating brand buy-in. As such, the DMOs detail how they utilise communication within the destination.

The communication process between DMOs and with operators is structured and clear from the regional DMO’s perspective. A formal, functional, linear and unilateral approach to communication is predominantly used by the regional DMO. On a monthly basis the regional DMO send out a newsletter to all members detailing what has been happening within the destination over the month. The emails include missions and marketing opportunities that have been utilised as well as future events and opportunities for the destination (RTO8). Such information is functional in its nature, ensuring that members are kept up-to-date with key information about the destination. The information is distributed in a top-down (regional DMO to local DMO and operators) manner, that does not encourage dialogue between the regional DMO and operators. Additional functional material is available to members on the regional DMO’s website. These additional materials include visitor statistics as well as brand toolkits and brand guidelines.

Members are encouraged by the regional DMO to keep them up-to-date with information about their businesses and any noteworthy news across the destination. A regional DMO participant states, “I ask them frequently to give me an update or not to forget to update their member profile” (RTO8). This quote indicates that the regional DMO is attempting to communicate frequently with its members. However, these are
episodic exchanges of information, rather than the regional DMO entering into
dialogue with the members. In addition to the monthly newsletter, on an annual basis,
the CEO of the regional DMO discusses strategic and marketing plans for the year
with Platinum level members. This highlights information asymmetries within the
destination, where those that are considered the most ‘powerful’, based on their
resource contribution, are given additional direct communications that are more
informal and flexible than the rest of the region receive.

A participant identifies that their role in the regional DMO is about “stimulating
continual dialogue with operators” (RTO8). But this participant notes that facilitating
operators’ understanding and identification of the benefits of the destination brand
and the regional DMO is challenging. Furthermore, the regional DMO participant
considers the reciprocity of the relationship between operators and the regional DMO
essential. This participant identifies feedback provided by members is important, that
it is not just about the regional DMO talking at members but requires their interaction
(RTO8). However, the regional DMO notes that members are often not willing to
provide this in a constructive manner, feedback often occurs when members are
severely dissatisfied with something and they often respond by enlisting others with
‘shared’ dissatisfaction. Thus, taking an episodic approach that does not offer a
continued relationship between the regional DMO and operators. Despite the
operators’ methods of communicating problems, the regional DMO understands the
value in the communication process and is willing to try and soothe disenchanted
operators. One participant stating:

So that pretty much is consistently my challenge to say to those that
are having a whinge or an uproar and leading them to water saying this is what we
have been doing, this is how you were effected, this is what you gained from it and the
information is all there, if you want to learn about it pick up the phone and talk to us.
It can be a constant battle but is also very rewarding when things pay off (RTO8).

The local DMO take a similar, formal approach to communication as the regional
DMO to their members. The local DMO send out a monthly email newsletter
detailing events of the month and forthcoming opportunities to their members.
Furthermore, the local DMOs host annual general meetings (AGM) where they report their yearly activities and elect a new managerial board. During this time all members are welcome to come and listen to what has been achieved over the past year. The detailed minutes from these meetings are available through public archives. The minutes to the AGMs are recorded in meticulous detail, as one consultant notes “they [the AGM minutes] are the record of the destination’s progress over the year” (C23).

Additionally, one local DMO hosts a weekly radio segment where residents and operators are told about what has been happening in tourism over the week, recent tourism trends and any pertinent news influencing tourism in the destination, thereby adopting a more informal approach to communication. This segment is available on podcast for future listening however there is no written form of this communication. The local DMO encourages members to come and talk to them taking an open door policy stating, “we have an open door here, they [operators] can come in at any time and find out what we are doing” (LTO9). The combination of formal and informal communication style is important for the local DMO to enhance their relationship with the local community.

Both the local and regional DMO identify that no one is listening, despite their attempts at communication with operators. It is important to note that notwithstanding acknowledgement that their current approach is not working, the DMOs still favour the rigid, formal approach to communication and no changes have been made to the communication style. The regional DMO states, “well you can lead them to water but you cant make them drink” (RTO8). The regional DMO are resigned to the fact that operators do not listen, whilst the local DMOs makes light of the issues they are having, providing jovial solutions “someone get them with a big stick? An electric shock…I think it is just a time issue” (LTO9).

Both the local and regional DMOs perceive that they are trying to be transparent and encourage open communication across all levels of membership; however, members are not receiving this. Yet despite the understanding of a lack of reach through their communications, there is stagnation in the DMO’s approach and changes have not
been made in their communication style to create a more efficient approach to delivering brand knowledge to operators.

6.2.3 Brand evaluation by the DMO
There is a self confessed lack of brand monitoring by both the state and the regional DMO since the launch of the TNQ brand in 2009. The lack of monitoring and evaluation originates from lack of resources, specifically the funding required to conduct the research. One state DMO participant mentions:

We probably haven’t spent enough money to make an impact [with the brand]. So whilst in the region it’s well accepted I can’t really quote you any figures on it I am afraid. And we haven’t conducted specific research on it [the TNQ brand] for a while, well in fact ever...we haven’t had the money to do specific research (ST01).

Despite a lack of monitoring of brand implementation and delivery of the destination brand the regional and state DMO are monitoring key economic data, such as visitor numbers and visitor expenditure. Thus, the regional DMO are seen to be funding the monitoring of outputs sought typically through an economic dominant logic.

6.2.4 Summary of DMO dominant logic and governance approach
Overall the empirical materials indicate that the regional and local DMO are responsible for the brand implementation to varying degrees of influence. The regional DMO apply formal management to their hierarchical brand governance approach. Facilitating the hierarchical governance, is a linear structure to communication that supports episodic relationships, despite efforts to create dialogue. These attributes are typical of an economic dominant logic. The DMOs current brand management lacks flexibility in its processes and is institutionalised in its actions. Thus, the current application of internal brand management techniques is done in a formal rigid manner that encourages utility maximisation, emphasising power differentials and information asymmetries across the destination brand network (relating to RQ1, RQ3 and RQ4). It is also apparent from the empirical materials that there is a lack of evaluation of both the internal and external perceptions of the brand.
6.3 OPERATORS’ PERCEPTIONS OF BRAND GOVERNANCE PRACTICES

It is important to consider the operators’ perceptions of the brand development, implementation and evaluation to understand where there is congruency, or a lack of congruency, between stakeholders (RQ1). Furthermore, an exploration of the operators’ perceptions examines the impact of governance practices on destination brand buy-in (RQ2), the additional influencing factors to destination brand buy-in, the impact of stakeholder-agency theory (RQ3) and the implications of internal brand management practices (RQ4).

6.3.1 Brand development and the impact on operators’ brand buy-in

The brand development process has lacked transparency in the eyes of the operators. This is evidenced through several participants (B7, B10, G13, S17a, B18, B19, B20) identifying that they are unaware of how the brand was developed and unable to see the role that the regional DMO played within brand development. These participants state that they believe the brand had been “imposed on the destination by the state DMO” (B10). Other participants also note that they were “unsure of the level of communication around the brand development to operators within the region” (B22). This quote highlights the lack of transparency in the process and the lack of inclusion of operators in the brand development process. Participants believe there is information asymmetry across members with some operators- based on financial contribution- having greater access to information about the brand development than others, for instance one participant identifies “it certainly concentrates on the big players…the DMO does not recognise us small players (B16). Often operators assume that the members that the DMO consider powerful, based on their resource contribution and membership level, get the greatest access to brand development consultations, one participant states, “they are in their pockets because they pay silver membership” (B10). Consequently, a number of operators suggest that the brand was ‘dumped’ on them by the state DMO and is an inappropriate fit for the destinations included in the brand. These comments about the brand being ‘dumped’ on the destination were prevalent across all levels of membership from Bronze to Platinum one member stating, “no I do not believe there was any industry consultation unless I missed it but I don’t think I did” (G13). Whilst a Bronze operator also describes a lack
of consultation “Nope they told us they were doing it [changing the brand] and that was pretty much it. You have to use specific colours, use this, use that” (B10). The initial lack of engagement of operators gives them the feeling as though they are not a part of the process; thereby the regional and state DMOs have marginalised members from the brand. The marginalisation is likely due to the top-down approach that is considered by the local DMO as “the wrong drive to [brand] development” (LTO9). Another dissatisfied participant states:

We were never involved [in the branding process] they just dump it on you. When [Change Your] ‘Latitude’ came out they just dumped it on you. We tried to get involved in the “Adventurous by Nature” stuff but that is just silly people holding silly signs. And it is like the television ad[vertisements], they have no relevance to product. I just don’t understand it (B20).

This quote highlights the importance of brand knowledge for operators, without understanding the brand and how it can be operationalised, operators are unable to buy-in to the brand.

Conversely, in relation to the brand development some Gold operators identify that there was consultation within the destination. But, the operator also notes that those that ran the consultation process put their own spin on the consultations. Thus, the regional and state DMOs were able to derive their own preconceived outcome from the process. Thereby, highlighting utility maximisation driving the DMOs decisions. A Gold member stating:

Well they [operators] were consulted with but it was a case of having the meetings then you have the people running the meetings [state and regional DMO] then putting their own spin on things. Now I’m not being negative in what I am saying, I am saying that the brand of TNQ was influenced upon how TQ saw the branding fitting together across the different regions of the state (G6).

For many operators, across all levels, this process of brand implementation involved more politics, manipulation and “under the table handshakes” (B10) than it did a
collaborative approach, thus, indicating a top-down approach. In the eyes of the operators the DMO is pushing self-interest above developing an authentic brand that suits the needs of the destination one participant stating “it was about how they (state DMO) saw it all fitting across the state” (G6). A lack of transparency in terms of development and implementation and limited access to the branding process has also left operators less willing to buy-in to the destination brand, one such participant stating, “I just don’t know if it works or not” (P11).

Operators’ perceptions of the brand name
The dual brand strategy and the brand names associated with each of these is another fundamental difficulty with achieving brand buy-in among operators that emerged across the interviews. The dual brand strategy is lacking transparency for operators and is confusing for a number of operators. Operators identify that where and when they should use the brands is not clear, with a number of operators believing that one brand is being used both domestically and internationally. This lack of understanding caused further confusion with the translation of the domestic brand internationally, one participant states, “I remember asking how the [Adventurous by Nature] brand would work in the international market and what the translation would be and he [the CEO of the regional DMO] couldn’t tell me” (G13). Whist another participant explains:

I think the domestic market they are supposed to be using “Adventurous by Nature” but time and time again it is referred to as “Cairns and the Great Barrier Reef” when they are marketing domestically and they are not supposed to be doing that (P9).

This quote indicates that it is not just the operators that lack sufficient brand knowledge but the DMO are also not utilising the dual brand strategy as designed. This lack of regional DMO use may be derived in part by the weakness in the partnership discussed in section 6.1.1. Isolated attempts to convey brand knowledge and when to use each of the brands have been made by state, regional and local DMOs, these attempts are constrained by limited state and regional DMO funding, a state DMO stating, “TNQ have had less budget [than Gold Coast] so I am not sure
how widely accepted it [the brand] is up there and how much work has been undertaken to get local businesses buying-in” (STO1). Accordingly, a lack of brand knowledge and understanding of how to operationalise the brand within the destination is inhibiting brand buy-in among operators.

Beyond the confusion of when to use each of the dual brands, there is also apprehension among members in the destination due to the name chosen for both of the brands. Operators criticise the “Cairns and the Great Barrier Reef”, international brand, for being Cairns focused (B10; B16; B19; B22; LTO9; S17a). The brand is considered to fail to include the diverse landscapes (physical resources) of the destination, such as the Daintree Rainforest or the outback destinations (U15). By focusing on specific destinations the brand is inhibiting buy-in from operators within more regional destinations and those not in the direct Cairns area. One participant states:

*I get the reason they do the Great Barrier Reef blanket approach and you know really pushing Cairns but there are other things to do. What they [the regional DMO] are doing is “ohh we are just pushing Cairns but people know about these [regional] places”, well no they don’t because you are not marketing them and the way you are marketing them is not right because it does not actually reflect the destination* (B10).

This concern from operators demonstrates a feeling of marginalisation and that they are not being represented by the brand, a local DMO considers “it [the brand] doesn’t describe [destination] it describes some of the other regions and they tried to do sub-branding under that but it does not work” (LTO9), therefore generating a lack of brand buy-in. Little education for operators in relation to their role in the delivery of the brand means that operators have an absence of brand knowledge and lack understanding of the brand fit for each of the destinations. One participant suggests that the brand could be for “anywhere in the world” and that “they told you this is what you need to run with without any discussion” (B22). The lack of brand knowledge indicates that there was little transparency during the development
process. The lack of knowledge and understanding in turn is impacting the willingness of members to participate (buy-in) in the marketing and branding efforts.

It is not just the international brand that is not widely regarded by operators. Participants note the “Adventurous by Nature” tag line, associated with the domestic brand, as ‘narrow’, ‘pigeon holing’ and ‘unrepresentative’ (B10; B20; G6; U15). The distain towards the brand and the operators’ inability to identify with the brand is inhibiting the brand buy-in and brand commitment. For a number of operators an inability to identify with the brand values and identity and how their product can be representative of the brand expedites a lack of brand buy-in. For other operators, the lack of buy-in is derived from the lack of inclusion of physical resources in the branding efforts. TNQ houses two of the seven natural wonders of the world, the Great Barrier Reef and the Daintree Rainforest. These resources are considered ‘iconic’ to many operators and consumers and operators feel that the brand should reflect these drivers to the destination (B21). The lack of use of the ‘iconic resources’ in the brand makes operators feel as though there was not sufficient consultation in the development of the brand. Rather, operators perceive that the DMO exerted their power and made decisions that do not reflect the destination, but that reflect self-interest of the state and regional DMO. For example one participant mentions:

*I have no hope [in making a difference to the destination], I mean pulling my membership won’t make any difference to them [the regional DMO], they say what they will. I believe that my money should be spent to promote the destination not the product but the destination, I wish they would get back to their grass roots, the reef and the rainforest which people still think is incredibly special. The Great Barrier Reef, but TTNQ don’t promote it* (B20).

Another participant also identifies the value in the ‘iconic resources’ in the branding of the destination and states:

*I’m not sure what is out there that could be better [than Adventurous by Nature], I’m a little old school and think it should be something iconic and I suppose
I have always felt that Cairns should have ownership of the Great Barrier Reef, that is what people come here for (G6).

Other operators feel that in general the current branding campaign does not add any value to the marketing efforts of the destination, but just suits the needs of the DMO. One Gold member says “rightly or wrongly I do not feel that it adds any value to the region” (G13).

Not all operators are dissatisfied with the brand; some are more nonchalant toward it believing that it is not an issue for the destination. A Silver operator identifies, “Adventurous, yes, I think that it’s ok and that they’ve done it [branded] well, I have nothing to complain about” (S17a). Other operators are more positive about the brand; participants that identify the value in the brand and its contribution to the destination are satisfied with it. One positive participant attests:

*The branding is working very well with us and we are one of the images used throughout so I couldn’t be happier and I think it really works for the region, it is nature that is behind all this and that is the critical difference between what we have up here and the experience that we have up here and what is offered on the Gold Coast, there is plenty of adventure on the Gold Coast that is not provided by nature* (B21).

This participant not only identifies their role within the brand but they are also able to identify how the brand helps to differentiate the destination from other Queensland competitors. The adventure focused operators and those that had heavy investment (such as Platinum members) in the destination tend to be among those that supported the brand name, one such operator noting, “it [the brand] fits us like a glove, I think it is a great brand” (B22). The operators with a close ‘fit’ to the brand values have a more active role in the brand advertising and closer relationship with the regional DMO than other operators, the same operator says “I did go to the branding workshops…and there was plenty of information given to people” (B22). Given their relational ties these operators indicate greater levels of knowledge and understanding of the brand and how it can be utilised in their operations. As such, these operators
were able to identify how the brand fits with their own brand and have a greater influence within the regional DMO and over the direction of the brand. These relational strengths, based on the fit of the brand, highlight power differentials within the destination with some operators being given greater levels of information and resources by the regional DMO. The power differentials also demonstrate unequal dependence of operators across the destination in regards to their relationship with the DMO.

Through the follow-up interviews there was discussion about the influence of the destination brand name on operator buy-in. For instance, there is a clear separation among the interviewees about their perception of the use of ‘Tropical’ in the brand name of Tropical North Queensland. Some participants identify the positives of using this (B19, S17b) whilst others consider tropical a barrier to visitation (G6, B10, UK15). Those participants that are in support of the tropical name identify that tropical conjures an image of heat, a good escape from colder climates, such as Melbourne and Sydney (B19; G13), identifying its ability to differentiate the destination when in Australia “on the whole there is not much exotic” (C5). In addition, a Silver operator considers that Tropical North seems more accessible for potential visitors than Far North Queensland did, thus indicating the strengths against the previous name of the destination (S17a).

However, other operators state that when thinking of tropical images of “humidity, mosquitos and rain” (B10) are induced alongside “ticks and leeches” (B16). One Gold member although perceiving benefits in the use of tropical also comments: “there are difficulties in advertising based on climate, it is a risk for the destination as it does not differentiate the destination from the competition” (G6). Thus, these operators do not perceive tropical as a marketing strength of the destination. This member also notes that this is becoming even more difficult to utilise tropical when “truly tropical” destinations such as Bali and Fiji are becoming more accessible for Australian travellers. A comment from a consultant to the destination was particularly interesting in regards to the use of tropical that states:
Perception vs. reality is a big thing for us and for some points they [potential visitors] hear tropical [and are put off] but it is the essence of what the place is. And we know that during the winter it is the best place on earth...We need to be very efficient at communicating just how good nine months of the year are (C5).

Yet despite the acknowledgement of the strengths of the brand name, the comments from operators within the destination suggest that efficient communication to consumers and operators is something that has not yet been achieved and work still needs to be done by the regional DMO to overcome this barrier. For example: “Perhaps new name [is needed] for TNQ in Oz (sic) market - somehow point out that it is more pleasant up here in the summer than the baking heat of further south” (B16).

Overall the use of tropical is considered a more appropriate marketing tool than the previous “Far” iteration. Despite this, there is acknowledgement among operators and within the DMO that there needs to be more done to communicate the reality of the tropical nature of North Queensland and thus, effectively highlight the benefits of the destinations climate to consumers. Tropical is not the only discussion about the brand name, the “Adventurous by Nature” slogan associated with the brand also stimulates conversation among participants and demonstrates an impact on their brand buy-in. The lack of brand buy-in among a number of operators appears to be derived from the lack of consultation with operators in the region to identify an authentic brand name that is a strong representation of the entire region. Therefore, by adopting a brand name with little consultation, the DMOs are immediately inhibiting buy-in.

It is important to note that the majority of participants across all membership levels identify that the “Adventurous By Nature” tag-line is a considerable improvement on the previous “Change your Latitude” tag-line that none of the operators were able to relate to. However, there are still a number of issues associated with the slogan that are inhibiting brand buy-in.

A Gold member, proposes that the subtly of nature is considered lost within marketing efforts despite nature being strength of the brand as it provides the adventure (G6). This participant also explains that the destination needs to focus more
on how they are being seen by their consumers, that the regional DMO needs to be
careful as certain aspects (resources) of the destination are currently being lost. Thus,
the destination is not able to effectively market its core resources to potential visitors.

Other participants also express dissatisfaction with the slogan, claiming that the
slogan is narrowing the view of the destination and giving potential visitors an
incorrect view of the destination suggesting “I also think Tropical North Queensland
does not reflect the whole region and can give prospective visitors an incorrect
perception of the area” (U15). The use of the brand slogan appears to be hindering the
operators’ buy-in to the brand by marginalising a wide geographical destination.

Other operators identify the positive within the destination brand slogan, for example:

    I didn’t pick up on the fact that until I read your report that that
    catch-phrase actually has 2 parts to it adventure and nature, I saw it myself as
    adventurous as by nature per-se so I didn’t pick up on the nature part of it. I think
    that, personally I think it is a good catch-phrase, it is good it is sharp and it is useful
    (B19).

This quote highlights the importance of brand knowledge. In the initial interview this
participant did not like the brand or its slogan due to the limited knowledge provided
by the regional DMO. There is an indication that a lack of brand knowledge among
operators is impacting the level of buy-in to the brand. Once this member identified
the meaning of the slogan they stated more regard for the slogan, evidencing the
importance of knowledge in the branding process.

Another key discussion with a number of operators within the follow-up interview
evolved around the participants’ knowledge and semantics of the word adventurous
and how the word was being used within the brand campaign. A consultant for the
destination identifies that adventurous is often mistaken by people for ‘adventure’ and
that is where a number of the buy-in issues are stemming from. The Oxford English
dictionary defines adventurous as:
Adjective, ¹Seeking Adventure; given to or having many adventures, bold, daring. ²Characterised by adventure; full of incident; ³Of a person; seeking or given to experimentation, innovation, or unconventionality, willing to try new things; ⁴of a product, activity etc. unconventional, innovative, characterised by experimentation or novelty.

Whilst adventure is defined as ‘noun, To risk oneself; to venture’. Across the destination there is no distinction between the meanings of adventure and adventurous despite the difference in meaning. Both words are used interchangeably across the interviews (C5; G6; B7; U12; U15; S17a/b; B19; B20; B21; B22). The interchangeable use of adventure and adventurous suggests that there has not been strong communication on the integration of the brand to explain to operators the meaning of slogan and why it is suitable for the destination. Yet, “Adventurous” is essential to delivering the brand experience to consumers and as such, it is important that operators understand how they are representative of an Adventurous experience. One participant states:

The slogan is fine but it is only part of what makes up the area as it is much more sophisticated than that. It could possibly frighten away the more sedate visitors who are a large part of our market. The semi-retired, self-drive visitors have money to spend. More needs to be done to encourage them to visit and spend more time in the region. They are more interested in the heritage and food and wine trails (U15).

Again, highlighting the importance of brand knowledge and communication ensuring that operators know what the brand stands for and how it can be conveyed to visitors. A different Bronze member notes that not many people “get” the branding and the slogan because of the use of the ‘adventure’, suggesting through a distinct lack of knowledge into the meaning of the brand and the slogan, the word is marginalising members of the regional DMO (B20). In addition, another Bronze member comments: “adventure is only 18% of the market, ‘Adventurous by Nature’ could be anywhere in the world” (B21). This participant identifies that ‘adventure’ is the problem within the brand as it is not representative of the people that visit the destination, demonstrating a lack of brand knowledge.
Overall, there seems to be significant discord among members and their opinions about the brand name and slogan thus impacting on the brand buy-in. On the whole operators suggest that comparatively the current brand iteration is better than the previous Change Your Latitude brand that participants identify “meant nothing” (LTO8; P14; B22). Empirical materials indicate that early discord among operators and their inability to identify with the brand name and slogan immediately hindered buy-in of a number of operators (RQ2). These interviews highlight that failure to achieve satisfaction among operators during brand development leads to a greater challenge to develop brand buy-in during the implementation of the brand. Thus, emphasising the importance of consultation and dialogue with participants to ensure that the brand meaning and values are effectively conveyed to members enabling the brand promise to be delivered to visitors.

6.3.2 Brand implementation and the impact on operators’ brand buy-in

A concern for several operators in relation to the state, regional and local DMOs’ goal for the implementation of the brand to develop awareness among consumers is that “there is already a strong awareness both domestically and internationally of Cairns and the Great Barrier Reef” (U15). This regional awareness results from the consumer survey highlight that Cairns as a destination has the highest level of awareness, furthermore, the interviews indicate the destination has a higher concentration of resources and is gaining greatest benefits. Conversely, other destinations feel marginalised due to the lack of awareness building and resource distribution for areas outside of Cairns, these feelings were reinforced by the consumer survey report indicating lower regional awareness.

However, based on the consumer report, operators argue that there now needs to be a shift from awareness building to an action-based approach, engaging in dialogue with consumers that helps stimulate their visitation to the destination (G6). According to participants, the local DMO is approaching this more effectively than the regional DMO (B7; B10). Participants consider that the local DMOs are able to focus on the destination more effectively, thereby, delivering a more focused marketing campaign. For example one Bronze operator explains:
When it comes to it some times you feel like you are one of a million, especially with TTNQ you know, the country they have to cover up here for membership is massive you know, inevitably people are going to get left out which I think is happening at the moment...we have [local DMO] and thank God we have them because it is required...they are really concentrated and focused on the local area which is great (B10).

In terms of converting the awareness of the destination into action and getting people to the destination there were some interesting views from members. One Bronze operator identifies that getting people to the destination is a major challenge. However, this participant suggests that by showcasing more of the diverse activities (resources) available within the destination may help to stimulate action among potential consumers stating, “TTNQ can do a better job at representing more of the destination or painting a better picture of the diversity of activities and landscapes here” (B7). Thus, operators perceive the role of the regional DMO as essential to the delivery of a strong marketing approach to the destination. Operators and local DMOs outside of Cairns throughout the interviews identify Cairns operators as ego-centric looking out for only the Cairns area however, the participant that identifies that “we would like to see more diversity in the marketing, is based within Cairns” (LTO9).

This quote reflects that there are operators within the destination that are considering the entire destination seeking benefits for the wider network, emphasising the collaborative approach and indicating not all operators are focused on their own destination. A Bronze member notes that it is great that there is a strong awareness to the majority of the destination however; this participant attests “[stimulating access is] a lot more complicated than just getting people to know of the destination” (B19). The participant was unable to give any recommendations of how to achieve an increase in visitors. A different Bronze operator suggests that stimulating action among consumers should be the role of local DMOs. The participant identifies:

Exactly and that [with the LTO] is where you can have your action based plans rather than the awareness, TTNQ can do the whole awareness stuff on behalf of the region but the local DMO focus on the Tablelands for what they do you know they
have great food and wine tours and you know, whereas Cook Town is the 4WD and a little bit different it is very historical (B20).

This participant’s suggestion gives the local DMOs more responsibility and the role of stimulating visitation to the destination rather than creating the awareness. Awareness building is therefore considered a role of the regional DMO. One participant states:

Look I think, one of the things that has happened since you have done your report Cook Town now have their own local DMO which I think is just fantastic that you know what they can get specific funds for their area that is part of the TTNQ area. So same as PD have TPDD, Cook Town now have their own local DMO and I think that if you have more local DMOs on the ground then each area will be able to take care of themselves for what they need (B10).

Participants agree that more local DMOs operating across the destination are required, in addition the local DMOs should have clearly defined roles. Participants suggest that the local DMO should be utilised to support the marketing actions of the regional DMO, converting awareness into action among consumers (B10). Consequently, the structure of the DMO in particular the relationships between the state, regional and local DMOs need to be revised clearly defining their roles and ensuring that the funding structures are compatible and not overlapping. However, with only three official local DMOs in the destination there would still be a large proportion of the destination that is not being suitably represented. Another Bronze operator also identifies that building regional awareness should be the role of the regional DMO stating:

I think that is something that TTNQ needs to do [create awareness for the entire region] I mean the Cairns region themselves and operators within Cairns obviously won’t be keen on that as it will take dollars out of the area, but I think it is imperative that TTNQ as the regional tourism board showcase the entire region and not just the micro-region of Cairns and Port Douglas (B19).
This quote shows that desire of operators for the regional DMO to focus on the wider destination rather than just the narrow geographic area that they are based in. In contrast, some operators express that they think the current branding is designed with action in mind, that the use of the “Adventurous” slogan is designed to self motivate visitors (G6). In addition one member suggests that making changes to the branding campaign would reduce the level of action, in particular if the destination was to switch to marketing the ‘icons’ of the Great Barrier Reef and Daintree. This participant argues that use of the icons would cause the destination to loose its appeal and positioning (G6). A lack of consensus about operators’ brand perceptions is evident across the destination and, consequently, brand buy-in among operators is varied.

Overall, most participants agree that the regional DMO is achieving their goal of creating awareness and converting that to action based on the limited resources such as funding that they have to achieve their goals, a Platinum member states, “they are really keen to help but there is not a lot of resources or funding so they do what they can with what they have” (P11). All participants concur that they would like to see more visitors coming to the destination, however participants consider that the regional and local DMOs are doing well with the resources that they have. These materials highlight the importance of a strong funding structure for regional and local DMOs and that participants are aware that one of the major constraints to the marketing of the destination is funding opportunities. But, these empirical materials also indicates a strong view of the ‘bigger picture”, that is the competitive strength of the destination among operators.

There is a high level of pride in the destinations that operators are working. Operators love the destination and want to be able to covey their passion and the authentic personality of the destination to the visitors. This is important as it means that there is potentially a high level of collaborative thinking and action in the destination, therefore there is potential for strong brand commitment. These capabilities need to be effectively utilised by the regional DMO to harness competitive advantage. One participant notes:
Yeah I love it [the destination] it is easy, and it is fun, we are all really proud of where we live and want to show people our back yard, you know that way that its natural environment is really amazing (B10).

Yet despite the passion for the region, a number of operators identify the difficulties of delivering on the brand. These challenges stem from the diversity of the destination and the diversity of the consumers that come to the destination. Operators identify the heterogeneity involved in the destination both internally (in the brand network) and externally (among consumers) instead of perceiving a homogenous group of stakeholders. One Gold operator identifies the difficulties of delivering on a brand promise to so many different people with such diverse needs, identifying that “resource allocation to the destination is not sufficient to support such a diverse range of product” (G6). The same Gold operator states the need to not only meet consumer expectations but to go beyond this and provide them with “bragging rights” so that they leave completely satisfied.

In regards to the delivery of the brand experience, one Bronze members states:

I know there are some sketchy ones [businesses] that rely on under-the-table handshakes that are going to get caught out but that have the biggest say in this town. I suggested to the chamber of commerce that we should put on a service thing like Aussie Host and we start with managers and move to front line staff and when all staff have been trained you are certified so guests know that we are all on the same service level. But no that is discrimination. Are you insane? Some people will not get it but others will, when the majority have it the minority will feel left out and get it too and then we will be on the same level...I would like to see something where the town rallies together and we are on the same page, but it doesn’t happen. One day (B10).

This operator also considers that to be able to deliver the brand experience the destination needs to stick to their strengths, finding that it is difficult to deliver the current brand as it is not representative of the destination. The role of the delivery of
the brand across all touch-points is therefore considered. One consultant notes the importance of front line staff in the delivery of the brand experience:

*It is important to provide them with real customer service experience that stands out from the crowd...staff are not well trained and that comes down to cash flow...it is also important to train the front line staff so that they are fully engaged [with the brand and consumer] (C3).*

This quote demonstrates the need for transparency in the brand process ensuring there is dialogue and knowledge not just within the regional DMO, but, throughout the businesses that are delivering the brand experience. The need for consistency throughout organisations creates a demand for not only the managers of operators to understand the destination brand, but for their employees to also understand and utilise the brand in their daily operations. Thus, further complicating the destination branding process through an additional level of brand employees that is not a concern in corporate branding structures.

Through lack of transparency in the brand identity and through access to the brand operators and their staff lack knowledge and understanding of the brand, therefore are unable to deliver the brand experience. For example one participant notes “Q- do you think [business] fits the TNQ brand? A– Absolutely. Q- Do you know what the brand is? A- No but of course we are, I have to say that we are a good representation of anything” (U12). By not knowing and understanding the brand, operators are unable to deliver the brand experience. It is evident from the interviews that a number of operators are unaware of the brand and how it can be used in conjunction with their own brand and consequently, they show a distinct lack of brand buy-in. Furthermore, within TNQ there has been little filtration of the brand through the top management to front line staff of operators (B21; G6; P14; U12; U15). Transparency of the brand must be available for those that need to integrate the brand and deliver the brand experience. One member states:

*Umm I get a sense from the launch that it was top down...I am not a fan of it...I mean there is not much that you can put on your brochures but if it was*
compelling I would use it but and plus they change it so often there is no point using it, if I ask most of my colleagues they would probably have no idea what the brand is (G13).

This quote indicates that for those employees that are not in direct communication with the regional DMO there is a lack of brand knowledge. Thus, indicating that the brand experience cannot be intentionally passed on to visitors. Whilst another operator adds when asked if their staff are aware of the destination brand “the short answer is probably no. We are very focused on the experience that we deliver and the rainforest and not on the broader brand” (G6). In order for the brand to be utilised by those that deliver at the brand touch-points there needs to be consideration of how the brand filters through member organisations, ensuring it is not just the CEO that is aware of the regional DMO brand but that employees are also aware of and can deliver the brand experience. Despite this there is currently little to no attempt to stimulate brand buy-in throughout member organisations.

Operators’ perceptions of the DMO’s leadership style

From the interviews it is evident that operators find that there is no identifiable leader within the regional DMO. There is no identifiable representative that operators feel they can turn to if they have brand or marketing related issues or questions. The lack identifiable leader for operators highlights a lack of relational ties between the regional DMO and operators.

In regards to the leadership style of the regional DMO, some operators identify that there is a power-oriented approach to leadership with those that are ‘leaders’ using their power to manipulate decision-making processes. A number of operators spoke of the ‘boys club’ where the ‘leaders’ of the destination would come together and make decisions based on their history and their own perceptions of the destination. For example one operator states, “they [the regional DMO] are run like a boy’s club, there are a group of guys in Cairns who basically control the whole thing and it really is a boy’s club” (B20).
Within the ‘boy’s club’ there is a significant number of years experience among the decision-makers. The level of experience can be identified as a strength to the destination. There is knowledge and understanding about the geographical destination that they operate in. Thus, given the history of the leaders in the DMO should have a strong understanding of the resources in the destination and how best to leverage these resources for maximum benefits. Some operators believe that some of the regional DMO employees, particularly those in the ‘boy’s club’ may have become desensitised to the issues that are arising within the destination thus, considering the ‘boy’s club’ style of leadership and their strong history in the region as a weakness. For example, one operator states, “they [the boy’s club] no longer battle as hard as they once would have for the issues that matter to operators” (B19). Other participants identify that the ‘boy’s club’ is focused on the area that they operate (predominantly Cairns) rather than the entire destination. Furthermore, operators regard that the ‘boy’s club’ prioritise issues that they deem urgent based on personal relationships and political influences. As such, participants identify that members of the ‘boy’s club’ are causing inertia in the destination; that they are myopic in their view and unwilling to accept change within the destination. The ‘boy’s club’ are argued to be imbedded in the tradition of the destination and do not see any problems with the way in which the destination is operating. One participant states:

The town doesn’t really have any leadership and the two people that are meant to be its leaders are totally not here. They are stuck in the past, they don’t want to look into the future because they are nearly done and so they have had their time (B10).

Furthermore, the ‘boy’s club’s’ leadership style favours a pursuit in self-interest, maintaining strong relationships with those they deem ‘powerful’ and isolated relational ties with others within the network, demonstrating the lack of willingness to change and adapt within the destination. However, it is important to note that not all regional DMO employees are members of this ‘boy’s club’ and that the ‘boy’s club’ extends beyond the direct Cairns destination. This ‘boy’s club’ impacts the operators ability to have a say in the way that the destination is operating, there is no dialogue, rather one way communications. As a result of the ‘boy’s club’, some operators
identify that ideas or suggestions for change are not accepted if they are not members of the ‘boy’s club’ (B21). Consequently, this influence on the destination is causing stagnation and discontent among operators within the destination.

It is not just the ‘boy’s club’ that is influencing decision-making practices within the destination, other operators note that there is a flaw in the regional DMOs overall structure. For example a Bronze operator says:

*I see a problem in the way in which the regional arms [DMOs] are structured. They are structured to please everyone and to me that is not the way to structure stuff because the classic is there are 12 directors at TTNQ, eight of them represent what totals about 3% of tourism in the region, so you've got a fundamental flaw and trying to keep everyone happy* (B18).

The lack of representativeness on the board is determined by this participant as an attempt to pacify operators, that is, to “keep everyone happy” (B18), rather than generating a board that brings the strongest outcomes to the destination. Furthermore, operators identify there is a sense of anonymity at the top of the destination brand hierarchy, based on an organisation as the figurehead rather than an actual leader; someone with the brand knowledge that the operators have access to when they need advise or support in branding matters. Therefore, the lack of representativeness within the board structure combined with the lack of a true leader is impacting brand buy-in.

The support that operators receive from the regional DMO is an additional issue operators identify with the leadership in the destination. One participant notes support from the regional DMO is hard to get stating, “What support? Like I said someone from TTNQ was supposed to get in contact me and they didn’t, they did not follow through so there is no support” (B19). Members feel that the regional DMO do not have time to respond to their concerns, that there is disinterest in members, this maybe due to the large number of members that the regional DMO need to support. Furthermore, some operators consider that the destination continues to operate based on ‘who you know’-self-interest - rather than supporting members that need help and seek. In this case, operators fail to see the reciprocity from leaders in the destination
given the consideration of self-interest as a priority.

Generally, the closer the relational ties with the DMO, the greater the level of support from the regional DMO, a Platinum member identifies “we have a very close relationship with the state and regional DMO” (P14). Conversely, several Bronze operators (B7; B10; B19; B20; B22) identify a lack of support. Interestingly, the level of support is something that is mentioned across Bronze, Silver and Gold level members as well as with consultants to the destination. Bronze level members identify that the best way to get support from the regional DMO is to sit on panels and get support from the relationships developed there. These empirical materials indicate that the operator’s position within the region, based on the relationships operators hold, can change the legitimacy of operator’s claims on the brand and decision-making processes in the network. As such, operators also note that personal vendettas get in the way of operations and the support of others within the destination for example:

I know that there are people in town that will not do things for certain people no matter how good the idea is which is so disappointing it is like you have to go round the back door and get them to do it without knowing that they are, which is not how it should be (B10).

From the Silver level members, it is again emphasised that in order to get benefits in the destination you need to “know the right people” (S17b). The ‘who you know’ information sharing highlights the power inequalities within the destination, with some operators being provided more information than others based on personal connections and legitimacy in the network. This is typical of an economic management style where self-interest is a priority. Despite the ‘who you know’ approach from the regional DMO, there is also a strong feeling of loyalty among members within the destination. Operators consider that if well-established then support among operators can be maintained. A Silver participant identifies “the agents of a product are quite loyal so we have a lot of support for our product around here” (S17a). However, this means for new operators it maybe more difficult to gain support within the destination. Operators pay membership fees but are unable to
identify the return on this investment (B16). Consequently, a number of operators may feel that there is more risk associated with being members of the regional DMO than there is reward. The lack of reward and the high risk may inhibit future buy-in to the brand and membership decisions. One Bronze participant states, “We didn’t rejoin this year because we don’t have any brochures and because well that was all that they [the regional DMO] were doing. All they did was distribute our brochure so we are not renewing this year” (B16).

The regional DMO’s lack of knowledge and understanding of the destination is another concern among operators about the regional DMOs leadership style (B7; B21; U15). As leaders, the presumption among members is that the regional should have a strong working knowledge of the entire geographic destination that they represent. The lack of knowledge was prominent in destinations outside of Cairns where participants explain that representatives of the DMO rarely leave their ‘ivory tower’ to visit the different destinations. One participant attests:

They [the regional DMO] are just disconnected, they sit in their ivory tower and just don’t get on the ground to meet people. They should be coming to the [region] every three months and ask what we are finding and what people are saying because at the moment they know nothing (B20).

Some operators comment about representatives of the regional DMO and their ability to showcase the destination to visiting guests when they themselves have not visited the area previously (B21). The regional DMO demonstrates a lack of knowledge about the destination they are responsible for ‘selling’, for members this again suggests a lack of interest in them, and a destination ruled by political and personal relationships, governed by self-interest and utility maximisation.

A number of smaller businesses within a close proximity to the regional DMO also consider that DMO representatives are unaware of what some of the members do within the destination, indicating it is not just the regional destinations that are misunderstood by the regional DMO (B7). The lack of understanding of operators within the region has two consequences; firstly it hinders operator buy-in to the
destination by building a perception the regional DMO is not interested in its members. Furthermore, it may mean that the regional DMO are unable to fulfil their roles to the best of their ability, when it comes to promotion or famils they are unable to select the best fit for the opportunity, as they are unaware of the role of all the businesses within the destination. This means that the DMO are unable to allocate resources in a way that maximises their output and consequently could lead to lower economic benefits than if they had a better understanding of the operators that ‘fit’ opportunities. The assumption of a lack of reciprocal respect and dependence between operators and the regional DMO may also be attributed to a lack of understanding of members in the destination.

Furthermore, in regards to the regional DMO’s leadership style one Gold level member makes an interesting comment:

_We make sure we do [have a strong voice], also we encourage organisations like TTNQ to take a broader view from different levels of the market and not just listen to certain organisations in the marketplace and to listen to all levels of the market so they get a picture of how it affects different people at different levels (G6)._ 

This quote suggests that the regional DMO would not be open to all levels of membership unless reminded by the ‘bigger players’. The regional DMO dismissing smaller organisations until they are ‘needed’ emphasises the power differential within the destination. Also identifying that certain operators within the region have a stronger power and influence over DMO operations. In addition, this demonstrates unilateral communication assumed by the regional DMO toward a number of operators, along with the importance of self-interest rather than engaging in dialogue with all members. Within the TNQ destination operators identify that there are a select few operators that are able to provide the knowledge and resources that the regional DMO want and thus are that the regional DMO listen to.
Operators’ perceptions of the DMO’s communication style

Some operators perceive the regional DMO’s current leadership structure is inhibiting the communication across the network and causing a lack of brand buy-in. In particular, from the operator’s perspective there is little value in the communications that are currently being received for example one participant states, “but I do expect a better flow of information, the communication from them is [expletive] to put it mildly, they send stuff out every week all the feel-good garbage but none of it is any use to me” (B19).

Some operators note that the value in the communication is missing due to the content of the newsletters that are disseminated. Operators identify that these do not contain information that operators could not get themselves, or that the content is on market segments that are irrelevant to their business. One Gold respondent explains “the newsletter is interesting but not information that I would read and go gee this confirms why I am a member, I would not have got this on my own” (G13). Whilst a lower level member says in relation to content “the TTNQ stuff is not useful, sometimes the TQ stuff is yes, it is not focused on what I am doing, it is not on the drive market” (B19). This suggests that the current communication is limited in content and is often focussed around the same market areas, thus is not providing the diversity in information despite the heterogeneity of the destination acknowledged as being a major part of the brand network.

Other stakeholders identify that there is no value in the medium of communication that is being adopted, finding that the monthly e-newsletter is just “taking up space” in their inbox and is not being read (U15). In this case, operators suggest that the flow of information is not appropriate for those operating in the destination, identifying that these bulk emails lack focus and are irrelevant. A Bronze participant claims “they [regional DMO] may think that a lot of email communication is good communication but it is not” (B10). Operators identify that it is about the quality and medium of communication that creates value, not the quantity. Despite a lack of satisfaction members cannot identify a better medium for communication. It appears that members are unsure of how they want the regional DMO to communicate with them, but they are not satisfied with the current approach.
A number of operators also note that the degree of communication you receive is dependant on “who you know” (B19; B21). This suggests that information is disseminated not in a hierarchy order but based on personal relationships that exist within the network, highlighting the information asymmetry within the destination. If you are a member of a board or if you have strong personal relationships with the regional DMO representatives then you are more likely to receive more detailed and valuable information than those with weaker relationships. As one member states:

_They [regional DMO] send us emails with updates, I mean there is fact sharing so we know who is coming to the region but if we were not on the tourism advisory panels that is where all the conversation happens (G13)._ 

This “who you know” perception is especially prevalent among those at the lower end of the membership scale, emphasising the asymmetry and lack of transparency. With several participants suggesting that, if it were not for personal connections within the destination, they would not be privy to the same amount and detail of information that they currently receive (B21). This personal drive behind access to knowledge and other resources is creating a negative image of the regional DMO. This negative perception of the DMO is developed in both those that do have the access to the knowledge and resources and more prevalently among those that do not have the same access. This personal relational approach to the management of the destination and direction of communication appears to be inhibiting the buy-in among some operators.

A number of operators (B7; B10; S17; B22), spoke of the value of informal communication, noting the use of the sub-networks in talking through problems with other operators and gaining support in a way that the regional DMO do not provide (B22). Whilst another operator (B7) identifies the value in workshops where operators can talk with other operators to run scenarios and discuss how to deal with issues that are arising. This participant notes that they would like to see the regional DMO facilitate more opportunities where operators can come together through workshops, to discuss ideas and work through problems together. In regards to informal
communication, a number of operators also identify that they would like to see the regional DMO talk to their members in an informal capacity to develop a better understanding of the region (B10). Another member identifies that along with talking the regional DMO needs to listen to their members, taking time to understand why members are dissatisfied and respond by making changes to the regional DMO (B16).

Other informal mediums of communication, such as Facebook and Twitter, were also discussed with participants, however, are not a core focus for this thesis. Some participants note that the destination is not particularly active on these mediums and that they were not being utilised to generate the impact that they could be. When operators suggest further use of social media as a marketing tool it is declined by the regional and local DMOs (B10). However, independently all of the operators spoken to were using social media and informal communication tools as part of their own communication strategy. This finding links to the previous leadership discussion where a number of the leaders within the destination are considered as being “stuck in the past” and “unwilling to accept change” creating inertia in the region. The lack of engagement with social media may also be related to the economic dominant logic approach where relationships are episodic rather than long term relationships developed through dialogue such as those generated through social media.

6.3.3 Brand evaluation and the impact on operators' brand buy-in

A noticeable result from the empirical material collection is that there is distinct lack of monitoring and evaluation of the brand, consumer perceptions and operator perceptions. One participant says on the subject of brand evaluation “I am unaware of any research that seeks out or seeks to find out whether or not the destination brand image of ‘Adventurous by Nature’ has got through to the broader market” (G6).

Operators are aware of the lack of monitoring of the brand and also note that there are no consequences if operators are not “on brand” (G16). This is a major problem for the destination as operators have a nonchalant attitude toward the brand and realise there is no consequences for not supporting the brand thus they do not need to, stating, “why bother” (B7). The lack of monitoring impacts brand buy-in by
indicating that it is not an important focus for operators and there are no consequences for not demonstrating brand buy-in.

A discussion raised with participants was about the use of accreditation within the region. A number of operators are currently accredited by national schemes such as AussieHost. The discussion considers the value of such schemes in creating consistency across the brand network.

When Tropical North Queensland was first re-branded from Far North Queensland an accreditation program was part of the membership. One consultant identifies “funding for accreditation was not drawn from member fees but from additional pools of money brought in through economic development strategies” (C23). At this time the quality of the service in the destination was identified as being paramount to the delivery of the brand experience and as such all businesses were invited to participate in AussieHost training (C23). AussieHost is a nationally recognised scheme that trains tourism and hospitality businesses focusing on communication, customer relations and service. The accreditation scheme was dropped when the CEO changed in the regional DMO and now there is no destination wide accreditation process. The majority of operators discuss the role of accreditation in the destination, and there are polarised views on the use of such schemes. Some operators relish the idea of a destination wide scheme, particularly those that are required to have accreditation to operate (Daintree operators and those that operate on the Great Barrier Reef) would like to see a central organisation where they can get their accreditation creating an ease of operation. Other operators identify the value of utilising accreditation schemes to ensure quality destination wide, for example one Bronze member states:

> It gives you an avenue to chase the bad guys, so if you are a competing operator I’m not really going to go head to head with, but if you are doing something wrong or I am doing something wrong then it would be better to go through a third party (B18).

Others operators however, cannot identify any value in the process of accreditation and would not like to see such a scheme in place. These operators suggest that
consumers cannot identify the value in the process and that not all operators would participate, therefore it would not have the desired effect of bringing the destination up to standard. A Bronze operator states, “I think it is a load of [expletive] really...you can find the holes that you have, patch them up and put policies in place but it is really just about covering your butt...it is not worth it” (B19). For some operators this lack of willingness to participate in accreditation processes can be derived from a lack of understanding to how the accreditation is awarded and what it entails. Therefore, the provision of additional knowledge would be required to successfully implement the scheme across the destination.

In contrast to monitoring negative behaviours, awards are currently utilised as a way to encourage strong ethics and positive visitor engagement within the destination. The majority of operators within the TNQ destination value the awards and a number of participants have entered and/or won the regional DMO awards. Despite this however, a number of operators notice a lack of additional value from these awards suggesting once the night was over there is no mention of the awards again. One operator notes:

*When you win an award there is one small advertisement in the paper the next day announcing the winners and then they never get mentioned again, they [the regional DMO] will never use it for promotion especially if you are a state winner, you would think that the locals would jump on board but there is no mention, no reference, no acknowledgement. There is nothing and people [operators] are starting to get annoyed with it* (B20).

Due to the lack of recognition from the awards process some of the operators explain that they find greater value in awards that are external to the destination than they do to the regional DMO awards. Operators identify the awards are an achievement to be celebrated, they are voted as being the best operators in the destination and therefore should be considered for familiarity programs, VIP visits and regional promotion (B19). At the current time, despite the winners being voted by experts as ‘best’ in destination, there is no additional interest in the winners after the night of the awards. The lack of acknowledgement is disheartening for operators:
There doesn’t seem to be any kind of follow up, you go in it with your peers to stand out from your peers, and you think it would be acknowledged or utilised in some way within the year until the next awards but it is not… It's very important to those people that won the award. But nothing. It [the awards night] was so flat and we left as soon as we could, it was almost embarrassing, and that is how the awards go. And I am not sure what management [regional DMO] is thinking, if they don’t acknowledge the winners who will’ (B20).

In addition, it takes a considerable amount of time for the award winners to be updated on the regional DMO website. The awards were held on the 29th November 2013, the researcher was on the regional DMO website on 25th April 2014 and the results were still ‘coming soon’. The lack of urgency for displaying the winners emphasises the participants’ perception that the regional DMO does not hold the awards to high regard and that once the night is over the awards no longer matter. Furthermore, this increases the perceived risk for operators, spending considerable amounts of money and time on applications that get them little long-term value (B20). On the contrary participants want to see these awards celebrated and recognised as they highlight the best of the tourism and hospitality operators within the destination therefore, using such awards as positive reinforcement and brand evaluation.

6.3.4 Summary of operators’ dominant logic and the influence the DMO’s governance approach has on brand buy-in

Overall the operators have a very different perception of brand to the DMOs. The operators that have weak relational ties with the DMOs (non-elite members) identify that there is a lack of transparency and large power differentials within the region. These operators identify that the regional DMO favour those operators that are able to contribute more resources to the region, rather than supporting the smaller operators that are in search of support and guidance. These operators, with weak DMO relational ties, defer to sub-networks to stimulate the trust and support that they are missing from the DMO. Support, trust and brand knowledge are considered core intangible goals for these operators under a co-creative logic (relating to RQ1). In contrast, those that contribute greater resources (the “elite” operators) have positive
relational ties with the regional DMO. These “elite” operators are able to identify the value in the decision-making of the regional DMO. In addition, these “elite” operators have more communication with the regional DMO, both formal and informal, thus stimulating trust between the powerful operators and the DMO. These operators share a similar economic dominant logic as the regional DMO (RQ1). The empirical materials also indicate that the governance approach employed by the regional DMO has a significant impact on the leadership style and communication adopted (RQ4). Thus, impacting the level of brand buy-in among operators (RQ2). The lack of brand evaluation and positive reinforcements for brand centred behaviours indicate that operators are unable to identify the value in brand buy-in. The lack of consequences for behaving (or not) to support the brand generates a lack of urgency for operators to demonstrate brand buy-in (relates to RQ3 and RQ2).

6.4 CONCLUSION
This chapter identifies that the DMOs and the majority of operators have divergent needs and wants from the governance structures and brand network (relates to RQ1). The regional DMO are approaching their relationships in an episodic manner and aiming for utility maximisation. Conversely, the majority of operators are willing to work in collaboration to provide strong tourism experiences for guests. Knowledge, trust and support are regarded as important to the majority of operators utilising both formal and informal communication to achieve these goals through sub-networks. This chapter examines the development, implementation and evaluation of the destination brand and the impact of the DMOs’ processes on brand buy-in (RQ2, RQ3 and RQ4). The role of leadership and communication (RQ3) within the destination from the perspective of both the DMO and operators and the influence these have on brand buy-in (RQ2) is also considered. The next chapter explores the empirical materials in relation to the four research questions and discusses the contribution of this thesis to the literature and to the practice of destination branding.
CHAPTER SEVEN
FURTHER INTERPRETATION, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

7. INTRODUCTION
This chapter explores the interpretation in Chapter Six in relation to the literature outlined in Chapters Two and Three. Furthermore, this chapter addresses the research questions, identifying the dominant logic of stakeholders of the brand network (relating to RQ1). The chapter also discusses the core influencers on destination brand buy-in (relating to RQ2), proposing a model of destination brand buy-in. In doing so, the core concepts that influence operator buy-in to the destination brand are identified. This chapter also examines the role of governance mechanisms, such as internal brand management and stakeholder-agency theory, in stimulating brand buy-in (relating to RQ3 and RQ4, respectively). Implications and core contributions of this thesis are then presented. Finally, this chapter concludes the thesis by identifying the study’s limitations and suggested areas for future research.

7.1 DOMINANT LOGICS
This section explores the dominant logic of the DMOs and operators involved in the destination brand network and the impact of these dominant logics on decision-making (RQ1). Through the understanding of the dominant logic, it is possible to determine the mind-set of organisations and therefore the approach they adopt to decision-making and resource allocation (Bettis & Prahalad, 1995). This section generates insights into how can managers balance these approaches to stimulate a consistent brand experience.

7.1.1 The economic dominant logic of the DMOs
Consistent with established destination brand management research (e.g. Beritelli et al., 2007; Marzano & Scott, 2009; Pike, 2004), this study found that the DMOs (in this case, at state and regional levels) are operating under an economic dominant logic. The economic-dominant logic, developed in fast moving consumer goods in the 1930s, seeks to allocate resources where the highest functional benefit will be achieved (Heding et al., 2009). Such a dominant logic is characterised by rigid and linear approaches to communication preferring episodic exchanges over relationships...
and often utilising hierarchical governance approaches. Here, the DMOs are driven by economic performance measures, most notably, increasing visitation and expenditure to the destination, thus achieving the highest functional outcome. Attracting visitors is important for the destination because visitor expenditure brings tourism export dollars into the destination’s economy, creating jobs and prosperity within the businesses and community, sales figures are also considered a core goal for organisations under an economic dominant logic. The role of tourism in economic development is evident throughout the tourism literature (e.g., Bronhorst et al., 2010; Garcia et al., 2012; Haugland et al., 2011). Economic-dominant goals were evident in the TNQ case; for instance, the Queensland Government (represented by the state DMO, TEQ) has a vision to double overnight visitor expenditure in Queensland to $30 billion by 2020 (TEQ, 2012). TNQ is the third largest tourism destination in Queensland, therefore will make a major contribution to achieving this goal. The branding of Queensland and its tourism destinations, such as TNQ, will have a central role in stimulating consumer demand for a Queensland holiday.

Similar to many other destinations around the world (i.e. Portugal, Scandinavia and Britain), Australia, Queensland and regional destinations, like TNQ, work under a hierarchical brand governance model with national, state, regional and local destination brands and DMOs. Under this model, the DMOs at each level are the central or ‘focal’ organisations in the brand network and, thus, control and distribute destination branding resources (Provan & Kenis, 2007). DMOs therefore often adopt a formal hierarchical structure within the brand network, where the ‘powerful’ (i.e., those organisations at the top of hierarchy) are able to exert control over smaller less powerful network contributors. Although this model allows DMOs to strategically distribute resource, Beaumont and Dredge (2010) warn that this practice generates a sense of elitism and fails to engage all network members, thus hindering the level of brand buy-in among the unengaged. This case study of the TNQs network structures supports these findings yet, extends the literature on destination brand governance by showing that the lack of engagement appears to be stemming from a lack of organisational knowledge by operators to effectively buy-in to brand values and identity. This lack of knowledge is exacerbated by the reliance of the DMO on functional communication with operators, using tools such as newsletters and
presentations to convey unilateral messages on branding. These communication tools do not align with the communication needs of operators who prefer a more collaborative, informal and personalised approach that empowers them to embrace the brand. However, given the vast number of operators within the destination brand network, this personalisation is challenging for regional DMOs to achieve. Consequently, adopting more flexible governance tools is not always possible given the number of members the DMO services. According to Provan and Kenis’ (2007) network classification model, this case, based on the hierarchical approach and the DMOs role in the network, demonstrates an organisation-led network, that is, there is a controlling authority over the network that directs resources and manages the network. Typical of an organisation-led network this case is characterised as having high levels of centrality (with the regional DMO taking the focal role) and low levels of trust among operators. This study shows that the economic dominant logic and organisation-led network of the DMO hierarchy hinders operator buy-in to the destination brand by restricting the prerequisites of network success (trust and dialogue) from being achieved (Dredge & Whitford, 2011). As a result, operators expressed a reluctance to share resources, such as organisational and innovative knowledge, time and tangible resources with the DMO to facilitate a consistent brand experience.

It is also evident that power differentials are accentuated under an economic dominant logic (Heding et al., 2009; Hill & Jones, 1992). These power differentials manifest themselves in the strength of the personal relationships that exist between the operators and the DMO, as well as, among operators in the brand network. These power differentials take the form of the DMO’s control of access to and the resources within the network. The resource control includes the DMO championing or focusing on certain geographic locations and not others, controlling the organisational knowledge distribution based on those operators that contribute the most to the network and communication structures that favour those operators with strong relationships with the DMO. The DMO exerts its power to distribute resources in a strategic way, favouring operators that contribute more resources and with stronger relationships, to optimise the DMOs goals of increased visitor numbers and expenditure. Thus, the regional DMO allocate resources strategically to where they
believe utility maximisation will occur, that is, where they believe they will gain the greatest return on their resource contribution. A major drive to this strategic resource allocation is the limited resources, especially funding, that the regional DMO contend with. Stakeholder-agency theory provides some guidance on how to balance power differentials. This thesis therefore argues that this theory can inform destination brand governance.

Stakeholder-agency theory advocates the need to balance the power differentials to maximise utility for all stakeholders and enhance stakeholder satisfaction (Hill & Jones, 1992). This study found that the regional DMO achieves this outcome with the ‘elite operators’ who have access to resources, such as knowledge on branding and marketing activities. This access of knowledge is often based on their resource contribution and strong relational ties with the DMO. Yet the regional DMO often does not share this strong relationship with lower level members termed by the researcher as the ‘non-elites’. The DMO’s inability to achieve a balance of power across the entire destination brand network results in dissatisfaction with the brand and, therefore, affects stakeholder buy-in to the brand across the entire network. Consequently, lower level members feel marginalised, that is, feel like “little fish in a big pond”. Although the DMO is aware of these power differentials, they feel unable to address them, mostly due to insufficient resources (both human and financial resources). Responses from the participants in this study indicate that the DMO made no obvious attempts to minimise the power differentials by offering additional resources to those that are feeling marginalised. Rather, the DMO continue to operate under a hierarchical governance structure, whereby the operators at the top of the hierarchy, the elites, receive the most benefits because they have the most to offer the DMO in return. However, TNQ is not alone in facing this issue, nor is it unique to tourism. Barstow (2008) identifies power differentials based on status in both the law profession and within education, identifying that power differentials are leading people to become poorly attuned to the needs of others. Within the agriculture industry Shortall (2014) concludes that power differentials between genders are inherent within the agriculture industry and during policy generation over genetically modified produce clear power differentials were evident in stakeholders influence over policy decisions (Hill, 2005). Within tourism, Marzano and Scott (2006) identify
power differentials in their case study of another Queensland destination, the Gold Coast, noting a sense of elitism within destination management in that tourist destination. Similarly, Alvarez (2012) attests to the importance of balancing stakeholder needs and wants to achieve successful cooperation, yet, stresses that the current governance of destinations focuses principally on the pursuit of self-interest as opposed to balancing all stakeholder utility. The trait of self-interest is common to an economic dominant logic due to the goals of achieving an increase in economic return, thus allocation of resources to attain these goals is inevitable. By employing mechanisms to share additional intangible resources within the network, such as organisational knowledge, the regional DMO may be able to increase the level of transparency within their operations. This may reduce the power differentials and enhance buy-in by offering all operators an equal opportunity to understand the resource allocation of the regional DMO.

In contrast to the state and regional DMOs, participants in this study appeared to have very different views on the local DMO. The interviews undertaken for this study suggest that most operators, across all membership levels, thought the local DMO as integral in delivering a local brand experience, often providing what the regional DMO cannot for them, that is, market knowledge and support through relational ties. These relational ties are strengthened by the close geographic proximity of the local DMO to operators and the smaller number memberships that the local DMO are accountable to. Yet, power differentials between the local and regional DMO in the branding hierarchy are accentuated because the local DMO has to pay membership fees to the regional DMO and, as such, is treated as any other member. This structure is in spite of their supporting role in marketing and providing the local knowledge that the regional DMO does not have the resources to provide.

Of particular note in this study is the DMOs (local, regional and state) use of functional (for the purpose of achieving goals), dyadic, linear communication and knowledge dissemination to its members. This approach is consistent with an economic dominant logic. Yet appears to be hindering brand buy-in as in adopting this approach, the DMOs assume that the operators are the homogenous group of stakeholders and will receive, decode and respond to the message in a similar way
(Heding et al., 2007). The functional communication approach is consistent with Holt and Cameron’s (2010) term ‘brand bureaucracy’. Holt and Cameron stress that a brand bureaucracy approach creates a barrier to learning and stifles brand buy-in because it lacks the flexibility to empower and inspire operators to buy-in; rather it presents a functional approach that does not always engage the recipient. A key resource identified across the interviews to facilitate transfer of knowledge is the informal communication that is obtained through the sub-networks. The dialogues stimulated through the sub-networks allow flexibility and facilitation of organisational and network knowledge transfer. Therefore, the use of the sub-networks by operators supports the intangible resource sharing that they are missing from the wider DMO controlled network. It is evident that, by creating barriers to the facilitation of knowledge, the DMO is negatively influencing the brand buy-in from a large section of its operators.

The TNQ case shows that the regional DMO are prescribing the brand and its use to operators through the economic dominant logic reflective of a brand bureaucracy. Such top-down branding behaviour is typical of traditional corporate branding (see Gyrd-Jones et al., 2013) as well as being prominent in a number of tourism destinations (see Table 3.2). The state and regional DMOs are utilising materials, such as the ‘brand pyramid’, to explain branding materials and generate organisational knowledge. The brand pyramid, a common branding tools in destination brands, uses texts to explain the essence of the brand and to attempt to generate an understanding among operators of the core values and brand identity. For instance, within the TNQ brand pyramid, the language utilised focuses on adjectives associated with ‘adventure’, thereby supporting the brand promise ‘feel the natural exhilaration of an Australian tropical adventure’. However, in the interviews, brand managers of the regional DMO stress the importance of the brand being “adventurous” not “adventure”, that the brand is more than adventure tourism, such as bungee jumping and white-water rafting. Instead, it represents having a carefree spirit and experiencing new things when holidaying in the destination. Yet, in marketing collateral on the brand there appears to be a shift from the use of the word adventurous to the use of adventure. This shift may have occurred accidentally, whereby, the linguistic sensitivity required has not been applied and although the
word has changed, the meaning has remained. Consequently, unless operators were a part of the group that developed the materials and know that the meaning of adventurous was applied to the word adventure then a shift of meaning occurs. This shift in meaning is causing confusion for operators that were not part of the brand building process. Weick (1995) identifies that multiple meanings across organisational material can lead to equivocality, contradiction and confusion. Weick suggests that to rectify these inconsistencies stakeholders must search for synthesis and draw meaning from the synthesis of all documents. In this case, the lack of flexibility in the communication within the brand network means that operators are synthesising from written documents with limited opportunities for clarification. The shift in meaning has left “adventurous” and “adventure” sitting in tension without a comprehensive understanding of the brand for operators. Operators then balance the information and draw their own conclusions to the meaning and values of the brand. Given the economic dominant logic that drives the DMO, there is no evaluation or monitoring of how operators understand the brand. Thus, here the communication approach is dysfunctional and does not achieve the desired outcome for the DMO. In addition, a key finding of this thesis is that the DMO is not aware of miscommunications or misconceptions about the brand values and identity, because it does not promote on-going engagement. Again, this finding highlights the influencing factor of communication in the facilitation of resource distribution across the network. The importance of these findings reinforce Zehrer et al.’s (2014) research that posits that more intense communication structures are required within destinations to help operators’ buy-in to the brand. The views of operators reported in this case of the TNQ brand suggests that communication facilitates organisational knowledge sharing, and that by applying a rigid, ‘functional’ approach the transfer of knowledge will be less effective than through more informal, flexible approaches. The functional approach is typical of policy markers in wider political theory, with those responsible for the policy focussing on a specific set of problems (in this case increasing economic goals) and utilising bureaucratically designed routines to address the problems (Rose, 1993). DMOs can learn from the failings, or the dissatisfaction with the current approach from others that have moved through similar issues identifying new ways of formulating brand buy-in that is more appropriate for stakeholders.
The interviews also indicate the episodic nature of relationships between the DMO and the majority of operators also impeded stakeholder buy-in to the destination brand. The ‘fit’ of the operator to the DMOs brand, and the resources that those operators can contribute, dictates the level of relational ties with the DMO. Therefore, the resource fit, value fit and goal fit of the operators with the DMO and the destination brand influence the level of brand buy-in. For example, if the operator has an image and values that are congruent with the DMOs or if the operator is able to contribute a large amount of resources (i.e. finance through membership), then the DMO considers them to have a better fit with the destination brand and has a stronger relationship with them. The determination of operators that have the best fit with the brand is a strategic decision made by the regional DMO. Due to this ‘fit’ criteria, an elite set of operators within the destination is created that have different communication and relationship structures with the DMO than other, non-elite, operators with less ‘fit’. Thus, emphasising the power differentials within the region. This approach is similar to political decision-making in government with dominant parties that influence decision-making based on relational ties and minority parties that lack the power or relationships to influence decisions (Tsebelis, 1995). As a consequence, by retaining power differentials within the destination the DMO risk the likelihood of stagnation within the policies and procedures within the destination as powerful actors will keep things the same, such practices were evidenced within the UK education system where powerful actors dominated decisions and restricted change between 1945 and 1979 (Hill, 2005). Resource allocation, to those that are a strong fit to the brand, is therefore utilised in a way that will achieve the economic goals for the destination – thereby supporting the dominant logic of the DMO. This appears as a win-win situation for the powerful, however drawing on rational choice theory the result of this could be more stakeholders suffering in the long term (Hill, 2005). For those that are non-elite, operators that are constrained by their own resources or offer different values than the DMO deem preferable, then the relationships are episodic in line with the economic dominant logic and thus they both give and receive less resources (Heding et al., 2007). This distribution of resources then brings the question for such stakeholders of why there is an inefficient or inequitable use of resources, and in this context negatively impacts the brand buy-in (Hill, 2005).
A lack of flexibility within the episodic relationships indicates that the state and regional DMOs are not willing to change their practices to address the needs and wants of operators. Consequently, this indicates a myopic approach to brand governance and inhibits the brand buy-in among operators that perceive the DMO as ‘elitist’ and marginalising operators. This episodic approach to the management of relationships does not enable the regional DMO to utilise the relational ties as a strategic resource under a resource-based view (Gouthier & Schmid, 2003). Gouthier and Schmid suggest that for relationships to become a strategic resource, strong relationships need to be maintained, problematic relationships should be fixed and finally lost relationships should be regained to maximise the value of the relationships. Strong relationships are established through the elite operators within the destination brand network. DMOs therefore need to ensure that they maintain these relationships over time. Problematic relationships are the operators that are members but are not buying-in to the destination brand due to a lack of organisational knowledge or who do not have the physical resources to be considered elite operators by the DMO. Strengthening these relationships to engage operators and facilitate brand buy-in should be an area of focus for regional DMOs. Finally, lost relationships exist within the destination based on historical relationships and dissatisfaction within the destination. The DMO needs to actively try and regain these relationships, to ensure consistency in the destination brand experience, acknowledging their role in stimulating brand buy-in and applying flexibility to their governance approach. This research argues that with the intangible resources the DMO contributes (i.e. knowledge and support) and through their governance style (i.e. leadership and communication), the DMO can more effectively facilitate relationships with non-elite operators thereby, developing relationships as a strategic resource. The current resource allocation by the regional DMO is strategic in its nature to achieve economic goals, however, by marginalising a proportion of the brand network not all the destinations resources are accessible to the regional DMO.

The economic dominant logic utilised by the state and regional DMOs can be considered mimetic isomorphism (Holt & Cameron, 2010). Mimetic isomorphism refers to a follow the leader type approach whereby an organisation changes overtime
to become more similar to other organisations or remains static in their operations believing it is the ‘best way’ to operate (Haveman, 1993). By following a mimetic isomorphism strategy, the DMOs (state and regional) are operating in a way that is deemed appropriate by historical iterations of the brand and how destination branding ‘should’ be done. Such strategies or routines help to sustain bureaucratic predictability and impose a narrow vision on organisations or destinations (Rose, 1993). These findings are consistent with Beritelli et al. (2007) who identify the history, or *path dependencies*, of the destination determines the governance structure. Yet, political theory suggests that after structural or strategy changes what worked before will no longer work as it once did (Rose, 1993). Therefore, by following a mimetic isomorphism approach or managing destinations based on path dependencies DMOs are hindering the buy-in of operators as disconnect between operators and the DMO are dismissed due to a lack of flexibility in the governance approach. As such, the state and regional DMOs are unable to identify or are blinded to the concerns of operators. Holt and Cameron argue, that for brands to become successful, there needs to be a shift away from the brand bureaucracy approach and mimetic isomorphism. Provan and Kenis (2007) argue that inertia within a network is at its strongest when governance is more formal. Thus, indicating that the economic dominant logic is reflective of the isomorphism within the network and consequently, a shift to a more flexible approach is unlikely to occur. Provan and Kenis (2007) consider that, failure to evolve in such a situation, leads to the failure of the network. Given the nature of tourism, constructed by not a singular organisation but a myriad of operators and experiences, destination failure of a network is unlikely. Due to the myriad of operators within a destination, the notion of the organisational structure described by Provan and Kenis (2007) is not reflective of a tourism destination. Instead of mimetic isomorphism causing the failure of the network, in destinations it appears to generate stagnation and inhibit innovation and change. The historical evolution of the destination, *path dependency*, therefore, directs and influences the governance approach and mechanisms within the destination, in line with resource-based view. In order to evolve, the regional DMO need to identify the roles that the unique resources available within the destination play in the development of the brand and adapt to exploit these resources whilst demonstrating awareness of the impact of historical influences and mimetic isomorphism, (Barney, 1991).
In summary, the economic dominant logic pursued by the DMO determines the governance approach, as well as, the leadership and communication styles of the DMO. This governance style evolves based on the path dependencies, such as the historical governance structure and political influences over the destination. The economic dominant logic appears to create tensions between the operators that are not determined by the DMO as ‘elite’ based on resource contribution. The tension between the DMO and operators, impacts the relationship strength within the destination and, consequently, the level of brand buy-in among operators. DMOs within destinations that are applying such hierarchical structures need to look to destinations that have successfully implemented alternative, more flexible models for inspiration, for example the network based branding approach applied in New Zealand. In learning from such positive cases, understanding cultural differences and applying successful strategies can help the destination to enhance their competitive position. Next, the dominant logic of operators will be explored to determine where the incongruences, friction and tensions lie.

7.1.2 Service dominant logic of the operators leading to co-creation

This study reveals that the dominant logic associated with a large proportion of the operators is service-dominant logic. The service dominant logic reflects the importance of the human touch in service delivery and operant resources such as, knowledge and skills, in the creation of competitive advantage and experience delivery (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Within the destination brand network the importance of knowledge is emphasised by smaller operators. These operators identify that they seek knowledge and support from the regional DMO and when this is not achievable from other operators within the network.

Knowledge for operators involved in destination branding is multi-faceted; it includes the organisational knowledge of the destination, network knowledge, operating knowledge and innovative knowledge. Tsoukas (2002) describes the various types of knowledge in tourism. Organisational knowledge is one’s understanding of the roles of the DMO hierarchy and knowledge of the destination brand. Operating knowledge reflects the understanding of how to operationalise the destination brand alongside
their business’ brand. Innovative knowledge reflects the operators’ ability to respond to situations in a creative way and involves the development of new and innovative ways to communicate across the network. DMOs are influencing resource distribution and brand buy-in by governing the brand in a manner that creates barriers to organisational knowledge sharing and that stifles innovative knowledge. Stakeholder-agency theory provides advice on reducing information asymmetry (Hill & Jones, 1992), thus, allowing all operators to share knowledge and resources. The ability to work collaboratively with industry is a theme that both the regional and local DMOs note in the interviews as being extremely important to them. However, the regional DMO’s linear and functional communication style - sending out regular email newsletter updates to their members - does not facilitate information symmetry and collaboration (Heding et al., 2009). Consequently, disconnect and friction appears between the intention of the principle in minimising information asymmetry and knowledge sharing and the way that the operators are receiving the messages that the regional DMO are disseminating. Thus, the lack of knowledge provided and/or the lack of value identified within the communication by operators is accentuating information asymmetry within the destination. The lack of value in rigid approaches to knowledge sharing is consistent with Breen et al.’s. (2010) research. The operators appear to be seeking dialogue with the regional DMO and they seek more than just functional knowledge through a monthly newsletter to convey destination activities.

Operators identify that the regional DMO does not provide or contribute the support, operational knowledge and the leadership skills – the resources- that they are looking for. The discussion in the follow-up interviews highlights a complete misconception about the destination brands and therefore indicates that the DMO is not able to provide operators the means to facilitate the branding goals. This misconception suggests that regional DMO have not achieved providing the operators with suitable organisational knowledge to understand the brand or enough operational knowledge for operators to deliver the brand experience. Literature on internal brand management stresses the importance of leading by example and leaders being seen by their employees (Chiang et al., 2012; Cui et al., 2014; Naipaul et al., 2009). Such notions are also identifiable in wider organisational leadership literature (Schein, 2010). In addition, network research identifies that leadership is required over
management in networks as they are complex and unpredictable (Svendsen & Laberge, 2005). Thus, DMOs need to develop a leadership style that enables them to lead by example and contribute sufficient resources to operators to create knowledge and thereby, providing the reciprocity to empower operators to buy-in to the destination brand.

Based on their knowledge seeking, operators demonstrate a co-creative nature. That is, they are seeking reciprocity in value creation through the development of trust and the sharing of knowledge, skills and culture (Line & Runyan, 2014). Operators’ search for reciprocity in network relationships and their desire for active engagement across the branding process evidences this co-creative nature. Disconnect between the regional DMO and operators appears to lie in the lack of trust between the operators and DMOs. The non-elite perceiving that the regional DMO is ‘elitist’ and allocating resources (especially knowledge) based on self-interest rather than establishing network goals facilitates the lack of trust and enhances friction in the network. The dominant logic of the operators’ also influences the type of resources that they place value in. Operators look for leadership that empowers and shares the intangible resources they value. As such, the dominant logic and co-creative approach from operators influences their level of buy-in. Operators are in search of more effective communication, seeking knowledge (organisational and innovative) and resource sharing within the destination and from the regional DMO. These concepts are deemed the foundation of co-creative approach but are not recognised by the brand managers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Conversely, operators are unresponsive to rigid approaches that DMOs’ utilise. As such, to stimulate co-creative brand buy-in there needs to be flexibility and a combination of formal and informal approaches. From the interviews, a number of operators, in particular the smaller, non-elite, needs and wants are not being met with the economic dominant logic to resource allocation applied by the DMOs. Operators are seeking stronger relationships with more support and communication from their governing body. This supports Hankinson’s (2007) conceptual work that identifies that small businesses want to be part of the destination brand network, that they are seeking cooperative forums where they can be supported and their concerns shared.
Established by the collaborative approach to sub-networks taken by smaller operators and their overarching ‘love and passion’ for the destination they represent, there is a level of cohesion identifiable across the TNQ destination brand network. These informal sub-network groups develop based on the ‘fit’ of similar goals and culture. Drawing on political theory, it is expected that high levels of activity will be evident in such networks based on stakeholders being embedded in networks that support their viewpoints (Mutz, 2002). The sub-networks of operators are similar to the networks that Naipaul et al. (2009) identify among DMOs. Naipaul et al., posit that it is personal relationships, formal and informal communications and frequency of communication that generate successful networks among DMOs. Within the sub-networks of local small and medium operators it is the support of their needs and developing meaningful relationships that develops a centre for trust and mutual outcomes. The similarities amongst the stakeholders within the sub-network support the culture, reducing the level of political controversy and therefore encouraging activity (Mutz, 2002). In addition, intangible resources such as innovative knowledge create the mutual dependencies within the sub-networks. Innovative knowledge is generated through the understanding of the external environment and the combination of resources available to the sub-networks. Therefore, identifying ways to utilise and evolve the resources available to the network. Sub-networks have less tangible resources (finance and attractions) and salience in their network than the DMOs in Naipaul et al.’s study despite operating under similar assumptions. However, the sub-network has an abundance of intangible resources, such as innovative knowledge and support, despite a lack of salience. Based on the knowledge and support the sub-network is characterised by higher levels of trust than are evident across the wider destination network. The sub-networks encourage members to work together bundling products or combining in marketing opportunities to maximise their opportunities.

The sub-networks collaborative nature supports Svendsen and Laberge’s (2006) and Keast et al.’s., (2004) findings that state when network relationships are effectively balanced there is strong levels of knowledge sharing and the networks are able to self-regulate. In addition, these sub-networks’ collaborative approach demonstrate characteristics of Holt and Cameron’s (2010) cultural studio, whereby groups of employees work together generating ideas (innovative knowledge), building on them
and refining them to generate more effective resource usage. The voluntary nature of the sub-networks indicates that through a combination of valuable resources (knowledge, support and trust) and through the right facilitation (flexible communication and leadership) buy-in, the willingness to engage with others in the network and share resources can be enhanced.

Under Provan and Kenis’ (2007) governance classification, these sub-networks are participant governed (internal collaborative networks). Consistent with the classification, the sub-networks are characterised by equal decision-making powers, high levels of trust and consensus around the network goals. These characteristics are supported within the sub-networks due to the shared intangible resources. Beaumont and Dredge (2010) identify that there is shared leadership and strong collaborative commitment within these networks. The leadership approach evident across the sub-networks indicates that the governance style helps determine the level of collaboration. Beaumont and Dredge also contend that, although the network is not always harmonious, there are underlying values that ensure success. The sub-networks within TNQ support these findings. Beritelli et al. (2007) identify that in strong culturally formed communities there needs to be power equilibrium. These sub-networks within TNQ are one way that the operators are able to operate without the influence of power differentials. The lack of power differential is based on the participant governance approach to leadership and communication taking more flexible and inclusive forms than are evident within the wider network.

The building blocks of co-creation appear more prevalently across sub-groups than within the wider destination brand network (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). There is more on-going dialogue and knowledge sharing between organisations within the sub-networks than there is within the wider network. This dialogue facilitates exchange and enables feedback and evaluation. The rules of engagement within the sub-network are clear, all members need to ‘pull their weight’ ensuring that they are contributing to the network. Therefore, performance bonds are put on members of the sub-network (Hill & Jones, 1992). Failure to contribute to the resources (both tangible and intangible) of the sub-network will lead to consequences of being excluded from the sub-networks in the future. Similar to Naipaul et al.’s (2009) findings, that there
are informal and personal ‘gentleman’s agreements’ that guide the behaviours of the network are supported in this case. Although consequences of not actively participating are not governed, operators indicate that under these structures participation is not an issue. Zehrer et al. (2014) also indicate that mutual trust and common goals help to ensure that the network is successful. In terms of access to information within sub-networks there is not full disclosure that is expected among competitors. Dialogue and support between network members is evident through generating greater access to information than network members perceive is available from DMOs at all levels. The participants acknowledge that there are vulnerabilities and risks associated with collaborating with the competition, by passing on information, sharing intangible resources such as knowledge (operating procedures and innovative knowledge such as external trends) and tangible resources (finances or product) organisations are potentially putting themselves at risk. However, feeling unsupported by the regional DMO and not having access to information is perceived as a greater risk. Thus, a number of operators decide to balance the risk prior to joining a sub-network. Members of the sub-network identify the need to strike a balance between being too transparent and putting themselves at risk and alienating the others around them by not being transparent.

The exploration of the sub-networks within tourism brands extends the discussion in destination branding by indicating that intangible resources, such as innovative knowledge and support, is derived within this network from other similar operators – those with value or culture fit. These informal groups can enhance the consistency of the destination brand by aligning members’ values and identity creating a better fit among operators. Such sub-networks are a strong resource for the regional DMOs, as they generate a sense of collaboration and community within the destination. These sub-networks are experts of the destination, they operate on a daily basis and have a close connection with consumers to the region, and consequently their position is similar to a community of experts offering links between the organisation and the consumers (Rose, 1993). It is important for DMOs to acknowledge the importance of these sub-networks and establish ways to support or facilitate such collaborative approaches learning lessons from their unique insight into the community they are selling. Thus, the consumer experience across multiple experiences in a destination is
more cohesive than apparent in less collaborative networks based on the shared values among sub-networks.

Not all operators are involved in sub-networks and are therefore not seeking the co-creative approach. Participants that are resource rich within the network, that have a strong history and relationship strength with the DMO and greater understanding of the brand and organisational knowledge (the elite) often do not join in sub-networks. These players, often the international branded hotels, are not involved as heavily at the sub-network level unless it is within their own brand portfolio. This position may be due to the head offices that are external to the destination that influence resource allocation and the level of local investment. In addition, there is an economic focus for a number of these larger organisations. Often, based on the congruency between the dominant logic the larger organisations demonstrate a stronger relationship with the regional DMO. In addition, a closer resource and value fit to the destination brand is evident among elite operators. The DMO’s fit with the resource rich supports the research by Marzano and Scott (2009) that identifies the elitism within destination management and the role of the relationships in determining the brand decision-making process. Beritelli et al. (2007) however argue that elitism can only work in some destination governance structures, that community focused destinations require a power equilibrium to be successful. Based on the history of DMO operations’, the elitist structure appears embedded in the destination demonstrating economic mimetic isomorphism, despite the argument that community destinations (such as TNQ) need power equilibrium. These divergent needs and values are causing strain within the destination and indicate the value of sub-networks for operators.

These findings on the dominant logics suggest that the DMOs operate under an economic dominant logic and operators adopt a co-creative approach (relating to RQ1). The understanding of the dominant logic of stakeholders extends the destination brand literature by identifying disconnect between the approach that state, regional and local DMOs and operators and the conflict that permeates the relationship strength within the destination. Previous destination brand management studies (i.e. Bregoli, 2013; Cox & Wray, 2011; Hankinson, 2007; Marzano & Scott, 2009) focus on single approaches to brand management under the assumption that all
stakeholders fit under a single management approach. This thesis suggests that the single approach is no longer sufficient due to incongruent goals and interests of the DMO and operators and that greater consideration needs to be given to the heterogeneity of the brand network. In particular, the governance role and implications on brand buy-in need to be reviewed by DMOs to consider the wider brand network buy-in.

7.1.3 Balancing the divergent dominant logics

The following section examines ways for the DMO to balance their divergent dominant logics through the use of governance mechanisms (relates to RQ1, RQ3 and RQ4). From the interviews, it is evident that the state DMO believes they took a stakeholder approach to the development of the destination brand, calling it a ‘bottom up-top down’ approach. The state DMO included operators in the development process through a series of meetings and, therefore, believes they engaged operators in the development process and developed a ‘best fit’ model of the destination. Despite this, a number of operators do not share this view, claiming that the state and regional DMOs either did not consult with the destination or that they ‘spun’ the workshops to fit their own agenda. Thus, offering a tokenistic ‘consultation’ rather than active engagement with operators. Tokenistic consultation is apparent within other case studies of the Australian tourism industry. For instance, Beaumont and Dredge (2010) identifying similar practices lacking meaningful consultation within South East Queensland. A consultation process where utility maximisation is a key outcome (as apparent in the case of TNQ) is aligned with the economic dominant logic. This is due to the need to drive economic goals through tangible resources (i.e. visitor expenditure), rather than intangible resources such as knowledge and trust. The approach that the state and regional DMO took to brand development appears to be linear, directed from state to regional to local DMOs in a top-down manner, and typical of the economic dominant logic seeking economic goals as the main output (Heding et al., 2009). The backlash from operators from adopting the approach presented in this case suggests that this top-down approach is not successful in engaging operators in the branding process, therefore DMOs need to consider other ways to include operators in the development of the destination brand to facilitate their buy-in to the brand.
A lack of operator understanding of the brand is evident from the interviews. This knowledge gap was one of the main contributing factors for the lack of brand buy-in among operators. That is, they felt unclear what the brand stands for and how it can be operationalised, or incorporated into the experience they provide. In particular, operators are unable to engage with the meaning and relevance of the destination brand name and slogan, that is, Tropical North Queensland – Adventurous by Nature, and Cairns and the Great Barrier Reef and instead preferred an approach that does not focus on a geographical area or a set of experiences that operators perceive do not represent the destination. Operators also indicate a lack of understanding of how each of the brands within the dual brand strategy represents the destination. Several authors (e.g., Beritelli et al., 2007; Bregoli, 2013; Beaumont & Dredge, 2010; Cox & Wray, 2011; Hankinson, 2012) attest to the importance of brand understanding, communication and knowledge within destination brand networks. An understanding of the brand, what it means and how it can be operationalised is therefore fundamental for brand network success. Furthermore, brand knowledge enhances flexibility and innovation and, thus, is a core competency for destinations (Denicolai et al., 2010). Consequently, in this case, the regional DMO needs to explore ways to communicate organisational knowledge more effectively to operators and become involved in the innovative knowledge evident across the sub-networks to enhance the consistency of the brand. This change may require the regional DMO shifting from formal communication mechanisms that are failing to positively influence behaviour in their current format toward a more interactive dialogue approach. Denicolai et al. posit that, through different brand governance approaches, DMOs will be able to develop different core competencies and champion different strategic resources. Thus, the researcher proposes that from learning from other successful models of destination governance and by altering their current governance approach the governance tools such as communication and leadership can be utilised as capabilities of the destination that can in turn champion resources that are important under a service dominant logic, such as organisational knowledge, more effectively.

During the launch of the destination brand (in 2009), the state and regional DMO provided members within an online brand tool kit to help enhance member
understanding and buy-in. In addition, operators were also given a detailed presentation about how to use the brand. The regional DMO therefore perceive that they have provided access to the tools required to implement the brand. The provision of such tools demonstrates a top-down approach that lacks flexibility. Generating ways to facilitate the understanding of the brand is acknowledged as being important under a service-dominant logic (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a). Yet under the economic top-down approach utilised, the facilitation of understanding is not a priority. The one off presentations to operators, for those operators that attended on the day is only able to provide some organisational knowledge to some operators. In addition, during the process there may be a lack of knowledge retention, whereby, operators do not fully take on the intended message. There has been no further presentation to inspire other operators to integrate the brand into their operations. Taking an episodic approach to the dissemination of organisational knowledge ignores knowledge retention (i.e. operators not receiving the intended message) and disengagement. Consistent with Bregoli (2013) this case asserts that DMOs need to do more work to ensure that operators adopt the destination brands, identifying that through enhanced organisational knowledge and understanding the DMO will be able to facilitate brand buy-in. The DMOs approach to resource allocation, in this case in the form of intangible resources such as organisational knowledge, is not stimulating brand buy-in. As such, the researcher asserts that different approaches to resource allocation elicit different reactions from different operators. To reach the non-elite operators, under a co-creative logic, the DMO needs to consider a more flexible approach to knowledge dissemination that empowers engagement rather than ‘manages’. Furthermore, brand communication efforts, such as workshops, need to be on-going rather than episodic. At the time of research, there were no activities in place that are centred on the brand and enhancing brand understanding and use. Integrating brand centred practices in more flexible events, i.e., brand webinars and face-to-face workshops could be a way for the regional DMO to facilitate the extension of organisational knowledge of the brand and thus, enhance brand buy-in. These events should encourage engagement with the brand value rather than presenting information on the brand.
The state DMO recognises in the interviews that the level of buy-in to the brand will depend on the level of operator exposure to the brand. However, rather than ensuring that members had suitable exposure to the brand, it was assumed that different members have differing interest in the brand. This variation in brand knowledge is considered sufficient by the DMO. This highlights the lack of congruence between the rigid approaches to governance that the DMO apply not reaching the operators in the way that is intended. The lack of flexibility is typical of the economic approach but fails to provide all operators with suitable organisational knowledge to successfully utilise the brand. With the provision of additional organisational knowledge, through the researcher intervention, operators indicate that the brand is a positive reflection of the destination, thereby demonstrating that organisational knowledge helps to shift the mind-set of operators and inspires brand buy-in. Denicolai et al. (2010) identify that knowledge sharing is the main contributor to destination brand performance and competitive advantage. Thus, stimulating a need for DMOs to identify why the organisational knowledge is not reaching operators and consider an approach that will enhance the level of brand knowledge among operators.

Operators within the interviews identify that the local DMO provides a greater level of access to the brand than the regional DMO do. The local DMO has integrated a number of marketing opportunities that are within the financial resource constraints of a number of the operators. Furthermore, the positioning and local focus of the local DMO makes them appear more accessible than the regional and state DMOs; providing a closer cultural fit to the values of operators within the destination. Consequently, there is a more favourable attitude from operators toward the local DMO than there is toward the state and regional DMO. Despite the favourable attitude toward the local DMO, the local DMO are constrained by limited tangible resources, such as finance and attractions and limited intangible resources, such as market knowledge. Therefore, it is more challenging for the local DMO to operate successfully. Bertelli et al. (2007) support the role of the local DMO. Their findings demonstrate that destinations with deputies for their DMOs work better explaining that local rules shape the expectations of the network. From this case, operators perceive that the local DMO are interested in local issues and were more willing to work with them in a flexible and reciprocal way. Therefore, based on the
understanding of local issues there is a close cultural fit between the operators and local DMO. Consequently, operators are able to engage and build trust with the local DMOs thereby, facilitating brand buy-in based on co-creative goals. This thesis identifies that to enhance the consistency of the brand the regional DMO should not underestimate the value of the local DMO because the local DMO has stronger physical and social local connections, therefore a better geographic and cultural fit with operators than the regional DMO. These relationships can be leveraged by the regional DMO to stimulate buy-in across the brand network.

Stakeholder-agency theory attests that to reduce power differentials and reduce friction between the principle and the agents within the network credible commitments should be integrated prior to resource exchanges (Hill & Jones, 1992). Stakeholders put bonding costs on performance ensuring that both the agents and the principles operate in a way that reduces utility maximisation and supports network goals through the use of credible commitments. The interviews identify that the operators perceive no risk associated with buying-in (or not) to the brand and, accordingly, do not feel compelled to act in a way that supports the brand. Thereby, operators are behaving in a way that supports their own goals over the brand network, this may also in part be due to people avoiding politics to maintain social harmony, thus making it easier not to participate in wider network inclusion (Mutz, 2002). The absence of an evaluation of operator brand buy-in and behaviours accentuates the lack of urgency to join the network; therefore the DMO is unclear as to who is supporting the brand and who is not. In addition, the lack of evaluation or feedback loop from the operators to the regional DMO means that even if dissatisfied, operators do not have a channel to voice their concerns. The regional DMO may need to open up to evaluation and start monitoring and assessing the brand usage, to enhance their position, as considered in stakeholder-agency theory as credible commitments (Hill & Jones, 1992). Successful use of informal credible commitments in the form of gentlemen’s agreements appears successful in the context of the sub-networks. Lessons can be drawn from this small-scale network to identify techniques that leaders can utilise to promote brand buy-in among operators. Provan and Kenis (2007) consider that evaluative tools generate trust within the network and inspire operators to become more committed under a network governance structure.
Currently there are no credible commitments, that is, contracts or mutual bonding costs, in place to ensure the behaviour or goal alignment between the principle (DMOs) and agents (operators). The lack of credible commitments means that the principle is able to operate in a way to generate utility maximisation with no regard to the consequences on the network. Thereby, enhancing the power differentials within the destination and increasing friction between the principle and agent. For the operators (i.e., agents), there is no urgency in them adopting brand buy-in as there are no consequences to buying-in or not. The regional and local DMOs should explore with operators suitable credible-commitments to generate urgency to brand buy-in. For instance, more recognition of operators through awards may make them feel a sense of reciprocity and more valued in the brand network. As a consequence, brand buy-in will be enhanced, as the DMO is able to meet intangible goals of trust and support. Additionally, utilising informal communication tools such as Facebook or Twitter, as a means to highlight the positive brand contributions within the network may help reduce friction and build engagement in the network.

This thesis proposes that more consideration needs to be given to the divergent needs of DMOs and operators in order to reduce the incongruences and develop more consistency across the destination brand network. To achieve this, consistent with Denicolai et al.’s (2010) findings, active management of the governance structure and relationship management need to be considered. By adapting more flexibility DMOs can encourage reciprocity and meet the resource contribution that operators are seeking through intangible resource sharing to stimulate brand buy-in among non-elite operators whilst maintaining the internal economic goals the goals of the elite operators.

In conclusion, this study found that the dominant logic for DMOs is economic dominant and operators apply a service-dominant logic with co-creative goals in the delivery of the destination brand experience. To balance the logics, in order to stimulate a consistent brand experience, the DMO needs to consider the co-creative goals of operators and govern the brand with flexibility that enables these goals to be achieved. This thesis suggests that through a combination of formal and informal communication and through transformational leadership the DMO can reduce the
power differentials and information asymmetries in the destination that are currently
enhancing the friction between the DMO (principle) and the operators (agents).
Thereby, balancing the dominant logics of the DMO and operators, enabling both
economic and co-creative goals to be achieved and destination brand buy-in to be
enhanced. RQ1 is therefore answered.

7.2 BRAND DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION
PRACTICES AND THE IMPACT ON BRAND BUY-IN
This section explores the influences to stakeholder brand buy-in (RQ2) across brand
development, implementation and evaluation. Furthermore, this section identifies the
role of internal brand management practices (relating to RQ3) and the role of
stakeholder-agency theory (relating to RQ4) in facilitating destination brand buy-in.

Brand buy-in reflects the operators’ mindful and willing engagement with the brand
network, furthermore, it relates to the operators consent to contribute resources
alongside the DMO with the goal of facilitating a consistent experience. In the
following sub-sections, the factors that influence brand buy-in are discussed across
the branding process.

7.2.1 Brand development
The brand development process has a significant influence on buy-in to the brand.
This case confirms the paradox that Gyrd-Jones et al. (2013) propose, that top-down
brand developments create major tensions between stakeholders (in this case DMOs
and operators). Operators within the network that did not have suitable access to
intangible resources, such as organisational knowledge, are not willing to buy-in to
the destination brand as they lack the knowledge about brand development and
identity. Consequently, a lack of knowledge about the brand building process leads to
the perception the brand is ‘dumped’ on a destination by brand managers, thereby,
inhibiting brand buy-in. Gyrd-Jones et al. identify that when creating a top-down
brand, the brand should be broad enough to enable the majority of stakeholders to
tolerate it, however this requires suitable communication mechanisms to disseminate
enough organisational knowledge to gain acceptance among stakeholders. Acceptance
was not achieved across the destination brand network in this case. Instead rather than
the state and regional DMOs ensuring acceptance across operators the focus for the brand is on the brand raising consumer awareness and generating the output of maximising visitor numbers and expenditure. These economic priorities over relational priorities are typical of an economic dominant logic and have an impact on operator buy-in by stifling trust from developing within the network by creating the perception that utility maximisation supersedes network goals.

Operators identify some attempts at taking a bottom up approach to brand development through ‘work-shopping’ ideas with ‘key stakeholders’. The ‘key stakeholders’ are defined by their value fit with the DMO, therefore gaining acceptance among those that operate in alignment with the goals of the DMO. Furthermore, typical to an economic approach to brand management the brand was being tested rather than developed and operators suggest that brand executives were putting a ‘spin’ on the workshop outcomes. The tokenistic approach hinders buy-in by failing to facilitate trust between brand managers and operators. Operators feel that their opinions are not valued by the regional DMO, thus, trust is lacking in this process. As such, the attitude toward the regional DMO, based on the strength of the DMO relationship, has become a major barrier for the development of brand behaviours and brand buy-in among a number of operators. To overcome these issues, the approach to communication adopted by the DMOs is important. The DMO need to appear transparent in the eyes of operators. By engaging in dialogue with operators, internal brand management and wider organisational leadership literature suggests the leader can enhance their transparency and mitigate the concern of operators (Goodman, 2006). Strong organisational knowledge is also required for operators to act in a way that develops and distinguishes the brand image therefore demonstrating brand behaviours (Henkel et al., 2007). This further highlights the importance of strong communication channels within the destination network. By taking the top-down approach to brand development, the DMO is unable to convey to operators the fit of the brand, thus, impacting the buy-in through a lack of understanding of the fit between the destination brand and operators’ organisational identity and values. As such, the chosen brand development and management process is currently inhibiting brand buy-in. Consistent with Kemp et al. (2012), the importance of operators’ buy-in during the brand building process is therefore acknowledged. Additionally, the
influence of the governance tools such as communication and leadership during the brand development process are important for the DMO to consider.

**Brand Name**

Another significant factor to stimulate brand buy-in is the destination brand name. Kapferer (2008) argues that the brand name reveals the brands intentions, conveys brand characteristics and is a powerful source of identity therefore, is important to consider. Immediately the brand name acts as a key resource for the destination, conveying organisational knowledge to operators and consumers. The name of the brand appears to be extremely important for operators within this case. A number of operators mentioned previous brand iterations such as ‘Change your Latitude’ that they could not buy-into because they ‘did not get it’; they lack the knowledge to reflect the meaning of the brand. The importance of the brand name is therefore emphasised within this thesis as is the history or evolution of the brand, the path dependencies creating more or less favourable reactions based on previous iterations. Gouillart (2014) identifies the importance in generating a rich set of ideas and helping stakeholders to identify the value in these. Applying this logic, it is the role of the DMO to ensure that the operators have suitable organisational knowledge and can therefore relate to the brand. By ensuring that operators are accepting of the brand name is the first stage in the brand process. Morrison (2013) argues that the brand is used to articulate who the destination is. If the operators cannot identify with the brand then they will be unable to portray the brand experience to consumers. When selecting a name for a destination brand, it should be a strong representation of the history, culture and values of the destination that operators are able to relate to.

Cox and Wray (2011) identify the importance of the brand being a strong fit to the destination and monitoring the brand buy-in to ensure the brand acceptance withstands time. This thesis identifies the importance of the destination brand being a good value fit to the destination, enhancing operator buy-in from the development of the brand. Buy-in in this case is evidenced through operators that are able to identify with the values of the brand, those that represent the ‘adventurous’ experience. The lack of initial or on-going monitoring of the brand has an impact on stimulating brand buy-in. Without the DMO identifying that brand knowledge is lacking across the
brand network change to governance mechanisms such as the communication process to facilitate sharing of intangible resources (e.g. knowledge) is inhibited. A number of operators identify that they want TNQ to utilise the iconic world heritage sites (physical resources) of the Great Barrier Reef and the Daintree Rainforest in the branding materials. This argument is consistent with Cox and Wray’s (2011) findings that identify the competitive strength is attributed to the promotion of iconic resources and that moving away from the promotion of these may create confusion in destination identity. This finding also supports Hankinson (2007) who identifies the need to link the brand to realistic elements of the heritage of the destination. There is a heavy focus on path dependency in this desire from operators. For operators the most successful brand iteration of the destination is the “Where Reef Meets Rainforest” therefore based on the history of the destination operators are seeking the success of this brand again. Despite the history of the destination and wants of operators, brand managers contest that these resources will not drive visitation to the destination. In not driving visitation the regional DMO will not meet their economic goals. The use of experience over physical resources is also consistent with a destination at the stagnation stage of the tourism area lifecycle (Butler, 1980). However, the value of this experiential approach is not apparent to operators. The brand managers’ decision is consistent with the findings of Poria, Reichel and Cohen (2011) that identifies world heritage sites as appealing to consumers, but that just having world heritage status does not motivate potential visitors to visit that site. Consequently, the regional DMO’s approach would have greater benefits for the destination, but the strategy needs to be communicated more effectively to operators providing them with greater levels of organisational knowledge to help them understand the decision-making process rather than assuming, often incorrectly, that operators will adopt the identity without question thereby, treating operators as a homogenous group.

There is little research to validate the use of dual brand strategies or measure the success of the use of each brand. Within TNQ, the dual brand strategy appears to be used haphazardly without focus on the market that should use each brand. The choice of brand name “Cairns and the Great Barrier Reef” although inclusive of the ‘icons’ also narrows the geographic region, thereby, alienating a large proportion of the
destination’s operators. The use of the dual brand strategy therefore appears to be causing additional complications for TNQ, instead of stimulating buy-in to one brand they need provide suitable organisational knowledge and resources for operators to understand and buy-in to both brands. This strategy is causing stains on the regional DMOs resources and creating tension between the DMO and operators that lack sufficient understanding and organisational knowledge of both brands. In addition, Hankinson’s (2012) findings acknowledge the importance of consistency in brand communications to stimulate brand buy-in. The lack of consistency with the DMOs application of the dual brand strategy negatively impacts brand buy-in, indicating that the DMO is not willing to contribute their resources (time and knowledge) to the brand network, removing the reciprocity from the network. The lack of resource contribution by the regional DMO also generates a lack of support within the brand network, yet support is a key resource that operators are seeking form the DMO.

**Organisational knowledge as an intangible resource**

This thesis identifies that a major buy-in inhibitor is a lack of understanding of brand values and how to operationalise the brand. The lack of knowledge results in a lack of understanding of how the brand can be implemented within operators daily routines. As such, there is little enthusiasm toward or willingness to utilise the brand, which are key internal brand management indicators of brand citizenship behaviour and brand buy-in (Burmann & Zeplin, 2004). This is consistent with the work of Bregoli (2014) who identify that operators will often not consider the role of the brand in their operations. Holt and Cameron (2010) posit that more engagement (knowledge) across the branding process and greater ownership from the stakeholders (operators) may stimulate greater levels of brand innovation.

For a number of operators the lack of buy-in takes the form of the perception of a narrow focus to the brand, thus indicating that the organisational and brand knowledge has not translated for operators. A number of operators perceive that the brand is not a ‘good fit’ to the culture and experiences across the destination and consequently feel marginalised from the brand. The exclusion of operators mirrors the findings of Beaumont and Dredge’s (2010) that indicate networks that are not inclusive of all members impact on the satisfaction and commitment to the network.
Inclusiveness, developed through organisational knowledge, is therefore an important feature of destination brand networks. Empowering operators to engage with the brand and therefore develop enough organisational knowledge to buy-in to the brand is an important factor in facilitating brand buy-in. Existing studies emphasise the role of transformational leaders in ensuring that brand values and the brand promise is effectively conveyed to and accepted by operators (Hankinson, 2012; Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006). However, within the DMO there is reference to ‘managing the brand and operators’. Ford, Harding and Leamonth (2008) characterise managers as administrators, focusing on achieving economic results through short-term episodic relationships. Thus, whilst the DMO is assuming a ‘manager’ role the facilitation of organisational knowledge will be ineffective as they are unable to develop the engagement and trust with operators through the episodic relationships. In order to effectively turn the organisational knowledge into a core resource of the destination, the DMO need to facilitate, through transformational leadership and communication, the understanding of the brand identity, brand values and how the brand can be operationalised across routines. Schein (2010) argues that in the case that organisational culture becomes dysfunctional a leader is required to surmount their own culture to speed up the evolution of cultural change in order for subordinates to identify fit with the values and the culture. Therefore facilitation of understanding will require a shift from episodic relationships to greater levels of flexibility and fluidity associated with leadership in order to empower operators toward contributing resources toward common goals and inspiring trust and understanding within the brand network (Ford et al., 2008). However, in the current network, the DMO do not acknowledge that there is a lack of organisational knowledge across operators or that the brand network is lacking a sense of trust and reciprocity. The state and regional DMO suggest that there is already strong brand engagement and buy-in across the destination, thus indicating a lack of relational knowledge and understanding of the state DMO’s operators’. Without acknowledging problems within the network the DMOs appear myopic and unresponsive, thereby, negatively influencing their relationship strength with operators and the level of brand buy-in among operators.

Several operators identify that organisational and operational knowledge sharing within the destination is dependent on personal relationships, that is, ‘who you know’.
There was considerable dissatisfaction with this approach among operators who felt marginalised for not having the same historical ties to the DMO and the level of access to resources as others in the destination. It is evident across the brand network that operators perceive organisational, operational and innovative knowledge as important resources. Payne, et al. (2008) also discuss the desire for knowledge sharing among stakeholders. They suggest the co-creation process is enhanced through the stakeholders being emotionally supported (though organisational knowledge), action supported (through operational knowledge) and cognition-supported (through innovative knowledge). In order to obtain support and knowledge, operators identify that they need to actively engage with multiple boards and panels to achieve the level of knowledge they are seeking. By engaging in multiple panels operators are utilising other valuable resources such as time and finances. Therefore, in the current network structure DMOs are forcing operators to trade off their resources rather than facilitating and empowering access to a greater level of resources. Consequently, by forcing operators to make these decisions it negatively impacts on operator buy-in.

During brand development, the interview analysis revealed that operators seek clear communication that engages them with the brand in order to buy-in. The operators want transparency from the DMOs in this process and brand leadership rather than brand management. Internal brand management practices, especially strong transformational leadership and effective communication, therefore have an important role within the development of the destination brand in order to obtain buy-in. The case of TNQ did not indicate evidence of these practices, yet operators indicated these practices were what they would like to enhance their engagement with the brand and promote their buy-in. The absence of these practices in this case also suggests that the result is the marginalisation of operators and the restriction of certain resources to certain minorities in the brand network (i.e., the elites), leading to general dissatisfaction among most operators.

7.2.2 Brand implementation

Brand implementation is the stage where operators are charged with the responsibility of delivering the brand experience to visitors of the destination. Brand implementation is therefore an integral stage in the branding process and requires
careful consideration by the DMOs. The level of support that operators receive from the DMO is an intangible resource that the empirical materials identify as influencing the buy-in of operators throughout brand development and implementation. Support pertains to the level of reciprocity in the relationship and helps to build trust in the network. A number of the non-elite operators feel unsupported, that they are left behind, or are unimportant to the regional DMO and consequently are unwilling to buy-in to the brand. This echoes the findings of politics in organisations where certain employees are favoured based on their personal relationships with managers (Gandz & Murray, 1980). One operator mentions that the support was a contributing factor to why the following year they would not be renewing their membership and why other operators within the destination are no longer members. Several operators perceive that they have to ‘battle’ for the support of the regional DMO and the only benefits they receive are monthly emails. This indicates that these operators perceive their relationship with the DMO as adversarial rather than a reciprocal partnership and negatively impacted on their brand buy-in. Hankinson’s (2007) contests that small businesses need to be a part of the destination brand network and seek collaborative forums where they can be supported and concerns can be shared with others in the network. Hankinson (2007) identifies that a number of DMOs take control of the branding process and weaken the role of small businesses that ultimately has a negative impact on the brand. The strong DMO control is evidenced across this case. Therefore, the ways that DMO can actively support operators across the brand network warrants attention. DMOs need to consider providing support as an intangible resource through organisational, operational and innovative knowledge and through tangible resources, when required, to stimulate reciprocity and, thereby encourage brand buy-in and brand behaviours.

**Brand behaviours**

Acting in a way that supports the brand is a key principle of internal brand management (Baker et al., 2014; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Henkel et al., 2007) and leads to brand buy-in. In acting in a way that supports the brand, operators are able to deliver the brand promise to consumers. The willingness to help internal (i.e. other operators within the brand network) and external (i.e. visitors) consumers is commonplace in this study of TNQ. Operators willingness to help others within the
A brand network is a key indicator of internal brand management success (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). Operators demonstrate pride in their work when discussing their product and the destination. This local pride was especially evident in the smaller lower membership level operators. The level of collaboration among the sub-networks suggests an understanding among operators in the added value of working together rather than operating independently. Yet, many had limited experience working collaborative with the state or regional DMOs. This result also indicates a high level of interdependency within the destination, thus the importance of trust and reciprocity in a destination branding context.

To stimulate positive brand behaviours, internal brand management theory posit that ‘managers’ need to be seen on the floor, showing employees that they are in touch with operations and understand the issues within the organisation (Chiang et al., 2012). However, this is not happening in TNQ. The current disconnect between the economic and co-creative logics means that operators believe that the state and regional DMOs are sitting in their ‘ivory towers’ and are therefore not associated with the destination and its operators. The local DMO in part reduce the negative associations with the DMOs, however, with limited reach and resources, the local DMO are not able to satisfy all operators. One of the key reasons for dissatisfaction within the destination is that the regional and state DMOs do not understand what is happening at the local level ‘on the ground’ and have limited direct interaction with customer. This lack of local knowledge results in limited network knowledge and the regional DMO having a somewhat detached understanding of the visitor experience as opposed to the operators who are intimately involved in delivering the visitor experience. These factors enhance power differentials, by driving the perception that the DMO only consider the ‘elite’ within the destination and asserting the DMOs self interest over network-based goals. The focus of the state and regional DMOs is on economic outputs rather than the co-creative goals of knowledge and collaboration, thus impacting buy-in and positive brand behaviours. As such, the DMO need to enhance their level of network knowledge, increasing their knowledge about members and consequently advancing their knowledge about the resources within the destination to reduce the perceptions of their disconnect from the destination.
In addition, the lack of an identifiable figure-head (appointed brand leader) responsible for the branding within the regional DMO is augmenting disconnect between the DMO and the operators as they are unsure who to turn to when faced with challenges and questions about the brand. Facilitating the understanding of brand values and structures, thereby, translating the brand and issues associated with brand implementation is a key role of leaders according to internal brand management literature (de Chernatony, 2006). The figure-head is someone that operators are able to turn to for greater organisational and operational knowledge in relation to how to operationalise the brand in their organisation. With the entire regional DMO as brand leader rather than a person (or team) operators are unaware of whom to communicate with when they need support and they are not receiving knowledge and resources that they would like. Consequently, the perception of information asymmetries is enhanced and discontent is evident among operators in the destination as they are unaware of the communication structure. This research posits that by implementing a DMO structure with a clear brand leader, that is transparent to operators, will enhance the value of the DMO in the eyes of operators, enabling operators to know who they can communicate with for brand related resources such as support and knowledge. Thereby, reducing the appearance of the ‘ivory tower’ and facilitating operator willingness to engage and buy-in to the destination brand.

7.2.3 Brand evaluation
Consideration also needs to be given by the DMO to how they can encourage brand buy-in among operators and evaluate the destination brand, accordingly. It is not enough just to look at programs or information from elsewhere, it is important to consider the performance of the organisation, or destination, in comparison to observed outcomes from another time or space (Rose, 1993). From this research there is evidence of both parties not utilising the brand effectively but there is no enforcement for either party, thus, enhancing the feeling of power differentials and causing operators to demonstrate a lack of brand buy-in. Such dissatisfaction suggests that achievements and aspirations within the destination are not being matched indicating that routine satisfaction has not been achieved and that managers need to seek lessons from other contexts to help implement change to stimulate satisfaction (Rose, 1993). Hankinson (2012) finds a similar lack of buy-in among operators and
posits that brand endorsement schemes can be utilised by DMOs to enhance consistency across brands. Furthermore, Hankinson (2012) notes the value in DMOs investing in long-term strategies to engage operators with the brand. Long-term strategies give the DMO time to develop trust with operators and develop a brand identity that meets the needs of stakeholders, consistent with the resource-based view of small retail communities (Runyan et al., 2007). However, the DMO would need to shift their approach to facilitate relationships and trust with operators, based on the current episodic nature of relationships within the brand network.

In addition, the lack of brand evaluation demonstrates that the DMO are unaware of the performance of the destination brand, this is important in ensuring that the brand is being utilised effectively (Cui et al., 2014). Internal brand management literature suggests that brand leaders should have a holistic understanding of the brand (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006). Therefore, for the destination brand to be utilised as a strategic resource the DMO need to monitor the effectiveness of the brand both externally (through visitor perceptions) and internally (through operator perspectives). By evaluating the brand, the DMO can create a sense of urgency for operators to demonstrate brand buy-in and brand centred behaviours whilst stimulating a greater sense of reciprocity across the network than currently exists. They can also identify the weaknesses of their current strategy and acknowledge ways to enhance satisfaction by drawing-lessons from similar contexts (Rose, 1993).

7.2.4 Summary of brand buy-in

Evident through the brand development, implementation and evaluation stages there are a number of factors that are currently influencing operator buy-in to destination brands. This extends the existing destination brand research (i.e., Wagner & Peters, 2009; Hankinson, 2012; Sartori et al., 2012) by not only identifying how operators perceive the destination brand but also exploring why operators perceive the brand in a certain way. Through the discussion on destination brand buy-in, a new framework for destination brand buy-in is proposed.

Figure 7.1 shows the influencing factors of destination brand buy-in, combine with the characteristics of the organisation determine the level of brand buy-in (relates to
RQ2). There are three principle influencing factors, these are the governance mechanisms, the resource contribution and the path dependencies of the destination. These influencing factors result in varying degree of organisational characteristics in their approach of destination branding buy-in. These include the relational strength between the DMO and operators, the level and type of knowledge (i.e. organisational and innovative) that the operators possess and the degree of resource contribution (tangible and intangible) that they are willing to commit to the network. Three tiers of stakeholder buy-in are evident based on these influencing factors and operator characteristics.

“The elites”. Operators that have a value fit with the DMO also demonstrate strong history within the destination and a positive relationship with the DMO. These organisations are often characterised by a similar governance structure as the DMO (hierarchical and formal) and offer a positive resource contribution to the destination. The resources contributed though the upper end of the membership spectrum (i.e. Platinum and Gold), will often be financial through membership and additional marketing opportunities in association with the DMO and intangible through organisational and network knowledge. Based on their elite position, this set of operators are supporters of the DMO as they can identify the reciprocity in their relationship, identifying the value in the DMO for the wider destination marketing. However, the elites will often consider their own business ahead of the destination brand network. In addition, the destination brand values often does not filter past top management, thus those delivering the brand experience remain unaware of what the brand is and how it can be operationalised, this is due to the typically large scale of these operators where focus is given to the organisational brand rather than the destination brand. It is therefore important that consideration is given to how the brand can be introduced across operations within the elite operators engaging the brand with front-of-house staff as well as with top management.

“The inbetweeners”. The inbetweeners demonstrate high levels of local pride and have a genuine passion for the destination that they operate within. Thus, indicating the greatest cultural and value fit to a brand that is an authentic representation of the destination. Inbetweeners try to create relational ties with the DMOs however, they
lack the resources (often financial) to contribute to build the strength of relationship that the elites receive. Thus, often the inbetweeners are left feeling marginalised and as though there is a lack of reciprocity within the network. These operators utilise sub-networks to gain the intangible resources that they are unable to receive from the DMO. These operators are a strong resource for the destination. It should be a priority of the DMO to develop a stronger relationship with these operators, utilising the local DMOs to expedite this relationship, in order to ensure the inbetweeners have the level of transparency and enough organisational knowledge to deliver on the destination brand experience.

“The discontented”. Characterised as the operators with the weakest relational ties with the DMOs this group of operators have a very low level of brand buy-in. Often discontented by the lack of reciprocity within the destination brand network this group of operators fail to perceive the value in the destination brand and the DMO structure. This group of operators’ question their membership on a regular basis. Often these operators will consider, or do, cease their membership with the regional DMO as they lack the organisational and operational knowledge of others within the network. DMOs need to work on achieving a level of transparency across their operations that re-builds the trust with these operators. Thereby, providing them with the intangible resources that they are seeking to reaffirm the value in their membership. By working on enhancing the relationship with these operators the DMO will be able to enhance their level of buy-in and gain access to additional destination brand resources.

The level of brand buy-in is not static, it changes and evolves over time as operators change their level of knowledge, relationship strength and resource contributions.
Figure 7.1 Destination brand buy-in framework

Framework developed from this study

1. **THE ELITES**
   - Strong history and relationships within the destination brand network;
   - Understanding of brand and organisational knowledge;
   - Positive resource contribution.

2. **THE DISCONTENT**
   - Weak relationships in the network;
   - Low understanding of brand and limited relationship with DMO;
   - High innovative knowledge;
   - Limited resource contribution.

3. **THE INBETWEENERS**
   - Some relational ties with DMO;
   - Seeking collaboration in network through sub-networks;
   - Destination/organisation goal alignment.

**INFLUENCING FACTORS**

- Level of reciprocity
- Communication style
- Leadership style
- Heredity/network
- Evaluation/feedback

**GOVERNANCE**

- Support
- Trust
- Intangible - Knowledge
- Tangible - Financial

**RESOURCE CONTRIBUTION**

- Tangible - Financial
- Intangible - Knowledge
- Positive resource contribution

**ORGANISATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

- Supporter of the DMO
- Network through sub-networks
- "The Inbetweeners"

**PATH DEPENDENCIES**

- Time in destination network
- History of relationship with DMO
- "The Elites"
- "The Inbetweeners"
- "The Discontent"

**BUY-IN**

- Limited resource contribution and lack of organisational knowledge;
- Low understanding of brand and lack of relationship with DMO;
-"The Discontent"
The destination brand buy-in model indicates that brand buy-in is determined by the current governance approach and tools of the destination brand, the historical relationships within the destination and the access to and commitment of resources to the destination. In addition, destination brand buy-in is impacted by the organisational characteristics of the operators involved in the provision of the brand experience. Thereby, addressing RQ2.

Through power-differentials and information asymmetries within the destination brand network, generated through hierarchical governance mechanisms destination brand buy-in is negatively affected. As such, friction is enhanced across the destination brand network through the governance mechanisms of the destination brand. By considering stakeholder-agency theory within the destination brand network the DMO can utilise tools (i.e. credible commitments) to reduce the power differentials and information asymmetries within the brand network. By addressing the friction within the network the DMO can enhance their relational ties with the non-elite operators and influence the level of brand buy-in through the influence of stakeholder satisfaction. By understanding the importance of, and ways to, reduce power differentials and information asymmetries within the destination answers RQ3.

Finally, through internal brand management practices such as transformational leadership, leaders that are seen within the destination and a balance of formal and informal communication mechanisms the DMO this thesis suggests that DMOs can facilitate destination brand buy-in. By failing to adopt flexible approaches to brand leadership and by maintaining a hierarchical management process the DMO negatively impact the brand buy-in. Therefore, this thesis identifies that by adopting positive internal brand management techniques, buy-in to the brand network will be strengthened. Therefore, RQ4 is answered.

7.3 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION
This is the first study to undertake an in-depth exploration of operator buy-in to a destination brand. In doing so, a framework for destination brand buy-in is proposed, highlighting the theoretical contribution to the governance of destination brands in
terms of leadership, communication and reciprocity of relationships. As a result, the thesis makes four important contributions to the destination brand literature.

First, this thesis advances the destination branding literature by proposing a shift in thinking in the DMO’s brand governance approach. The findings reveal that DMO have an economic dominant logic and the operators apply a service-dominant logic, which causes inconsistencies in their approaches to destination branding. This conflicting viewpoint is particularly evident among the lower level membership of the DMO, namely “the inbetweeners” and “the discontented” members, and the regional DMO. As such, the regional DMO needs to explore ways to create a more network-focused approach to brand governance that delivers value to these groups. One way to build support among these operators is to restructure of the DMO hierarchy to champion the role of the local DMO. The local DMO is more effective in facilitating brand buy-in from these members because the network is typically across a smaller geographic area and has a smaller number of members. This structure would better satisfy the co-creative service requirements of the smaller operators than the current mass-membership approach employed by most regional DMOs at present. Alternatively, drawing lessons from industry-based cluster groups could also achieve a similar outcome to local DMOs (Gardiner & Scott, 2014). For instance, clusters have formed around niche tourism markets and activities such as food and wine tourism, youth tourism, whale watching tourism, etcetera in other destinations. These industry clusters operate similarly to local DMOs by uniting networks of members. The multiple local DMOs or industry clusters should then work closely with the regional DMO on collective branding for the destination. This restructure will enable the regional DMO to maintain strategic resource allocation, ensuring economic goals are fulfilled whilst providing intangible resources through the local DMO and industry clusters and thereby, supporting the wider network of operators.

The second contribution of this thesis to the destination branding literature is identifying where operators find value in the destination brand network and, thus, establishing reasons behind their evaluation of the destination brand. This approach advances single stakeholder literature (e.g. Beritelli et al., 2007; Kemp et al., 2012; Zehrer et al., 2014) by exploring multiple perspectives and extends understanding
across multiple levels of stakeholder within the destination rather than focusing of the resource rich (e.g. Hankinson, 2012; Marzano & Scott, 2009; Naipaul et al., 2009).

The third theoretical contribution is that this thesis provides an understanding of the need for reciprocity of relationships across the destination brand network through the application of stakeholder-agency theory. This thesis’ definition of brand buy-in requires the mutual contribution of resources by the DMOs (the principle) and operators (the agents), consequently it is important to operators that there is value in their contribution, and that they can identify reciprocity in the relationships that they form. In the current approach to destination brand governance, some operators (i.e., “the inbetweeners” and “the discontented”) are unable to identify the value or the reciprocity within the destination brand network due to the perception of power differentials and information asymmetries. To enhance the relationship with these stakeholders the DMO needs to offer greater levels of reciprocity to members. To achieve this, lessons learning from economic theories such as stakeholder-agency theory credible commitments can be utilised by the DMO, putting a bonding cost on the actions of both the DMO and operators to generate urgency to the buy-in and ensuring that both parties are acting in the best interest of the network. In addition, a focus on minimising information asymmetries through the communication approach will help to enhance the level of buy-in among operators. One of the most prevalent barriers to buy-in among “the inbetweeners” and “the discontented” are the power differentials, a perceived sense of elitism within the destination and the hierarchical approach to brand ‘management’. As such, the DMO needs to consider their framework to branding approach and how they address the power differentials within the destination. By examining other complex networks DMOs can enhance their understanding of network leadership and identify ways to minimise the negative impacts of their network. Adding transparency through the brand processes and facilitating support through the local DMOs will help to negate these issues, providing operators with the intangible resources that they seek through the relationship whilst maintaining a resource focus within the regional DMO that supports the economic goals of the network. As the first study to apply stakeholder-agency theory to a destination brand network, this thesis advances the understanding of operator buy-in
and the role that information asymmetries and power differentials play in inhibiting destination brand buy-in.

The final theoretical contribution of this thesis is furthering the understanding of underlying managerial approaches to ensure effective brand management, specifically the importance of transformational leadership and the simulation of dialogue within the destination brand network to encourage stakeholder buy-in. This study identifies the importance of empowerment from leaders within the destination, inspiring operators through the provision of intangible resources, to buy-in to the brand. In addition, the visibility of ‘leader’ among operators in the destination and having a personalised relationship with the leader to strengthen brand buy-in is recognised as important. This thesis makes a significant contribution to the destination branding literature by identifying that the current internal brand management practices adopted by the regional DMO is inhibiting operator buy-in by marginalising some operators, most notably “the inbetweeners” and “the discontented”. In order to facilitate buy-in across the destination network this thesis identifies the importance of empowerment through developing relational ties with operators and providing the intangible resources of knowledge, trust and support through the role of the local DMO. By exploring leadership and communication as internal brand management tools not just from the leaders perspective (e.g. Hankinson, 2012) this thesis advances the understanding of internal branding within the destination network.

In conclusion, this thesis makes an important contribution to the destination branding literature as the first study to take an in-depth exploration of destination brand buy-in. In addition, through the unique perspective of a resource-based view supported by internal brand management and stakeholder-agency theories this thesis advances the destination branding literature. The focus on the governance of the destination brand network represents an important contribution as it directs the internal management approaches of the DMO and determines the style of leadership and communication within the destination network. In order to facilitate stronger destination brand buy-in a shift of thinking is required from the DMO taking into consideration the dominant logics that guide operators as well as their own organisation thereby, increasing the reciprocity in the brand network. This thesis builds on previous destination brand
studies developing the body of knowledge to enhance the competitiveness of destination brand networks from a resource-based view.

7.4 PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTION
As well as having significant theoretical contributions, this thesis also has a number of important practical contributions for destination brand leadership in the future.

First, it is important that DMOs consider the heterogeneity of their members when governing the network as the current ‘one-size fits all’ approach to governance is unable to meet the needs of network members. The independent operators that make up the destination brand experience and their co-creative drive means that it is important to the DMO understand how they can enhance these goals. In the future, the DMO needs to consider the provision of a role within the regional or local DMO that is able to support operators. Although this would have financial implications for DMOs with more staff members required, the increased buy-in and trust established across the network will have sustainable economic benefits.

Achieving destination brand buy-in is a complex process and as such, when developing a brand DMOs need to consider how they can inspire brand buy-in throughout the process. As such, this thesis identifies that for the future buy-in of destination brands DMOs need to consider implementing credible commitments from the initial process discussing what these are and how to monitor them with operators. Thereby, encouraging operators to become involved in the branding process.

Brand buy-in is reliant on the contribution of resources from both the DMO and operators. As such, all involved in the brand network need to consider the value of what they are offering, ensuring that they are providing resources that enhance the network and the brand experience helping the network to attain both economic and co-creative goals.

In conclusion, this thesis indicates the importance of DMOs considering their governance approach and the influence that it has on buy-in to the destination brand network. By considering the dominant logics that direct both their actions and the
actions of the members of the destination network the DMO will be able to strengthen their relational ties in the destination, reducing power differentials and encouraging brand buy-in. Through achieving this, the relationships will become a strategic resource for the destination, thereby, strengthening the destination brand network.

7.5 LIMITATIONS
There are two main limitations identified within this thesis. This research was based on a single destination, therefore the generalisability of the findings should be considered. The outsider perspective of the researcher is also reflected upon. These limitations do not detract from the contribution of the thesis; instead they reflect fallibility in the search for an understanding of complex social situations and the paradigmatic approach that the research is not in search of a single truth, rather that it can explore warranted assertions that help develop understanding of a given context. Furthermore, the limitations presented establish boundaries of the study and present opportunities for future research.

This thesis is bound by a single location at a single time. Single destination studies are criticised for being weak based on the interpretation of the results and the ability to generalise from the empirical materials (Yin, 2003). However, more recently, authors attest to the strength of single destination studies in building theories and generating exploratory research (Xiao & Smith, 2006). Although the destination is typical of other destinations around Australia and the world, in terms of a hierarchical DMO governance structure reliant of government funding, it is important to acknowledge that different path dependencies in destinations have varying impacts on the buy-in of operators. Therefore, the researcher identifies that before generalising to other destinations the context needs to be carefully considered. However, given the similarities in traits with other destinations, warranted assertions can be made that based on similar governance structures (see Table 3.1), and similar resource allocations, similar influences on brand buy-in can be assumed. Future research can test the destination brand buy-in model proposed in this chapter and explore each of the concepts within different destinations, thus the ability to replicate the methods of this thesis minimises this limitation.
A further limitation is based on the sample utilised. As acknowledged in the ontology (Chapter Two), the researcher is an outsider to the destination. As an outsider it was difficult to achieve a sample across the destination. Those that did speak with the researcher are bound by their own history and subjectivities, thus their perceptions may have strong histories determining their opinions. The researcher continued gathering interviews until theoretical sufficiency was achieved (i.e. no new materials were gained) thus, minimising this limitation.

7.8 FUTURE RESEARCH
Upon considering the implications and limitations of this study, it is evident that future research is required to fully understand destination brand buy-in and the implications of brand governance on operator buy-in. This thesis identifies key concepts that underpin destination brand buy-in among stakeholders. Throughout the discussion of these constructs, the relationship between the concepts and the impact that they have on brand buy-in are acknowledged. Future research on this topic could examine these concepts in more detail. In particular, by exploring a destination that utilises more flexible network based approaches to governance and examining how the governance model influences the buy-in to the destination brand these results could be contrasted to the hierarchical model identified in this case.

Another area of interest from this thesis is the path dependencies and the role that the history of the destination has on the practices within the destination. In particular in destinations that demonstrate that they are operating with mimetic isomorphism, or based on institutionalism, exploring ways that DMOs can overcome the institutionalism formed through the history of the destination to ensure that they are operating in a way that best represents the dynamic industry. This is important in resource-dependent destinations in order to obtain or maintain competitive advantage (Helfat & Peteraf, 2003).

Furthermore, exploration of the role of brand buy-in to the delivery of a consistent brand experience, and consequently visitor satisfaction is required. The process of enhancing operator buy-in to the brand can be a costly and a time-consuming exercise. Therefore, it is important that the benefits for both groups of stakeholders
are recognised. As such, the next stage of the research would be to identify the role that strong operator buy-in plays to the consistency of the brand experience delivery and the visitor satisfaction to the destination.

The interpretation of the empirical materials also brought to light a number of additional concepts for future research. First, the interactions between the multiple businesses that combine under the destination brand is a considerable area of interest. Future research could explore the relationships utilising brand architecture models to determine how the DMO could leverage the operator brands independently whilst at the same time promoting the overarching destination brand. In understanding these relationships it may help DMOs to enhance their capabilities in order to maximise the strategic resources in the destination.

Next, the exploration of credible commitments on DMO and operator behaviour may help to understand the resource contribution and the importance of reciprocity among network members. Through action research the introduction of such evaluation methods could help to understand the role of mutual contribution to destination brand buy-in. To test the level of buy-in before and after the use of such mechanisms would enhance the level of understanding to destination brand buy-in and how DMOs can engage more effectively with operators.

Finally, additional research into what the DMO can do to support the operators within the destination is necessary. The codes identified through the interpretation of the empirical materials indicate that operators have a clear idea of what they would like to see from their DMO in future. Further research identifying what the needs and wants of operators are and how DMOs can achieve these would help to strengthen relational ties within the destination brand network. In particular greater transparency into how DMO funds are distributed and how resources are utilised is important to operators, therefore, in-depth studies into these areas of the DMO would help to support the operators within the network and in-turn help DMOs facilitate greater buy-in among operators.
7.7 CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to explore multiple stakeholder perspectives’ of destination brand governance, examining complexities associated with the heterogeneity of stakeholders and identifying practical tools to develop brand buy-in. Through in-depth interviews across all levels of destination brand membership this thesis achieves its aim. In addition, this thesis is the first destination branding study to take an in-depth exploration of destination brand buy-in and propose a framework that illustrates the levels of buy-in among network members. Thus, this thesis has a unique contribution to the destination brand literature and the practical governance of destination brand networks. By understanding the dominant logics of network members this study identifies the decision-making processes within the brand network and is able to identify why the incongruence exists between the operators and DMOs, as well as the impact that these have on destination buy-in. Through internal brand management practices, such as applying transformational leadership and combining formal and informal communication processes to facilitate dialogue among stakeholders, this thesis posits that destination brand buy-in will be enhanced among operators, namely the inbetweeners and the discontented. This is due to internal brand management practices facilitating transparency and trust within the network, thereby, helping achieve co-creative goals of operators. Finally, through the application of stakeholder-agency theory, the role of reciprocity in the destination network is identified. Thus, identifying the need for DMOs to ensure that operators are able to identify the value in the network whilst facilitating a governance structure that reduces the level of information asymmetries and power differentials within the destination. Thereby, providing DMOs with relationships that are strategic resources and contributing to the competitive advantage of the destination, under a resource-based view.
TNQ Consumer Perception Survey

Natasha Cox—PhD Candidate

Report Overview

Following the interview you have previously participated in, this report explores the results of a national survey of consumer perceptions to the Tropical North Queensland (TNQ) region. The report explores the awareness of TNQ, results indicate high levels of awareness to Cairns and Port Douglas but lower awareness to more regional destinations.

The report explores the suitability of the ‘Tropical North Queensland—Adventurous by Nature’ brand. Results indicate that the brand name is creating barriers to the destination due to the hot and humid perception that it creates. Furthermore, the nature element is established as a key attribute of the destination. Conversely, adventurous was not an experience that resonated as strongly with the region.

Brand personality is also investigated with the personality traits developed in the brand pyramid considered an authentic representation of the region. However, the personality trait of ‘cheeky’ confused respondents who questioned what this means for the destination.

Overall there is a strong awareness and positive perception of the region. However, intention to visit within the next twelve months is low, an effort needs to be made to create urgency to the visit.
**TNQ Consumer Perception Survey**

**Introduction**
Following the interview that you have kindly participated in, a national survey of consumer perceptions about TNQ was conducted. The following report details the key findings from the survey. We would value your opinions on these results.

**Aim**
The aim of this project is to establish visitor and non-visitor perceptions of the TNQ region. It aims to gain an understanding of the region and develop an understanding of the TNQ brand and the fit the brand has with the authenticity of the destination. Moreover, this project aims to establish the perceived barriers to travel to TNQ.

**Data collection**
A national online survey was collected in late October 2012. Participants were asked to respond to questions about their awareness, perceived quality and future intention to visit the region. Furthermore visitors and non-visitor were asked about their perceptions of brand personality.

**Demographic profile of respondents**
There were 562 responses to the survey. There was a higher male response (70%) than female (30%). Participants were aged between 18-79 years and were living across Australia. The Demographic profile of respondents is presented in Table1. Residents of the North Queensland region are excluded from the study as the project is focusing on tourist perception.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age Range</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-30</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-50</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-70</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Previous TNQ visitor</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of domestic trips in the last 12 months</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7+</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

Awareness

First the awareness of TNQ was established. Respondents were asked if they are familiar with the region without any prompts. This helps to establish how strong the awareness is and whether the awareness campaigns are effective. The majority of the sample (97%) are aware of the destination with only 7% stating that they are unaware of TNQ. The results can be seen in Figure 1. Respondents were then provided with a list of regions within TNQ and asked to identify the destinations they are aware of (Figure 2). Cairns has the greatest level of awareness (94%) followed by Port Douglas (85%). Gulf Savannah is less well known with only 11% of respondents identifying the region. The results suggest that there is little regional awareness. This suggests that the awareness campaigns are extremely effective for the city and larger destinations, however, the regional destinations are not indicating strong awareness. A change in marketing focus may be necessary.

Awareness is supported by strong word of mouth advertising suggesting that previous visitors are a strong advocate of the region (Figure 3). This needs to be taken advantage of and the focus for promotion within Australia should shift toward the regional areas of TNQ.

Although awareness is showing to be strong for the region the intention to visit in the next twelve months is not as strong (29%). Results suggest that for many the region comes to mind when they are looking at selecting a vacation destination however, it is not top of their destination set (Figure 4). Furthermore, there is little intention to visit the region within the next year with only 30% of respondents considering travel to the region within the next twelve months. This suggests that although there is an extremely successful awareness campaign and Australians know of the region there needs to be a change in the way the region is being advertised to move the intention to action. It is worthless having awareness is people are not visiting the region.

Implications

There is a high level of awareness around Cairns and Port Douglas. This is strong in attracting first time visitors to the region but there needs to be a greater focus on getting people out to the regions when they arrive in TNQ. This will help to encourage repeat visitation with more to see and do. The results indicate that previous visitors are strong advocates for the region producing positive word of mouth. This means service quality is imperative to maintain positive experiences and strong word of mouth.

Although the awareness is high, intention to visit is not. Although consistent with previous Australian domestic travel research there needs to be a focus on moving consumers from awareness to action. Thus, campaigns to build awareness should be supplemented with action orientated approaches that create urgency to visit.

KEY QUESTIONS

SHOULD TNQ SHIFT FOCUS FROM AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS TO MOTIVATING ACTION, THAT IS GETTING PEOPLE TO BOOK? CAN THIS BE ACHIEVED?
Findings

TNO Destination Brand—‘Adventurous By Nature’

The project sought to assess the brand tag-line and whether visitors perceive it is a good representation of the region. This is important as the brand is outlining a promise to visitors, if it is not considered to fit with the region then people may not get the experience they anticipated, in turn this may lead to negative word of mouth.

The results indicate that there is confusion among respondents about the correct tag-line for the region. 40% of respondents selected “Adventurous by Nature”, a further 36% selected “Naturally Refreshing” - the Sunshine Coast tag-line— as being the best representation of the region (figure 5).

This raises the question of the suitability of the tag-line. It also relates to the awareness of the region, although people are aware of the region they are not aware of the brand image for the region. Furthermore, these results indicate the strong pull factor of nature to the region, indicating this should remain a heavy focus of promotions.

Figure 5: Brand Slogan

Tag-Line Best Suited for TNQ

- Get Natural: 15%
- Adventurous by Nature: 36%
- Naturally Refreshing: 12%
- More than the Usual: 7%
- Famous for Fun: 4%

TNO Brand Personality

Brand Personality is considered the set of human characteristics that people associate with TNO. Personality is important as it helps differentiate TNO from other regions, adds an emotional dimension to decision making and can add meaning to the region. When the brand was launched TTNQ in consultation with the region, compiled a list of personality traits experienced in the region. The project gained an insight into consumers perceptions of these traits.

Figure 6 shows that respondents find the brand personality traits that best suit TNQ are outdoorsy, colourful, friendly, wholesome and successful. They do not recognise TNQ as being upper-class, intelligent and cheeky.

It was also identifies that those that have previously visited TNQ find it significantly more down-to-earth, honest, wholesome and reliable than those that have not visited.

Figure 6: Brand Personality

Implications

TNO Destination Brand - ‘Adventurous By Nature’

The brand is not clearly associated with the region and respondents are seeing more that just adventure in the region. Nature is a strong representation of the region’s experience and is clearly identifiable and associated with the region.

TNO Brand Personality

TTNQ attributes the following personality features to TNQ: warm, welcoming, energetic, positive, free-spirited, colourful, cheeky, engaging and casual. The results demonstrate that the respondents identify with all these traits except cheeky. This trait needs to be further conceptualised and better integrated into the brand (or should consider to be removed from the brand personality traits). It is important that all businesses are able to conceptualise and present the personality traits within the destination to ensure visitors are getting the experience that they are promised so TNQ can meet visitor perceptions.
Barriers to travel to TNQ

It is important to understand why visitors are reluctant to travel to TNQ in order to establish ways to overcome these barriers and increase visitor numbers. Predominant barriers to travel are the expense of the region (39%), that it is too far to travel (39%) and that there are other places to see (26%). Results are seen in figure 7. Out of the other reasons provided participants identify that it is too hot and humid. It is important to note that no one identifies negative word of mouth as a barrier.

Implications

Not unlike other Australian destinations, barriers to visitation largely relate to the remote location to TNQ. This barrier needs to be taken into consideration in marketing efforts to reduce the perceived distance from major domestic markets. This is particularly important given the rise in international travel. People are willing to travel longer to reach foreign destinations. As such, it is important to educate domestic markets and encourage domestic travel.

Furthermore, the tropical climate of TNQ is also acting as a barrier to travel. The Tropical North name is highlighting this barrier and for many it provokes an image of a hot and humid climate. Again enhancing consumer knowledge about the region is paramount in moderating this concern. Additional information about the ‘coolest’ time to visit may help reduce the barrier.

KEY QUESTIONS

GIVEN THE BARRIERS TO TRAVEL IS THE “TROPICAL NORTH QUEENSLAND” NAME DESIRABLE OR DOES IT EMPHASISE THE BARRIERS? IS THERE A BETTER NAME?

Conclusion

This report highlights the key findings of a national survey on the perceptions of TNQ. The report raises questions in relation to the destination brand of TNQ. The survey results show that there is a positive perception of the region and that the region has a high level of awareness.

Consideration needs to be given to ensure that potential consumers of the region are turning intention into action.

Natasha Cox—Doctoral Candidate
Griffith University,
Griffith Business School,
Department of Tourism, Sport and Hotel Management,
170 Kessels Road,
Nathan,
QLD, 4111.
Natasha.cox@griffith.edu.au
0421380227.

Thank you for participating in this research. I look forward to hearing your views on the questions raised in the report.
APPENDIX TWO
INFORMED CONSENT AND ETHICS INFORMATION PACKAGE

Griffith Business School,
Department of Hospitality,
Sport and Leisure.

Nathan Campus,
Griffith University,
170 Kessels Road,
Nathan,
QLD, 4111.

INFORMED CONSENT

Research Team:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natasha Cox</th>
<th>A/P Prakash Chathoth</th>
<th>Dr Richard Jones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD Candidate/ Primary Researcher</td>
<td>Supervisor Department of Hospitality, Sport and Leisure</td>
<td>Supervisor Department of Marketing,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Hospitality, Sport and Leisure</td>
<td>Phone: (07) 373 54103 <a href="mailto:p.chathoth@griffith.edu.au">p.chathoth@griffith.edu.au</a></td>
<td>(07) 555 28768 <a href="mailto:richard.jones@griffith.edu.au">richard.jones@griffith.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0421 806 227 <a href="mailto:natasha.cox@griffith.edu.au">natasha.cox@griffith.edu.au</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted the following:

- I understand that this research forms a component of the students academic program;
- I understand that my involvement in this research will include a taped interview;
- I understand that once the interview has been transcribed the tape will be erased;
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand that there is no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;
- I understand that information obtained from this research may be used in future research and published;
- I understand that the conduct of this research involves the collection, access and / or use of identified personal information. The information collected is
confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without my consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, anonymity will at all times be safeguarded;

- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;
- I understand that I am free to contact the research team to gain access to the report findings and a report of the results will be sent to me after analysis;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without comment or penalty;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team at any time;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3735 5585 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree to participate in the project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ethics Information Package

Destination Brand Architecture: An Exploratory Study of Nature-Based Brands

Purpose of Research:
This research is being conducted as part of the PhD program at Griffith University. The research aims to reduce the gap in destination branding literature. Specifically the research is exploring a holistic approach to creating a complete experience for visitors. Through practical application the research aims to help reduce the inconsistency in destination brands through exploring possible ways of managing the destination brand internally to reduce inconsistent levels of quality and experience.

Why you were selected:
You have been selected to participate within this study as your business is considered to be a primary tourism business within the region of the Tropical North Queensland and Cairns and Great Barrier Reef brands.

What is required of you:
You will be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview with the researcher. The questions will be in relation to your contribution in the development of the destination brand. It is your choice as to whether you participate and are free to not answer any questions or leave at any time. The interview will be tape-recorded for transcription purposes; notes may also be taken when required.

Results will be sent to you in a report once the data has been collected and analysed.

Privacy:
The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and / or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University’s Privacy Plan at
As with Griffith University Research Policy the recordings of the interview will be erased after transcription. Transcripts will be stored under lock and key or in safeguarded data files as per the Griffith University guidelines. You will remain anonymous within the research and any distinguishing characteristics will be removed to safeguard your anonymity.

**Benefits of the research:**
Although there will be no direct immediate benefit to you by agreeing to participate within the research, it is hoped that the long-term benefits will be recognised in the development of a better understanding of how to create sustainable destination brands from an internal perspective.

**Further Questions:**
The research team will be happy to answer any further questions you may have. Please contact them directly.

Furthermore, if you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this research please contact, Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3735 5585 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au).
APPENDIX THREE
INFORMATION SHEET

Destination Brand Architecture: An Exploratory Study of a Nature Based Destination

What does this mean?
I am conducting research that will explore destination brands in order to understand the internal management, governance and brand architecture (balance of services) of destinations. This will help to gain a deeper understanding of how destinations can give consumers a cohesive destination experience through the alignment of brand touch points.

Based on the emerging stream of research into co-creation it is both the demand and supply-side stakeholders that create the destination experience. Depending on the level of co-creation different visitors will have different experiences. No matter what they experience all visitors should leave the destination with a positive image and an understanding of what the destination represents.

The research that I am conducting will explore the implicit links between differing stakeholders and how they can be utilised to create a strong and consistent destination brand. In order to establish this, key stakeholders of the destination will be interviewed to determine the current structure of the brand, where the strengths and weaknesses lie and what can be done to ensure a holistic brand experience.

Why is this important?
In a world that is becoming increasingly competitive it is important to understand ways to enhance the destinations competitive standing. This in turn will help to put the destination at the forefront of the visitors mind. It is the local businesses that have the opportunity to make or break a holiday for visitors therefore exploring how to maximise the experience is an important task. In turn this could lead to increased profit and stronger competitive standing globally.
How can you help?
I invite you to talk with me about the destination brand, how it was created, developed and maintained. I want to understand the current level of governance over the destination and what is being done to ensure that visitors to the destination will leave with a positive experience. It is important to understand how different departments of the management organisations work toward the destination brand and the degree of alignment that is evident across the brands.

How will this benefit you?
This is your region, your visitors and your business. This research will not tell you how to do things but will explore ways that may help to enhance the quality of experience that visitors get to your destination. Furthermore, visitor satisfaction will also be explored, these results will be returned to you so you can develop a deeper understanding of how your destination is perceived.

Who am I?
My name is Natasha Cox and I am a PhD Candidate at Griffith University, Brisbane. I have worked in the tourism and hospitality industry for 10 years in restaurants, event venues and for overseas tour operators. During this time I gained a degree in International Tourism Management from Sheffield Hallam University, England and a Masters in International Tourism and Hospitality Management from James Cook University, Brisbane. During my time working for tour operators it became apparent that the guests often perceived their holiday to be ‘ruined’ if one element of their holiday did not live up to their expectations. This intrigued me and stimulated my research exploring the ways in which destinations can enhance the destination experience.

For further information please contact:
Natasha.cox@griffith.edu.au
0421806227

I look forward to hearing from you and meeting with you.
# APPENDIX FOUR
**PARTICIPANT LIST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>MEMBERSHIP LEVEL</th>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STO1</td>
<td>State Tourism Organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STO2a</td>
<td>State Tourism Organisation</td>
<td>Brand Development</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STO2b</td>
<td>State Tourism Organisation</td>
<td>Market Analyst</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>Consultant and ex STO</td>
<td>Consultant to the region</td>
<td>Gold Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U4</td>
<td>Multinational HR executive</td>
<td>HR head for TNQ hotels</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5</td>
<td>Consultant to the region ex RTO</td>
<td>Involved in brand development</td>
<td>Cairns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G6</td>
<td>Gold Member</td>
<td>Activity operator (SME)</td>
<td>Cairns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B7</td>
<td>Bronze Member</td>
<td>Activity operator (SME)</td>
<td>Cairns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTO8</td>
<td>Regional Tourism Organisation</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Cairns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTO9</td>
<td>Local Tourism Organisation/ Platinum Member</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Port Douglas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B10</td>
<td>Bronze Member</td>
<td>Activity operator (SME)</td>
<td>Port Douglas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P11</td>
<td>Platinum Member</td>
<td>Airport</td>
<td>Cairns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U12</td>
<td>Unknown Membership</td>
<td>Multinational Hotel</td>
<td>Cairns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G13</td>
<td>Gold Member</td>
<td>Activity operator (SME)</td>
<td>Cairns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14</td>
<td>Platinum Member</td>
<td>Activity operator (large)</td>
<td>Cairns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U15</td>
<td>Unknown Membership</td>
<td>Activity operator (SME)</td>
<td>Atherton Tablelands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B16</td>
<td>Bronze Member</td>
<td>Bed and Breakfasts</td>
<td>Ravenshoe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S17a</td>
<td>Silver (2 products)/Gold (1) Member</td>
<td>Activity operator (SME)</td>
<td>Port Douglas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S17b</td>
<td>Silver (2 )/Gold (1) Member</td>
<td>Activity operator (owner)</td>
<td>Port Douglas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B18</td>
<td>Bronze Member</td>
<td>Activity operator (SME)</td>
<td>Cairns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B19</td>
<td>Bronze Member</td>
<td>Activity operator (SME)</td>
<td>Babinda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B20</td>
<td>Bronze Member</td>
<td>Scenic Tour (large)</td>
<td>Daintree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B21</td>
<td>Bronze Member</td>
<td>Activity operator (SME)</td>
<td>Cape Tribulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B22</td>
<td>Bronze Member</td>
<td>Hotelier (SME)</td>
<td>Port Douglas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C23</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td>Ex TTNQ CEO</td>
<td>Gold Coast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX FIVE
PHASE ONE - INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

INTRODUCTION:
How long have you been operating in the region?
Number of employees in the business?

TNQ BRAND:
Awareness of TNQ brand?
How did you hear about the brand?
Were you part of the development?
What does the brand mean to you?
Do you consider the brand an accurate reflection of the destination?
Do you consider the brand widely accepted?
Is information on the brand easy to access?
How did you find out about brand details (i.e. values)?
Do you feel you understand the brand?
Do you feel your business is accurate showcase of brand?

INFLUENCE & BENEFITS:
How much influence does TQ/TTNQ have over the brand?
Membership?
Do you get much support from TQ/TTNQ?
What do you consider the benefits of the brand?
Do you utilise opportunities presented by TTNQ?

COOPERATION/COMPETITION:
Level of cooperation?
Who do you cooperate with?
Facilitated privately or by TTNQ?
Who do you perceive as competitors? Why?

**MONITORING & EVALUATION:**
Is there any monitoring/evaluation from TTNQ?
Were opinions sought after brand established for any period of time?
Do you have on-going access to networks?
On-going access to marketing intelligence?
Do you advertise with TTNQ?
Is there support/training? Do you use it?
Would you adhere to monitoring processes?
Are you aware of any businesses not supporting brand?

**ARCHITECTURE:**
What is the mix of businesses like?
Price offered by Businesses?
Good mix for brand?
Missing businesses?
Aware of collaborations?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant information</td>
<td>This group of codes identifies the role the participants play in the region.</td>
<td>Membership level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Board/group members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Local DMO members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal brand management</td>
<td>This group of codes reflects the discussion based around internal brand management principles identified in the literature.</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stakeholder buy-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Experience delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stakeholder participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand development</td>
<td>This group reflects the process of brand development across all stakeholders until the point of the brand launch.</td>
<td>Brand development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Development workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Regional consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Regional consensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brand name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>State synergy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Target market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brand personality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brand culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brand image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brand positioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brand promise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>On going changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brand launch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand implementation</td>
<td>This group explores the role of the operators in the delivery of</td>
<td>Experience delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stakeholder delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities</td>
<td>This group focuses on the opportunities that arise from being a member of TTNQ or an affiliated local DMO.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big picture</td>
<td>This code was important and stands alone, it identifies the importance of the role of TTNQ for the marketing of the region.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networks</td>
<td>This group of codes explores the structure and relationships that exist within the regions network.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand architecture</td>
<td>This group of codes identifies the relationship that exists between the brands within the region and the DMOs ability to simultaneously promote brands within the region.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand fit</td>
<td>This group of codes identifies the codes associated with how well the brand represents the region, not just the overarching brand but also the sub-regional brands.</td>
<td>Dual brand strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Great Barrier Reef a selling point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Great Barrier Reef ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brand consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-brand issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Destination not on brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Regional synergy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Regional activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Local pride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumers</td>
<td>These codes explore the participants perception of the role and understanding of consumers to the region.</td>
<td>No understanding of consumers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Needs analysis of consumers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>This group of codes identifies the methods of brand and operator evaluation that exist from a state, regional and local level.</td>
<td>Research – consumer and brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Control systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Accreditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Awards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This research is being conducted as part of the PhD program at Griffith University. The research aims to develop an understanding of your opinion of Tropical North Queensland as a holiday destination.

Your participation is voluntary and you are not under any obligation to consent to participate in this research. If you choose to participate you may discontinue participation at any time without providing an explanation. However, we hope that you will agree to participate fully in this study. The research is guided by the ethics requirements of Griffith University and if you have any questions, please contact the researcher at natasha.cox@griffith.edu.au.

Participation in this research poses no risks as the research asks only that you identify your opinion of Tropical North Queensland as a holiday destination and provide basic demographic information about yourself that will allow us to identify response patterns from different groups in society. You will not be identifiable from the information provided.

While the data collected in this research is not believed to be commercially or personally sensitive, all information in the questionnaire that you provide will be treated confidentially. The data collected from this research will be reported in general terms only.

By clicking the next button I am agreeing to be a part of the research understanding the above ethical consideration.

Please answer the following questions based on your opinion. It is important to answer all questions, it should only take you around 8-10 minutes. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey.

Please select the answer that best describes your opinion
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am aware of Tropical North Queensland as a holiday destination</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Which of the following Tropical North Queensland destinations have you heard of? (Tick as many as you know)**

- ☐ Cairns
- ☐ Mission Beach
- ☐ Cook Town
- ☐ Daintree
- ☐ Cape Tribulation
- ☐ Palm Cove
- ☐ Cape York
- ☐ Kuranda
- ☐ Port Douglas
- ☐ Torres Strait
- ☐ Atherton Tableland
- ☐ Gulf Savannah

**Which of the following tag lines do you think BEST suits Tropical North Queensland?**

- ☐ Get Natural
- ☐ Adventurous by Nature
- ☐ Naturally Refreshing
- ☐ More than the usual
- ☐ Famous for Fun

**Please tick the statement that best describes your opinion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland is TOP of my list when I think about a holiday destination</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland comes to my mind when I think of a holiday destination.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland is easy to recognize among other holiday destinations.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I know about Tropical North Queensland because of (tick as many as apply)

- Television advertisements
- Radio advertisements
- Magazine advertisements
- Social media (facebook/twitter)
- Travel agent
- Brochures picked up outside the region
- Brochures picked up in the region
- Other travelers
- Other (please specify)
- Never heard of Tropical North Queensland

Please answer the following questions based on your opinion, it is important to answer all questions

Have you ever been to Tropical North Queensland?

- No
- Yes

How many times have you visited Tropical North Queensland?

When was the last time you visited Tropical North Queensland?

Which Tropical North Queensland holiday destination did you spend most of your time in?

- Cairns
- Mission Beach
- Cook Town
- Daintree
- Cape Tribulation
- Palm Cove
- Cape York
- Kuranda
- Port Douglas
- Torres Strait
- Atherton Tableland
- Gulf Savannah
Thinking about your last trip to Tropical North Queensland please select the answer that best suits your opinion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland delivered what it promised.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland has a high level of quality.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland has a consistent level of quality.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland lived up to my expectations.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please state how Tropical North Queensland did or did not live up to your expectations


What was the purpose of your trip?

- Visiting Friends and Relatives
- Leisure
- Business
- Other

Why have you not visited Tropical North Queensland? (tick as many as apply)

- Too far from home
- Other places to see / things to do
- No time
- Too expensive / can't afford
- No particular reason
- I have heard negative comments from others
- Other (please specify)

Would you consider visiting Tropical North Queensland?

- No Chance
- Very Little Chance
- Some Chance
- Very Good Chance
**Thinking about Tropical North Queensland please select the answer that best suits your opinion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland is a down to earth holiday destination.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland is an honest holiday destination.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland is a wholesome holiday destination.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland is a friendly holiday destination.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland is a cheeky holiday destination.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland is an energetic holiday destination.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland is an imaginative holiday destination.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland is an up to date holiday destination.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland is a reliable holiday destination.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland is an intelligent holiday destination.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland is a successful holiday destination.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland is an upper class holiday destination.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland is an engaging holiday destination.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland is an outdoorsy holiday destination.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical North Queensland is a colourful holiday destination.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Almost there just a few more questions, please answer all questions as honestly as you can

Thinking of Tropical North Queensland please select the answer that you think is most suitable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I want to recommend Tropical North Queensland to others.</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I will tell other people about the positive aspects of Tropical North Queensland.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I intend to go to Tropical North Queensland in the future.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to go to Tropical North Queensland in the next 12 months.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which state are you currently living in?

Are you

- Male
- Female

What year were you born?
Which is the highest level of education that you have completed

- High School Grade 10 or less
- High School Grade 12
- Diploma/associate diploma or trade qualification
- Under Graduate Degree
- Post Graduate Degree

What is your average annual household income

How many domestic trips did you take in the past 12 months

How many international trips did you take in the past 12 months

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete the survey. Please click the >> button to submit your responses.
APPENDIX EIGHT
PHASE THREE FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What were your overall thoughts on the consumer perception report?
2. Do you think that the awareness campaigns are adding value to the region? Do you think that an action-based approach would add greater value?
3. Adventure is not being strongly associated with the region by visitors, do you think local operators could utilise this better in their marketing efforts or should Adventure be dropped in favour of an ‘iconic’ experience?
4. Far North Queensland was dropped due to the barriers it creates in the region, do you think that Tropical is now doing the same thing? Do you see any better iterations?
5. Was there anything that you expected to see in regards to consumer perceptions that is missing?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand name issues</td>
<td>Discussion about the name of TNQ, comparing FNQ to TNQ the change of brand.</td>
<td>Nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Name shift time consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>New domestic name needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>FNQ better fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shift from tranquil to adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Climate promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical</td>
<td>Issues with ‘Tropical’ as a name, the positives and negatives of the images that it evokes.</td>
<td>Tropical barrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tropical heat humidity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tropical positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Discussion around ‘adventure’ and other opportunities outside of adventure.</td>
<td>Great Barrier Reef icon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other 'non-adventure' activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Activities available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Soft adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positioning</td>
<td>How the region is trying to position itself and differentiate from the competition.</td>
<td>Differentiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adventure positioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Image creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No differentiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target market</td>
<td>Discussion around the target market and the impact of the brand on the target market.</td>
<td>Alienating a market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Focus of marketing too narrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Need to narrow demand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Need to widen market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Slogan too narrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Widen markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness level</td>
<td>Discussion regarding the level of awareness of the</td>
<td>Awareness vs Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Try to raise awareness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Regions as well as the need to action this awareness. | Dominance  
Funding  
Lack of consumer awareness  
Long term goal action  
Not breaking through market  
Regional awareness  
TV actions  
No negativity |
|---|---|
| **Barriers to visitation** | Where the barriers to visitation lie and why.  
Expensive operations  
Infrastructure hindering visitation  
Cost  
Distance |
| **Internal branding perspectives** | Internal discussions about the brand knowledge and industry support.  
Brand knowledge  
Change of attitude needed  
Industry support  
International strategy  
TNQ cohesion  
Want benefits for the *whole* region |
| **External brand communications** | External discussions about the promotion and communication of the brand and all destinations included in brand.  
Communication  
Mis-communication of regional areas  
Not enough communication of regions  
Word of mouth |
| **Consumers and the brand** | Discussion around the changing needs of consumers, their interactions with the brand and satisfaction.  
Consumer evolution  
Consumer perception  
International visitors  
Lack of consumer satisfaction  
Not sure of consumer perception  
Repeat visitation |
| **Experience marketing** | Shift from focus on ‘iconic’ physiography  
Experience marketing |
| Semantic issues | Issues defined with the semantics of the words used in the tag line. | Semantics of adventure |
|                |                                                                      | Semantics of nature |
|                |                                                                      | Semantics of tropical |
|                |                                                                      | TNQ misleading |
|                |                                                                      | Tag line |
| Role DMOs      | The role of the LTO and opportunities available for stakeholders in the provision of the brand experience. | Regional DMO role |
|                |                                                                      | Local DMO role |
|                |                                                                      | Opportunities in TNQ |
| Reality and perception of the brand | Discussion focused on the difference between the reality of the brand and consumer perceptions. | Reality vs. perception |
|                |                                                                      | Re-education |
|                |                                                                      | Personality |


and Hospitality Research, 8(2), 79-97.


thesis: The complexities of writing about the use of QSR*NVIVO within a grounded theory study. *Qualitative Research, 4*(2), 247-264.


Strategic Change, 11(1), 307-316.


Del Chippa, G., & Presenza, A. (2013). The use of network analysis to assess relationships
among stakeholders within a tourism destination: An empirical investigation on Costa

development and networked core-competencies for tourism excellence.
*Tourism Management, 31*(3), 260-266.

Angeles: Sage Publications Ltd.

membership within an organisation: A viable internal branding alternative? *Journal of
Product and Brand Management, 19*(3), 210-217.

Devesa, M., Laguna, M., & Palacios, A. (2010). The role of motivation in visitor satisfaction:

Horizons, 56*(2), 199-205.

of Service Industry Management, 4*(1), 25-35.


Dinica, V. (2009). Governance for sustainable tourism: A comparison of international and

destination- examining the nature and significance of co-branding effects in the case


Management, 27*(1), 269-280.


of Sustainable Research, 19*(4/5), 479-499.


Freeman, R., E, Harrison, J., Wicks, A., Parmer, B., & De Colle, S. (2010). *Stakeholder*
theory: The state of the art. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


Learning.


Modell, S. (2010). Bridging the paradigm divide in management accounting research: The
role of mixed methods approaches. Management Accounting Research, 21(1), 124-129.


Research, 14(4), 307-322.


Pesamaa, O., Ortqvist, D., & Hair, J. (2007). It is all about trust and loyalty: Partner selection


Simmons, C., Bickat, B., & Buchanan, L. (2000). Leveraging equity across the brand


Thorbjornsen, H., & Supphellen, M. (2011). Determinants of the core value behaviour in
service brands. *Journal of Service Marketing*, 25(1), 68-76.


Wang, D., Li, X., & Li, Y. (2013). China's "smart tourism": A taste of the service-dominant


