1. Introduction

1.1 Personal motivation

Sri Lanka. It is still an unknown country to me, a place to which I have never been.
Nevertheless, I feel a connection with this country. My father, who last year set up his
business in southern Sri Lanka, is the main cause for this attraction.
For this reason I dedicate my thesis to this country and hopefully those who might read it
will find it useful.

1.2 Problem statement

One of the reasons of why I would like to do research about Sri Lanka is because over the
past years this country has dealt with different issues.

First of all, in December 2004, several countries in the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka included,
were struck by a tsunami. For Thailand, the Maldives and Sri Lanka the consequence was
a 40 per cent decrease in tourism in the first quarter after the seaquake (Ven, 2005, p.1).

Secondly, Sri Lanka has a long, violent history with the Tamils, the largest minority
group in Sri Lanka (18.2 per cent of the population) (Sprang, 2003, p.29). The Tamils are
fighting for independence from northern Sri Lanka and since 1983 the Sri Lankan
government has disagreed with them. As a consequence, the Dutch government has
recently asked the Dutch residents in northern Sri Lanka to leave this area and for the
people in other areas to be aware of the situation (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
2006 b, p.3).

The most important country for Sri Lankan tourism is India, with 20 per cent of the total
tourists. Next is Europe with 60 per cent. When analyzing Europe, The Netherlands is in
the top 5 with regards to the number of tourists to Sri Lanka (see appendix 1) (Sri Lanka
Tourist Board [SLTB], 2006 b).

Research initiated by the Sri Lankan Tourist Board shows that 70 per cent of tourists come to Sri Lanka for pleasure, and 17 per cent for business (French Embassy, 2006 b, p.2).

The tsunami and the current situation with the Tamils have had its influence on the number of tourists in Sri Lanka. In 2007 there was some growth, but when the Tamil conflict began, there were consequences for tourism: from January to April 2006, 6,888 Dutch tourists came to Sri Lanka. This was a decline of 2.6 per cent, as 6.708 Dutch tourists in the same period in 2007 (SLTB, 2007 b).
I hope my research will contribute to finding a solution to increase tourist numbers.

1.3 Central Question
How can the Sri Lankan Tourist Board stimulate the Dutch leisure travelers to visit Sri Lanka, despite the current issues that this country encountered?

Definition of key words from the Central Question:
Sri Lankan Tourist Board: this organization is responsible for the decision making in the tourism industry.
Stimulate: improve the tourism by increasing the number of tourists.
Leisure travelers: travelers between 20 and 59 years, interested in sunny beaches, culture, historical sites and adventure.
Current: the tsunami in 2004 and the problems with the Tamils.
Issues: a trend or a condition, either internal or external, which will, if it continued, have significant effects on the functioning of the organization or on its future interests (Herle & Rustema, 2005, p.108).

The goal of this research is to create a marketing communication strategy, after determining the current image of Sri Lanka amongst the Dutch population.

1.4 Sub Questions

To answer the central question, I have defined overall sub-questions. The sub-questions are answered in the different chapters.

1. **What is Sri Lanka's background?**
2. **What are the current issues and what are their consequences?**
3. **What are the advantages of Sri Lanka as a tourist destination?**
4. **What is the current image of Sri Lanka?**
5. **What is the desired image of Sri Lanka?**
6. **What is the current marketing-communication strategy?**
7. **What are the external factors that can have an effect on the Sri Lankan tourism market?**
8. **What actions can be taken to improve the number of Dutch tourists, based on the STOP-SIT-model (Smith, 2000, p.44)?**

1.5 Justification of Research Methods

The structure of this thesis is based on the SOSTAC-Model: Situation (Where are we now?), Objectives (Where do we want to go?), Strategy (How do we get there?), Tactics (What tools do we use to implement the strategy?), Action (Detailed Action plan for each tool) and Control (How do we track our progress and know when we have achieved our goals?) (Smith, 2000, p.32.)

For each of the sub-questions the purpose and the methodology will be given.

1. What is Sri Lanka's background?

Goal: this part will give a first impression of Sri Lanka. The background information is necessary in order to put Sri Lanka in its content.

Methodology: secondary data, desk research:

- *Te gast in Sri Lanka*, Informatie Verre Reizen; provides general information and background information

- Sprang, U. *Sri Lanka,* Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen ; contains specific economic, historical, cultural information about Sri Lanka
- www.minbuza.nl ; the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

2. What are the current issues and what are their consequences?

Goal: after introducing Sri Lanka, the consequences of the current issues of the country will be explained.

Methodology: secondary data, desk research:

- *Te gast in Sri Lanka*, Informatie Verre Reizen; provides general information and background information
- Sprang, U. *Sri Lanka,* Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen ; contains specific economic, historical, cultural information about Sri Lanka
- www.srilankatourism.org; official website of Sri Lanka Tourist Board, provides statistics of tourist-industry.
- www.missioneco.org/srilanka ; website of the economic department of the French Embassy, with detailed information about different economic sectors in Sri Lanka

3. What are the advantages of Sri Lanka as a tourist destination?

Goal: to reflect the strengths of Sri Lanka as a country for tourism.

Based on theory: SWOT-analysis by Verhage, "Grondslagen van de marketing".

Methodology: secondary data, desk research:

- *Sri Lanka en de Malediven*; a travel guide
- *Tourism and recreation,* Board of Investment of Sri Lanka, Research Department; provides reasons why to invest in Sri Lanka

4. What is the current image of Sri Lanka?

Goal: to see what the image is of Sri Lanka amongst the Dutch population.

Based on theory: Seaton & Bennet, "Marketing tourism products",

Jansen & Joostens, "Enqueteren" and Vos "Het corporate image concept".

Methodology: primary data:

- A survey amongst a selection of the Dutch population

5. What is the desired image of Sri Lanka?

Goal: to see if the current image of Sri Lanka corresponds to the desired image.

Based on theory: Vos, "Het corporate image concept"

Methodology: primary and secondary data:

- Interview with Mr. Flambert of the Sri Lanka Tourist Board (see appendix 2)
- Information from the website of the Sri Lanka Tourist Board and the Sri Lanka Ministry of Tourism

6. What is the current marketing communication strategy?

Goal: to see if there are improvements to be made.

Based on theory: STOP-SIT-model and SMART- test by Smith, "Marketing communications. An integrated approach".

Methodology: primary data:

- through observation
- Interview with Mr. Flambert of the Sri Lanka Tourist Board

7. What are the external factors that can have an effect on the Sri Lankan tourism market?

Goal: to define the opportunities and threats for the SWOT-analysis in order to determine a strategy

Based on theory: Seaton & Bennet, "Marketing tourism products" An 'environmental scan' will be made and includes analyses of the technological, political, ecological, economic, socio-cultural and competitive environment of Sri Lanka.

Methodology: Secondary data:

- The website of the French Embassy in Colombo

8. What actions can be taken to improve the number of Dutch tourists based on the STOP-SIT-model?

Goal: to write a new marketing communication plan for the Sri Lankan Tourist Board.

Based on theory: Marketing communication plan by Smith, "Marketing communications. An integrated approach"

Methodology: Based on the results of the previous analyses objectives, a strategy will be made.

1.6 Survey Research Methodology

A survey was taken to discover the image of Sri Lanka amongst the Dutch population.. According to Baskin & Aronoff (1988) (as cited in Vos, 1992, p.99), the purpose of image research is to measure the familiarity, characteristics and positive/ negative perceptions of the public towards the organization, in this case Sri Lanka (?? What organization? This is a little unclear).

Only 100 people took the survey due to limitations in time and resources. The survey was based on the non-probability method, in which the people were selected through convenience. As a consequence, the survey was not representative of the Dutch population and thus the sampling error could not be measured. (Bennet & Seaton, 1996, pp. 95, 96).

The survey was held amongst people who have not been to Sri Lanka yet, because there was already much information available about the people who had previously been to Sri Lanka. Although the non-visitors of Sri Lanka had never been to Sri Lanka, it was still useful to ask them how they thought about the different aspects that Sri Lanka had to offer. The appraisal of these aspects was not based on their experiences, but reflected their perception of the 'tourist product', Sri Lanka. To determine the image of the country, it was good to know how people would spontaneously describe Sri Lanka. These descriptions were not based on their own experiences, but by impulses (influences?) they received from earlier. In this way, the image of Sri Lanka will be exposed.

The questions of the survey were based on the *corporate image measure model* used by Vos (1992, p.110).

The survey was held to discover the image of Sri Lanka as a tourist destination amongst the Dutch population. Only the most important results will be discussed. The complete results of this survey can be found in Appendix 3.

2. Sri Lanka, an analysis

This part of the thesis will introduce Sri Lanka with regards to the matters that are important for the tourism-industry: the population, infrastructure, economy and the accommodations for tourists in Sri Lanka and also the violent history with the Tamils. Eventually the discussed subjects will reflect the country's current identity[1]. The current identity supports the central question, because it is a part of the situation analysis. The situation analysis forms the basis of the communication-marketing plan. The identity also reflects the unique characteristics of Sri Lanka, which will be used when creating the "brand" Sri Lanka.

2.1 Profile

Sri Lanka is situated to the south of India and is surrounded by the Indian Ocean. It has over 20 million inhabitants and its capital is Colombo.

In comparison to the Netherlands, Sri Lanka is not large, 65,610km2 (1.5 times Netherlands) (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [MFA] 2006 b, p.1). This is a positive aspect, as one can see a lot of the country in a relatively short period.

Fig. 1 Map of Sri Lanka

2.1.1 Climate

Sri Lanka has a moderate tropical climate and the average temperature is 27 degrees, which is an ideal climate for tourists. The tourist seasons are defined by the two rain seasons, the so-called 'Monsoons'. The best period for travel is from November until March (Laet, 2000, p.185).

2.1.2 Nature

Because the country is relatively small, many attractions are within easy reach; Sri Lanka offers beautiful nature with white beaches and turquoise seas.

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[1] The identity is what the organization is and stands for; the personality of the organization (Michels, 2001, p.42)

13 per cent of Sri Lanka's land area is designated for wildlife and nature conservation. One of the most visited tourist attractions is, for example, an elephant orphanage. Moreover, Sri Lanka is set apart as one of the most bio-diverse eco-travel destinations in the world. The country has greater biodiversity per unit area than any other country in Asia (Board of Investment of Sri Lanka [BOI], 2001, p.2). This is confirmed by the findings of the survey; 52 per cent of the respondents think that Sri Lanka's nature   is very attractive or attractive (32 per cent) (appendix 3). This corresponds to the results of the Airport Survey[2] where most of the visitors had come to Sri Lanka for sun and beach (40 per cent), culture (77 per cent), historical sites (68 per cent), and wildlife (28 per cent) (SLTB, 2006 a, p.4).

2.1.3 Culture

According to the survey, 54 per cent of the respondents said that they would go to Sri Lanka for the culture and the historical cities (30 per cent).
Sri Lanka offers a rich cultural heritage, including seven UNESCO[3] world Heritage sites. It has a lot of places of historical, religious and cultural interest, where people can see, for instance, Dutch and British colonial heritage sites (BOI, 2001, p.2).

Another product that Sri Lanka offers is Ayurveda[4], which is practiced in Sri Lanka and some South Indian States. For tourists this is a way to relax, because the methods of Ayurvedic treatment vary from steam baths to massages. Remarkably, the survey shows that the opportunities for wellness and relaxation scores relatively low, while Sri Lanka has a lot to offer on these matters.

2.1.4 Population

Originally, the Singhalese people, who probably migrated from northern India, populated Sri Lank later on, the Tamil Kingdom was established from a south Indian dynasty (Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2006, p.1). Nowadays, Sri Lanka is divided

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[2] Sri Lanka Tourist Board, Research Division. *Airport survey on foreign departing tourists at Bandaranaike international airport. July 2005 to February 2006.*
[3] United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
[4] Ayurveda is one of world's oldest forms of healing. Ayurveda -derived from Sanskrit 'life' (Ayuh) and 'knowledge' (veda)- originated more than 3,000 years ago.

between Singhalese people (74 per cent) with the Tamils forming the largest minority (18.2 per cent). The Tamils are sub-divided into the Indian Tamils (5.6 per cent) and the Sri Lankan Tamils (12.6 per cent), mostly situated in northern Sri Lanka (Sprang, 2003, p.29). The different inhabitants of Sri Lanka form an important aspect of the current issues (which will be further discussed in chapter 2.2.1).

Despite the conflicts between these groups, an Airport Survey held among tourists revealed that found the people of Sri Lanka to be very friendly and hospitable, and added that, compared to other countries, this is unique to Sri Lanka (10.9 per cent of the respondents) (SLTB, 2006 a, pp. 22-23). This is confirmed by the survey answers from people who had not been to Sri Lanka, as 34 per cent of the questioned persons thought that people in Sri Lanka were very friendly or friendly (37 per cent), while only 1 person responded that the people were unfriendly. Also, the words most people mentioned when asked about Sri Lanka as a tourist destination were: tsunami, beautiful nature, nice weather, Tamils, and friendly people (appendix 3).

2.1.5 Religion
The main religion of Sri Lanka, Buddhism, is related to the largest population group; the Singhalese, with 69.1 per cent. Although Buddhism is known as a peaceful, non-violent religion, it has its own role in some violent events. For example, in 1958, Prime Minister Bandaranaike was murdered by *bikkhu's*, Buddhist monks.
Hinduism is the religion of the Tamils. Sri Lanka has also small Muslim and Christian minorities (Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2006, p.3).

2.1.6 Economy
For more than 2000 years, the agriculture and fisheries have been the most stable incomes for the economy of Sri Lanka. Next to the traditional forms of farming and fisheries, Sri Lanka has a few companies that produce tea, rubber, spices, rice and coconut products.

Most of the people in Sri Lanka work in the service industries (53.6 per cent), 26.6 per cent of the labor force works in the industry and 19.8 per cent works in the agriculture (Laet, 2000, p.24).

In the seventies, the economy of Sri Lanka was liberalized. However, due to the constant conflict between the Tamils and the Sri Lankan government, the changes associated with liberalization ground to a halt. The most important problems for the Sri Lankan economy are the weak infrastructure and high energy prices (MFA, 2006 b, p.6).

Sri Lanka has several export products: tea, rubber, textile and diamonds. Its most important export partners are the United States, Britain and India. Furthermore, a vital income for Sri Lanka is the money transfers from Sri Lankans working in the Arabic region, mainly in the housekeeping industry (MFA, 2006 b, p.6).

2.1.7   Infrastructure

Infrastructure is an important aspect that must be improved in order for Sri Lanka to grow as a tourist destination. Currently the Sri Lankan government is working on the infrastructure, because improvements have to be made to fulfill tourist's needs (BOI, 2001, p.1). In the Airport survey, 9.3 per cent of people would not go back to Sri Lanka due to the "terrible roads and traffic" (SLTB, 2006 a, pp.22-23).

When analyzing the graph (figure 2) of construction industry growth, one can see a strong progression until 2005. This was possible because of the financial help that came after the tsunami.

Several projects are in the pipeline, like the construction of a toll road between the capital Colombo and the international airport.
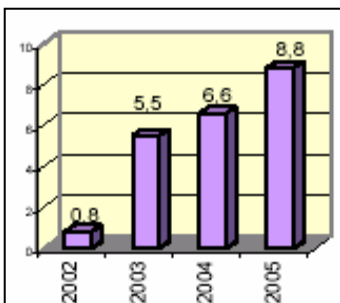

Fig.2 Growth of the construction sector in percentages, 2002 to 2005.

The hotel sector is currently busy recovering from the tsunami, but private investments are growing in, for example, the building of lodges and guesthouses. (French Embassy of Sri Lanka and the Maldives, 2006 a, p.3). The hotels in Sri Lanka are relatively cheap, compared to European hotels. Most of the survey responses showed that most think that Sri Lanka is relatively cheap; none of the responders think that Sri Lanka is expensive, which is positive for Sri Lanka as a tourist destination.

2.2. Issues

2.2.1 Tamil conflicts

The first issue that Sri Lanka is dealing with is the current situation with the Tamils, which has a long history.

After (former) Ceylon's declaration of independency in 1948, a majority of Sinhalese nationalists thought that the Tamils were over-represented in the public service and had too much power. Over the next years, a policy in favor of the Sinhalese people followed; Sinhalese became the only official language and Buddhists received special status. As a consequence the Tamil population felt threatened by the Sinhalese people and tried to defend their rights.

In the seventies, a part of the Tamil population formed a group, the Liberation of Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the so-called Tamil Tigers (Informatie Verre Reizen, 2006, p.6). In 1983 the tensions ended in armed conflict; a civil war in order to fight for Tamil independence in northern Sri Lanka. Since then Sri Lanka has dealt with constant guerilla warfare between the Tamils and the national army (MFA, 2006 b, p3).

Important dates of incidents over the past 10 years:

1995 → Under the government of President Kumaratunga, negotiations are held to reach an agreement. In the same year the LTTE stops the negotiation and the government reacts using both political and military force.

2001 → In June the LTTE attacks the international airport in Sri Lanka.

2002 → On the 23rd of February, Prime Minister Wikremasinge drafts the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) with the LTTE and comes to a truce for an unknown period.

2003 → In April, the LTTE forfeits the agreement, because they were not satisfied with progress.

2003 → At the end of October the LTTE comes up with their own proposals for an interim administration for the north and east of Sri Lanka, after two rejected proposals from the government.

2004 → New conflicts arise when the LTTE discovers that the government has not fairly divided the funds received to help tsunami-victims.

2005 → The Minister of Foreign Affairs is murdered by the Tamils on August the 12th.

2006 → The conflict starts a new, with the worst attacks since the Agreement of 2002. The main reason for these fights is the conflict over the water supply in Sri Lanka (Informatie Verre Reizen, 2006, pp.8-9) (MFA, 2006 b, p.4).

One of the most important weaknesses of Sri Lanka as a tourist destination is the situation with the Tamils, as earlier explained. The international observers of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) state that the fights can be titled as 'low intensity war'. As a consequence, several Western European countries advise their citizens not to go Sri Lanka if it is not necessary. The official statement of the Dutch Government is: "Non-essential trips to Central, South and West Sri Lanka at present are not recommended. People are strongly advised not to travel to the north and east of Sri Lanka. Dutch people who are staying in the north and east are called upon to leave these areas. Dutch people in the rest of the areas are asked to be aware." (MFA, 2007 a, p.1). Remarkably according to the survey, only 6 per cent of the respondents say that they had not yet been to Sri Lanka, because they feared it was unsafe. In addition, the most important reasons for not yet having been to Sri Lanka were: other countries were more preferable (38 per cent), Sri Lanka was too far away (19 per cent) and 39 per cent said they had no particular reason. Apparently, the situation with the Tamils is not an influential aspect with regards to tourism. However, later on in the survey, people were asked if they thought it was safe in Sri Lanka: 45 per cent answered that they thought Sri Lanka tended to be unsafe and only 19 per cent answered that the country tends to be safe. None of the respondents thought it was 100 per cent safe to travel in Sri Lanka.

2.2.2 Consequences of the tsunami in 2004

The tsunami in December 2004 affected the tourism industry in Sri Lanka precisely at the moment a record number of tourist arrivals had been reached. Regarding the tourists in Sri Lanka, about 92.5 per cent of the visitors were aware of the tsunami that hit Sri Lanka. Only 3 per cent of the visitors said that they were inconvenienced due to the tsunami damages. Also, 4.4 per cent of the visitors hesitated when planning a trip to Sri Lanka due to the destruction caused by the tsunami (SLTB, 2006 a, pp. 22-23).

In the Airport Survey of the Sri Lanka Tourist Board (SLTB), it is of particular note that the Netherlands has been highly involved in tsunami relief work. In general, about 12per cent of the interviewed visitors were involved in tsunami relief work as opposed   to 27.27 per cent of the Dutch visitors between July 2005 and February 2006. Only visitors from the United States had a higher rate of involvement (32.35 per cent) (SLTB, 2006 a, pp. 22-23).

A year after the tsunami, in January 2005, the Sri Lanka Tourist Board started a campaign called 'The Bounce Back Campaign' to revive Sri Lanka's tourism. The re-housing of people displaced by the tsunami and the rebuilding of Sri Lanka's beach resorts was given top priority. The marketing and promotion campaign was supported by an familiarization programme for both travel and tour agents and the media (Koumelis, 2005).

2.3 Desired image

The desired image is the image that Sri Lanka wishes to have with its public, and the image they wish to project to potential visitors (Michels, 2001, p.45).
To determine the desired image of Sri Lanka, one can look at the vision and mission of the Ministry of Tourism. Their vision is:

"*To build up Tourism as an industry capable of playing a significant role in the economic advancement of the country whilst preserving the country's cultural values, ethos and its rich natural endowment thereby winning the hearts of both the local populace and the international community.*" (Sri Lanka Ministry of Tourism [SLMT], n.d.)

The mission derives from the vision and contains the values, competitive position, core competences and the code of conduct (Michels, 2001, p38). The mission set by the Ministry of Tourism for Sri Lanka as a tourist destination is to

"To become the foremost Tourist Destination in Asia" (SLMT, n.d.)

In the *Sri Lanka Tourism Strategic Marketing Plan*, it becomes clear that the Sri Lanka Tourist Board wishes to develop the tourism industry in cooperation with the community.

They would like to "attract, welcome, involve and satisfy the visitors and to develop a profitable and sustainable visitors industry. Moreover they want to protect and enhance the value of the natural environment, local culture and values of Sri Lanka" (Weerasekera, n.d.). The long-term mission is that tourism becomes a key driver of Sri Lanka's economic growth.

Conclusion

All these different aspects, which reflect the identity of Sri Lanka, have been analyzed. One can conclude that not only the issues, like the Tamils, can cause the decline of the number of tourists, but the infrastructure has its own influence as well. On the other hand, Sri Lanka has a lot of potential as a country for tourism by offering tourist products such as beautiful nature and its willingness to invest in eco-tourism.

3. Communication analysis

In order to give any recommendations, one has to know what can be improvements can be made on the current marketing communication. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the Sri Lankan current marketing communication strategy (in The Netherlands). This includes communication objectives, a description of the target group(s), the strategy and the current communication tools being used, based on Smith's STOP-SIT-model.

3.1 Current communication objectives and strategy

The Tourist Board gave the following statement when describing its current objectives and strategy: "To undertake a consistent and comprehensive long-term product, public relations and promotions effort to develop and position Sri Lanka as a regional aviation, cruising and tourism hub and exotic nature, culture and adventure tourist destination that stands for building a sustainable tourism." (appendix 2) (J.M. Flambert, personal email, September 4, 2007). Mr. Flambert, director of the SLTB in the United Kingdom, realizes that this is not really a communication objective or strategy, but that is what comes closest to the actual definition. And when analyzing this strategy and objective, it does not meet the criteria of the "SMART-test": Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Reasonable and Timed (Smith, 2000, p. 36).

Although past campaigns have created some initiatives to promote Sri Lanka's tourism, a concrete coherent public marketing communication plan seems to be lacking. As stated on the website of the SLMT: "Sri Lanka's tourism, is now moving on to a strategic review of its industry in order to develop a strategic marketing plan appropriate to today's realities and tomorrows challenges." (SLMT, 2007, para. 1). This means that there is no exsisting strategic marketing plan as of yet. As further explained on the website, several products need to be delivered, such as a three-year Strategic Marketing Plan for Sri Lanka's Tourism and an one-year operational plan to promote the destination, based on the three-year strategic marketing plan. Furthermore, it has to be said, that the "guiding framework" that the SLTB plans to use, is indicated very clearly, step by step (see Appendix 3).

Consequently, there is no marketing (communication) plan for The Netherlands, which is confirmed by the Sri Lankan Embassy in The Hague, who is mainly responsible for the PR of Sri Lanka in The Netherlands. They state that they have contacted the SLTB to discuss a strategy for The Netherlands, but have not yet received a response.

3.2 Sri Lanka as a brand

Analyzing Sri Lanka as a brand will show the weaknesses and strengths of the country's current brand positioning. But, more importantly, this section will hopefully provide unexplored oppurtunities for marketing strategies. In this way these oppurtunities can be incorporated in the re-positioning of the brand "Sri Lanka" in the recommendations and thus eventually can contribute to answer the central question (*How can the Sri Lankan Tourist Board stimulate the Dutch leisure travelers to visit Sri Lanka, despite the current issues that this country encountered?*).

"The brand is the aura of beliefs and expectations about a product (or service) which make it relevant and disitinctive. It stretches beyond the physical and into the psychological and is extremely powerful" (Smith, 2000, p.482).

3.2.1 Brand image

When we discussed Sri lanka as a brand, Mr Flambert (SLTB, UK) said "that the greatest weakness of Sri Lanka's tourism is its variety" (J.M. Flambert, personal email, september 4, 2007). He explained that, normally, one can associate one country with one or two words e.g. New York with fashion and modernism, France with romance and wine, Egypt with Piramyds etc. Sri Lanka offers a bit of everything: sun and beach, nature, adventure, culture. "Because of the limitations of the budget, we could only send a small message" he explains. Moreover, we would not be sure if we had clearly represented, in one message, all the aspects that Sri Lanka has to offer. Besides that, Mr Flambert also admits that, concerning the marketing communication, they have not been very focused on branding Sri Lanka with a clear message. Although people associate Sri lanka with

friendly people, this is not unique. Other Asian countries claim this as well, so one can conclude that friendliness is a characteristic of the whole of Asia, and not just Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka wants to have a sustainable tourism industry for its visitors and the local communities. This fits in very well with the eco-tourism trend and comes to light in the latest marketing campaigns, as mentioned earlier . This is an oppurtunity for Sri Lanka, because no other (Asian) country has positioned itself as a eco-tourist destination. Sustainable tourism comes back in both the mission and vision as in the stated objective of the SLTB. Recently the SLTB announced a new project called the Destination Social Responsibility Project in order to improve Sri Lanka's profile as a destination. The Chairman of the Tourist Board, Mr. Alwis, states in a press release "today's brands needed to ensure they meet the highest ethical and environmental standards to stay competitive" (SLTB, 2007 a, para.1). To achieve these objectives, the Sri Lanka Tourist Board intends to create a special trust fund with the assistance of all major stakeholders as trustees. The stakeholders will include the Board of Airlines (BAR), Sri Lanka Association of Inbound Tour Operators (SLAITO), Tourist Hotels Association of Sri Lanka (THASL), Tour Agents Association of Sri Lanka (TAASL), Sri Lanka in Style, Institute of Tour Guide, Lecturers, Chauffeurs Association and Tourist Shops Association, among others (SLTB, 2007 a, para. 4).

3.2.2 The logo and slogan

The Sri Lankan slogan is "A land like no other" which indicates that Sri Lanka is unique . The slogan expresses the message that Sri lanka wants to send to tourists, namely, that a vacation to Sri Lanka is different than other vacations in Asia, and an unforgettable experience . The logo, often used together with the slogan, portrays a hand with a blue water lily (nymphaea stellata), which is the national flower of Sri Lanka. The colours orange and dark pink are colours with spiritual meaning and refelect the different sides of Sri Lanka. The logo is distinctive, easy recognizable and memorable. Although competing countries like India and Thailand claim the same message; namely "Incredible India" and

"Amazing Thailand", the Sri Lankan slogan is still different enough to distinguish itself. Together with the logo, the slogan symbolises that Sri Lanka is a rare beautiful country (the flower) which is treated with care (the way the hand holds the flower, carefully and almost like it is a diamond). The flower has multiple leaves, which represents the many "products" that Sri Lanka has to offer. Also, the flower is opened and is drawn, just like the hand, in simple, flowing lines, which stands for the simple and pure lifestyle and friendliness and openness of the Sri Lankan people .

3.3 Target group

Although Tourist Boards of competing countries mention eco-tourism on their websites, it is not really a part of their marketing strategy, but more a matter of (obliged) responsibility. The SLTB wants to bring greater numbers of socially and environmentally-aware tourists to Sri Lanka. This means that one could describe the target group as those tourists who care about their environment. According to Mr. Flambert, Sri Lanka tourism concentrates not on mass-tourism, but on the tourist who desires a more exclusive vacation. This because of the negative consequences of mass tourism like, the growth of sex-tourism, the effects on the environment etc.
He also provides a description of the ideal target group. This description is more specified to the United Kingdom, but still gives a clear image of the target group in general: a traveler, not a tourist; someone who wants to explore and is between 25 and 35 in age. He/she has a salary of more than 90.000 euros a year and takes an annual holiday for 10 to 14 days. Sri Lanka is seen as a semi-luxurious destination where hospitality, friendliness and high quality of service makes the money spent well worth it (J.M. Flambert, personal email, September 4, 2007).

 "The tourism chief, Renton De Alwis, believes that focusing on repeat visitors who are aware of the island's troubles, and a the same time admire its charms, might yield better results" (Ratnayake, 2007). This might be a very good idea for the Dutch population, since most of the visitors are repeat-visitors or have the intension to re-visit Sri Lanka . On the other hand, they (who?) will probably return anyway, so they should target new

markets. Mister Alwis suggested to strategically market Sri Lanka by promoting Ceylon tea or golf. Since the beginning of 2007, Sri Lanka's tourism promoters are trying to focus on niche markets, such as golfers and tea lovers: "We need to target specific market segments to increase the market" Mr. Alwis stated (Ratnayake, 2007). This can be a very effective strategy as the Tourist Board can organise events related to these themes, such as a golf tournament and workshops for making tea. In the Netherlands the market for golfers is probably too small, but linking Sri Lanka to sporting (or other) events is a good idea to increase awareness of Sri Lanka as a tourist destination.

3.4 The Dutch travel market
Because the Dutch tourist market is a part of the target group of this research, some aspects of the Dutch tourist market are discussed here:

First of all, in 2006, 80 per cent of the Dutch population went on vacation. 27 per cent of these tourists went abroad and 22 per cent stayed in the Netherlands. Thirty-one percent went on vacation both in The Netherlands as well as abroad (Nederlands Bureau voor Toerisme en Congressen [NBTC], 2007, p.1).

Furthermore, the average length of a vacation in the Netherlands in 2006 was 2 to 5 days (9 million people), while the length of most vacations made abroad were more than 9 days. For vacations taken abroad, the majority stayed in hotels or pensions. A smaller part stayed in apartments, camping sites and bungalows (NBTC, 2007, p.1).

A research report initiated by TNS NIPO analyzed the current trends and preferences of the Dutch travelers. One of the findings was that, although travel agencies had not become insignificant, online booking became more prevalent (especially for the elderly). Also, it seems that when people aged, they preferred more comfort during their vacation. This meant more hotels than tents, more flights and less bus travel. Destinations close to the Netherlands stayed popular, but in general the growth of vacations abroad continued, especially amongst seniors.

Furthermore, the research provided the core values of seniors and young people. The trend for elderly people was to relax and spend money on their vacation and free time. There was a strong craving for luxury, health and activity amongst this group, and cultural activities became more important.

On the other hand, younger people seemed to more enjoy "welfare and an authentic lifestyle"; their vacations had to be 'real'. Bus vacations were replaced by flight-vacations,   similar to seniors (Eldering, 2005).

3.5 Current communication tools

The Sri Lankan Tourist Board determines the communication strategy, but each specific country is responsible for their marketing. As a consequence, it can be that the United Kingdom has a relatively well-developed marketing plan for Sri Lanka, and The Netherlands has none. In this way the communication consistency of the "brand Sri Lanka" is not guaranteed.

The Sri Lankan Tourist Board, as well as that of the United Kingdom, often uses "third parties" to send their message to the consumer, such as travel agencies, tour operators and journalists. Mr. Flambert explained that if they would launch a complete media marketing campaign, one news item about the Tamils could destroy the effect of the campaign completely. "We can say to people it is safe in Sri Lanka, but if the news shows them a different image, they won't believe us". That is why the Tourist Board organizes trips for all the big newspapers and lifestyle-, beauty-, cooking-, travel magazines, (Daily News, Cosmopolitan etc.) to let them judge for themselves and to find out what Sri Lanka has to offer.

Another tool is showing short films about hotels in Sri Lanka on several websites, instead of having pictures. In this way, potential travelers can get a good idea   about where they are going, and what the hotel has to offer. Mr. Flambert used these films and has put them on the YouTube[5] website (J.M. Flambert, personal email, September 4, 2007). The good thing about this tool is that it is extremely useful and almost free of costs. The SLTB

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[5] A website on which people can show their home-made videos.

cooperated, as earlier mentioned, with intermediaries to send their message to environmental-aware tourists, such as the Board of Airlines, Tour Operator Associations and Hotel Associations. Although this is an international approach, there is no specific approach for, for instance, Europe and more specifically, The Netherlands. The Sri Lankan Embassy stated that there is only one Dutch pamphlet, which they send to the Dutch travel agencies, but no other tools or strategies exist.

In conclusion, the Sri Lanka Tourist Board sends newsletters with upcoming events and positive news about Sri Lanka to people who are registered on the Tourist Board website.

Conclusion

The SLTB has started good and effective marketing campaigns; however, there is no clear message to the tourist. While the "ingredients" are there: a good slogan and logo, a distinguishing aspect, namely the eco-tourism and an existing network of intermediaries, there is no coherent brand positioning. The fact that Sri Lanka is dealing with issues such as the conflict with the Tamils does not mean that it cannot promote itself extensively, as Mr. Flambert stated. One has to promote and emphasize the positive aspects of Sri Lanka. In this way a strong brand image can be created.

4. External analysis

Next to the internal analysis, the advantages and disadvantages of Sri Lanka as a tourist destination, it is necessary to analyze the external factors. Both Seaton's & Bennett's (1996) "Marketing tourism products" and Vos (1992) in his "Het corporate image concept" mention the importance of *monitoring* or *environmental scanning*. This is important because in an external analysis opportunities and threats can be of significance for a new communication plan. One can integrate these opportunities in a newly set communication objectives and strategy.

This chapter analyzes the different environments which can affect the number of tourists coming to Sri Lanka: technological, economic, political, ecological, socio-cultural and the competitive environment. Depending on its relevance for this research, these aspects will be discussed either briefly or extensively. Each environmental "scan" begins with an explanation as to why this particular aspect is important for tourism (in Sri Lanka) in reference to Seaton's and Bennett's "Marketing Tourism Products". In the conclusion, a SWOT analysis is made and will it be clear it will be made clear if the mentioned aspect is a threat or an opportunity for Sri Lanka.

4.1 Technological environment

"Scanning the technological environment is about assessing the future impact of technology on tourism development in general and marketing in particular" (Bennet & Seaton, 1996, p.10).
The use of the Internet has become more and more important for the tourism industry. Nowadays, vacations and flights are booked online, rather than a travel agency. According to the Airport survey held amongst departing foreign tourists, 59.09 per cent of the Dutch respondents answered that the Internet was their main source of information. Remarkably, this was the highest percentage compared to responders from other countries like France (50.56 per cent), Germany (38.13 per cent) and Italy (36.73 per cent). Furthermore, the percentage of bookings made by Dutch tourists online, 54.5 per cent, is above the average of 36.21 per cent (SLTB, 2006 a, p.13).

4.2 Economic environment

"Tourism demand is strongly affected by prevailing economic conditions" such as the Dutch income , unemployment rates, fuel costs, (which can affect travel and transport costs) and currency devaluations which can make some countries cheaper or more expensive in relation to their competitors (Bennet & Seaton, 1996, p.12).

At this moment, the Dutch economy is growing and stable. The Netherlands has 3.2 per cent rate of unemployment, which is the lowest of the European Union (Central Statistical Office, 2007). Furthermore the expectation is that the Dutch economy will grow by 3.0 per cent in 2007. Also, The Netherlands is in third place, after Luxembourg and Ireland, with 31 per cent above the average income in the European Union. *(Nederlandse economie groeit*, 2006).

Another aspect of the economic environment is the Schiphol airport. According to Mister Cerfontaine, Schiphol performs very well compared to its most important competitors, London, Frankfurt and Paris. The market share for both passenger flights as well as goods carriage has increased faster than those of its competitors. A few new airline companies have joined Schiphol and the number of destinations has grown (RTL, 2007, par.2). Most of the Dutch visitors to Sri Lanka travel with Sri Lanka Airlines, but also with Emirates, Royal Jordanian, Qatar Airways and Martin Air (SLTB, 2006 6, p.23).

4.3 Political environment

"Politics at regional, national and international levels profoundly affects tourism supply and demand" (Bennet & Seaton, 1996, p.11). Political unrest, as in Sri Lanka, can also strongly destabilize tourism. However, many hoteliers, tour operators and restaurant owners remain hopeful that this is just a temporary setback. It is positive that, for example, tourists have never become involved in   any disputes between the Tamils and the government, as has happened in Egypt, and the Basque areas in France and Spain. If incidents involving the Tamils reach the Dutch media, there will certainly be consequences for the number of Dutch tourists traveling to Sri Lanka.

As mentioned earlier, the Dutch government advises Dutch tourists against "non-essential trips" at this moment. They even state that the whole of Sri Lanka needs to be considered as unsafe. Regardless of this advice, Sri Lanka has a good relationship with The Netherlands. This is partly because of the long-term cooperation between these two countries with regards to development, but also because of their historical-cultural connections (MFA, 2006 b, p.7).

In 2006 a survey held among the Dutch population asked people about their fear of a terrorist attack. Then, 25 per cent of the Dutch population was scared of an attack, compared to 51 per cent in 2005. During the survey people were questioned about any behavioral adjustments resulting from the foiled terrorist attack in 2006 in The Hague. One of the findings was that 16per cent of those questioned would no longer go on vacation to a country with a higher risk of attacks (RTLZ, 2007, par.2).

4.4. Ecological environment

"Tourism both affects, and is affected by, the ecological systems in the areas in which it is developed" (Bennet & Seaton, 1996, p.12). A nice example is the Spanish Costas, which were once attractive regions, but are now dealing with the consequences of mass tourism.

The tsunami in 2004 is a good example how ecological environment can affect the tourism. Just like Thailand, Sri Lanka experienced a strong 23 per cent tourist decline in January 2005, directly after the tsunami (Ven, 2005, p.2).
An example of how the ecological environment can be positive for Sri Lanka is the trend for interest in eco-tourism. There are several definitions of eco-tourism, alias sustainable tourism development, one of which is: "Nature-based tourism that involves education and interpretation of the natural and cultural environment, and that is managed to be ecologically and culturally sustainable" (Mill & Morrison, 1998, p.381) Almost 36 per cent of Dutch consumers say that they are more interested than they used to be in the social behavior of the organization behind a product or service (ANVR, 2002, p.15).

Sri Lanka has an ideal eco-tourism resource base, because of its rich bio-diversity of flora and fauna. It is set apart as one of the most bio-diverse eco-travel destinations in the world, and has greater bio-diversity per unit area than any other country in Asia. This aspect can be considered as an opportunity for Sri Lanka, because the island is relatively unspoiled compared to other Asian countries, like Thailand (BOI, 2001, p.3).

4.5 The socio-cultural environment

"Monitoring the socio-cultural environment is about understanding changing trends in populations, lifestyles and values" (Bennet & Seaton, 1996, p.12).

Over the next few years, the proportional increase of the ageing population in the Netherlands will grow.

The number of elderly people will increase: in 2030 about 4 million Dutch people will be older than 65. That is almost a quarter of the population (Dutch Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sports, 2007, para.3). According to the Airport Survey, 31.82 per cent of the Dutch visitors in Sri Lanka is between the ages of 40 and 59 and 18.18 per cent is 60 or older. Furthermore, 50.80 per cent of the visitors are between 20 and 39 years (SLTB, 2006 a, p.5). Also, this can be an opportunity for Sri Lanka, regarding a possible new target group. This is likely to result in increasing levels of tourism by people who are older than 50, who are still physically sound and comparatively rich. The aging trend does not only apply to The Netherlands but also to countries like the United States, Japan and other European countries (Bennet & Seaton, 1996, p.13).

Furthermore, it appears that urban, northern populations, like the Dutch, often take vacations to southern and rural destinations. This is a positive aspect for Sri Lanka, because it has opposite climate, landscape and population features compared to those of the Netherlands..

Most of the Dutch people (55 per cent) go abroad on vacation. In the next few years, expectations are that vacations made abroad will increase (+3.1 per cent) compared to

vacations made within the Netherlands (+1.4 per cent). Also, the number of vacations themselves will grow; especially the number of long-term vacations (4 or more nights) will grow 2.8 per cent each year till 2010. The same growth will be expected with regards to expenditures made during the vacation (NRIT Media, 2007).

4.6 The competitive environment

"Competitors do not just pose a threat; they may provide an opportunity" (Bennet & Seaton 1996, p.13).

The main competitors for Sri Lanka are India, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia and the Maldives. These countries are in the same area as Sri Lanka.

For example, Thailand proves to be more competitive than Sri Lanka when it comes to expenditures per day: tourists spend 100 US Dollars compared to 50 US Dollars in Sri Lanka (BOI, 2001, p.1).

Furthermore, India shows stable growth when it comes to tourism, although this growth is always less when compared to Thailand and Indonesia.

Indonesia also suffers from a bad image that western tourists have of the country. Since the bomb attacks on Bali in 2002 and 2005 and in Jakarta in 2003 and 2004, tourists compare the situation with that of the Middle East and do not trust the Muslim communities (Toerisme Indonesië, n.d.).
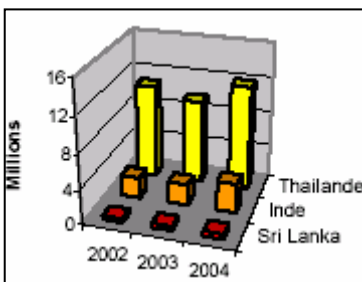

Fig. 3. Comparison of numbers of visitors of Sri Lanka, India and Thailand from 2002 to 2004.

Another competitor for Sri Lanka is Singapore. For the past two decades, Singapore has successfully promoted itself actively as a tourist destination. In 2006, 9.7 million foreign tourists visited Singapore, an increased of 7.9 per cent compared to 2005. Singapore is mainly a transit-country for European, Japanese and American visitors who stay a few days before they travel further, but the largest tourist group is the Indonesians who represent 73 per cent of all foreign visitors (Toerisme Singapore, n.d.).

At this moment, Sri Lanka's position is not as competitive as it should be (figure 3), but this could be seen as an opportunity for the growth of its market position. The main

reason people cite for not wanting to visit Sri Lanka again is their interest in visiting another country (34.37 per cent), but on the other hand 86.36 per cent of the Dutch people that have already been to Sri Lanka have the intention of visiting it again (SLTB, 2006 a, p.20).

This means that the Sri Lankan vacation experience was good and that there needs to be further emphasis placed on persuading people to come to Sri Lanka.

5. Conclusion of the analyses

Before giving any recommendations, a conclusion based on the previous analyses will be made and summarized in a so- called SWOT-analysis. In the SWOT-analysis (the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) of Sri Lanka as a tourist destination will be structured.

First of all, the most important strength of Sri Lanka is that it has a lot of potential, with regards to   what Sri Lanka can offer the (Dutch) tourist: a good climate, beautiful unspoiled nature, a rich cultural heritage, wildlife and friendly people. This all contained within a small surface, so one can see a lot in a relatively short amount of time.

On the contrary, the bad infrastructure is making it such that tourism cannot grow optimally. The positive side is that the Sri Lankan government is aware of this problem and is working on solutions, for example the building of a railroad and a new airport. Moreover, Sri Lanka has no specific (public) marketing communication plan; no clear brand-strategy on how to position itself, and more importantly, how to place itself within the Dutch market.

Despite these drawbacks, Sri Lanka offers some great opportunities, such as the growth of interest for eco-tourism. Because the Sri Lanka Tourist Board wants to build a tourism industry that is sustainable, eco-tourism has become a part of Sri Lanka's identity and can be communicated to the outside world as a positive aspect. The competition is also familiar with the concept eco-tourism, but this concept is not yet a part of their brand positioning.

The opportunities specified to the Dutch market are the proportional increase of the ageing population, the Dutch economy and the vacations made abroad in the coming years.

To conclude, the Tamils form a constant threat to Sri Lanka's tourism. With this in mind, campaigns can never be optimal if there is conflicting negative news about Sri Lanka.

The consequence, namely negative travel advice, can be destructive for tourism in Sri Lanka. However, this is not a reason not to promote and position Sri Lanka extensively. Moreover, if the situation with the Tamils remains calm, the competition of Sri Lanka will work on the promotion of their country as well (sentence unclear.. please revise). All the conclusions are structured a SWOT-scheme (appendix 4).

6. Recommendations

First of all, it has to be said that these recommendations will be purely based upon communication aspects. Communication cannot change the identity of Sri Lanka, such as the poor infrastructure and the situation with the Tamils. For these aspects, the Sri Lankan Government is responsible. However, communication can change the Sri Lankan image.

Based on the former analyses, the focus of my recommendations will be on the eco-tourism trend. This is what makes Sri Lanka unique and can therefore able to distinguish itself from its competitors. Furthermore, emphasis will also be placed on wellness and nature. In the survey, it appears that almost none of the responders thought that opportunities for wellness were offered in Sri Lanka, while in fact there are many spa and wellness resorts available.

The goal is to send one clear message with these values:

- Eco-tourism
- Wellness & pure experiences
- Nature & paradise

These three key-elements form the base of the communication plan. The message that should be sent is this: when one comes to Sri Lanka, they can feel good about themselves because they help the community in which they stay. At the same time, they can experience the pureness in a luxurious way with, for example, an ayurvedic treatment and a hotel with private lodges. One will go "back to nature" and will make trips to the famous tea plantations, visit the elephant orphanage and meet the friendly locals.

The largest difference between the new communication strategy and the current strategy of the Sri Lanka Tourist Board is that the approach will be more pro-active. There will be communication with third parties, but also directly with the consumer. Whereas the Sri Lanka Tourist Board concentrated more on a pull strategy (through third parties), this plan is based on a combination of both a push- and a pull strategy (as will be further discussed in chapter 6.2).

6.1 Communication objectives

The eventual goal is, of course, for more people to come to Sri Lanka. But, because of the fact that there is almost no communication initiated by the SLTB for the Dutch market, awareness must first be created (phase 2 in DAGMAR-model in Smith, p. 42). The brand "Sri Lanka" is not yet clear and one has to become aware of the fact that, besides the tsunami and the Tamils, Sri Lanka can be seen as an attractive tourist destination.

The target group at whom the message is aimed is the working person, with an above-average income, conscious of his environment, who takes long annual vacations, usually an empty nester that enjoys life. Sri Lanka has a lot to offer, but is not attractive for people who like parties and crowded beaches. Sri Lanka is perfect for the _traveler_, who wants to explore.

Specifically   for the Netherlands, the characteristics of the target group will be the same: most of the Dutch visitors to Sri Lanka the past years were aged between 30 and 59 years. Furthermore the perspective of the increase of aging people has been taken into consideration when defining the target group. The person with an above-average income fits within the target group, because flights to Sri Lanka can be expensive and will deter those with low budgets for their vacations. As the Tourist Board stated, Sri Lanka is mostly seen as a semi-luxurious destination, where hospitality, friendliness and high quality of service make the expenditure worth it (J.M. Flambert, personal email, September 4, 2007).

Furthermore, there has to be more positive news about Sri Lanka in the media. If not, Sri Lanka will remain dependant on news items about the Tamils, which are hardly positive. The Tourist Board, but also the Sri Lankan Embassy in The Netherlands, should initiate more attractive media attention. Lastly, travel agencies and tour operators need to be approached, to improve the distribution of Sri Lanka as a product. This sector is already aware of Sri Lanka as a tourist destination, therefore the emphasis will be on convincing them to promote vacations to Sri Lanka.

For this reason the following communication objectives have been made:

- *To increase the awareness of Sri Lanka as a tourist destination to 45 per cent among Dutch travelers between 30 and 59 years of age, within one year.*
- *To achieve positive media coverage.*
- *To position Sri Lanka as a strong brand, where it distinguishes itself from its competitors.*
- *To reposition Sri Lanka among the Dutch travel agencies as an attractive tourist destination.*

6.2 Communication strategy

The strategy will explain how the communication objectives will be achieved and summarize the tactics. The goal is to generate awareness and to position Sri Lanka as a brand, which distinguishes itself from its competitors.

I have divided the strategy for Sri Lanka into stages:

Stage 1: To generate an integrated advertising and PR campaign focusing on the *eco-tourism*, *wellness & pure experiences* and *nature & paradise*.

Stage 2: To communicate these values to the media, tour operators and travel agencies. In order to gain more control over this, the Sri Lanka Tourist Board can organize events or participate in international events.

Stage 3: To offer products that provide information e.g. attractive pamphlets and vacations for those people who are interested.

Stage 1 is based on a so-called pull-strategy[6]. Through intensive advertising, a demand and brand-preference for Sri Lanka as a tourist destination can be created (Verhage, 1999, p.351). Because of the demand, travel agencies and tour operators are basically forced to offer vacations to Sri Lanka.

The second stage is based on a push-strategy[7]. Important intermediaries, such as travel agencies, will be approached with offers that will 'force' them to offer Sri Lankan

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[6] With a pull-strategy the producer concentrates directly on the final consumer.
[7] With a push-strategy the producer concentrates on the intermediaries and is based on a strong sales force.

vacations, which would include attractive discounts, personal trips to experience the 'product' and personal contact with a representative of the Sri Lanka Tourist Board. The third stage is to ensure that those people that are interested will be convinced to take the last step of booking a vacation to Sri Lanka.

There is no specific choice of either a push- or pull strategy, but these are used in combination with each other. Through this integrated marketing, several target groups; the consumer and also the travel agency can be reached.

6.3 Segmentation and positioning

This part will discuss which segments upon which we will focus and how Sri Lanka wants to be perceived in each different target segment.
Because the selected target group is still very large, further segmentation is necessary.

Although the overall message will be the same for the whole target group, namely: 'relaxing and enjoying your vacation, while giving something back to the local community', the approach for each segment will be different; this is called differentiated marketing (Verhage, 1999, p.240). The groups are formed on socio-demographic segmentation e.g. income, occupation, family size, age, etc. (Bennet & Seaton, 1996, p.34). There is also a possibility for segmentation by lifecycle. This concept "is based on the hypothesis that people pass through several stages of family life each of which is associated with different patterns of activity and consumption" (Bennet & Seaton, 1996, p.36).

The first segment is (newly married) couples without children (aged between 30 and 35). They do not yet have to base their decisions on children. They should see Sri Lanka as a luxurious destination, were they can enjoy the nature, perhaps a place to have a wedding in a romantic setting.

The second segment is couples (aged between 35 and 49) with children where the youngest child is older than 10 years. This group can already do more than parents who

have babies or young children. They should see Sri Lanka as a place where they can participate in many activities with their children, without having to take long trips, because of the relatively small size of the country.

The last segment includes those people (aged between 50 and 59) who travel without their children, but are the head of the family and still working. They should see Sri Lanka as a luxurious place, with a lot of culture and nature and friendly people; where they can enrich their experiences. Also, Sri Lanka should be seen as an almost exclusive place that is unspoiled by mass tourism and where they can contribute to the local community by spending their vacation there.

6.4 Communication tools
This part will focus on the tactics that will be used to send the message to each target segment.

6.4.1 Stage 1: advertising campaign
Stage 1 of the strategy is to launch an advertising campaign directly to the target group. The advertising will be done through a combination of television commercials, magazines and billboards.

The first segment is the newlyweds/couples with no children. The message to them will concentrate on the romantic experiences; a perfect place for their honeymoon, with waterfalls, beaches and a rich traditional culture.

The advertisement will appear in magazines that fit the within this age group e.g.: *Living* is a luxurious lifestyle magazine. Their target-readers are people (male/female) between the ages of 25 and 40; who have an above average income; modern and fashionable, who enjoy life and love to travel. *Living* provides travel articles of *once-in-a lifetime* dream destinations, but also short city trips, and is published 8 times a year. Also, Viva magazine is suitable for these advertisements. Viva is meant for women between the ages of 25 and 35. The readers of Viva are curious, and have many

interests: from fashion to cooking and traveling, but also relationships, health and their social environment. This fits with the eco-tourist part of the strategy as well as the age-group of the target group. (Sanoma, n.d.).

Furthermore, the Sri Lankan Embassy can attend on the wedding fair in The Netherlands, which is held every year, to promote Sri Lanka as a perfect honey-moon destination.

The second target segment is parents with children older than 10 years old, between 35 and 49 years of age. The emphasis of the message will be on the activities in combination with relaxation. Magazines that match with this segment are: Esta, whose readers are mostly women between 35 and 55 years of age. These women work, have children and have a partner. The Esta-reader wants to be surprised and grow spiritually.
Next to Esta, Felderhof fits the segment as well: this magazine focuses more on men and women aged between 40 and 59 who are well educated and indulge themselves, but realize wealth is not only connected to money; they are interested in culture and are busy making their dreams come true. (Sanoma, n.d.).

The last group is comprised of older people aged between 50 and 59. The focus of the message here should be on the culture of Sri Lanka, the nature and the opportunities for wellness. The magazine most suitable for those in this age group is *Zin*.
Zin is meant for people older than 50 who have time and money. They are willing to spend their money on something qualitative. They enjoy life and do not feel old.
Another suitable magazine is *Midi*. This magazine has more or less the same readers as *Zin*, but is more focused on women. The magazine is a combination of culture, nature and relaxation (Sanoma, n.d.).

6.4.2 Stage 2: communicate values to third parties
The second stage is to achieve more positive media attention in Dutch national press and on television, by communicating these new values. Journalists, tour operators, travel agencies and opinion leaders will be invited to Sri Lanka and will be offered those things that fit within the campaign. A positive news item can be related to the tsunami. In

December this year, it will be 3 years ago that the tsunami hit Sri Lanka. For example, the news bulletin can show the Sri Lanka of back then, just after the tsunami, when a large coast area was completely devastated. Then the re-built Sri Lanka can be shown : nice weather, a blue sea, beautiful nature; all recovering from the tsunami with a heart-felt message from the people of Sri Lanka: "We are grateful for all the help we have received and invite you to come and visit us . You are welcome and we will guide you through our beautiful country".

The reason of connecting the media attention to the tsunami is because of the increased awareness of the tsunami among the Dutch population; many people have been involved with relief work or have donated money after the disaster occurred.

Furthermore, one of the tools to approach the travel agencies and tour operators will be direct mailing. Emails will be sent with attractive offers. Just like the media, they will be invited to Sri Lanka. The focus will be on those tour operators who do not yet offer trips to Sri Lanka . Every month a newsletter will be sent to the travel agencies with news of the Sri Lankan tourist industry and up-coming events.

6.4.3 Stage 3: follow-up

As a follow-up, brochures will be sent to the travel agencies and to consumers who are interested in booking a vacation to Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan Embassy will attend travel fairs who can approach both travel agencies as well as the consumer. During these travel fairs, free workshops of ayurvedic treatment will be given. Furthermore, short films of Sri Lanka and what it has to offer will be shown.

To conclude, a combination of these tools will be used: advertising through TV and press, free trips, direct mailing, newsletters, travel fairs, a website and publicity.

6.4.4 Logo and slogans

The current logo of Sri Lanka is visually strong and can remain as the symbol of Sri Lanka. However, for the campaign, a different logo and slogan will be used. Several options can be proposed to the Tourist Board:

"Naturally. Sri Lanka"   *"Sri Lanka. Travel the Pure Way"*

"Sri Lanka. The Island of Eden" *"Sri Lanka. Experience the nature of pleasure"*

"Sri Lanka. Pure Pleasure"   *"Sri Lanka. A taste of Paradise"*

All these slogans have a double meaning and radiate nature and pureness. No chaotic advertisements with a lot of images in one, but a clear message with just one image. The slogans will remain in English, also for the Dutch public, because the slogans are not difficult to understand and express the message better than the Dutch language. Besides, a lot of multinational companies use English slogans or pay-offs: Philips uses "Sense and Simplicity", McDonalds has "I'm loving it" and Nike uses "Just do it". The current slogan "A land like no other" is translated into Dutch and can be used during the campaign and on the website.

The colors used will be natural. The new slogans are in the same style and line with the current slogan and logo. The advertisements will promote the message that Sri Lanka is the "it" new travel destination. There will be powerful styling created, suitable for a television campaign or billboards.

On the next page an overview is made to see when which tool will be used.

Overview of tools:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Advertising:									
TV	x	x	x	x	x	x			x
Press	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
Sales Promotion:									
Brochures	x	x	x	x					
trips for media/travel agencies	x	x	x						
Direct marketing:									
(E-)Letters with offers		x	x						
e-newsletter	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Publicity	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Exhibitions (Travel Fair and Wedding Fair)	x	x	x	x	x				
Internet	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

6.5 Evaluation

After year, one can measure the first results of the strategy afterwards by counting the number of (Dutch) tourists to see if the communication objectives have been reached.

In order to monitor and measure the results, a small office will be set up, which will work in cooperation with the Sri Lankan Embassy in The Hague. This office will also be responsible for the PR:

- Attending to consumer, trade and press related enquiries,
- Mailing of brochures and newsletters
- Seeking and maintaining regular contacts with: airlines that fly to Colombo, travel agencies, tour operators, media and press (networking).
- Register the trends of travel behavior of the Dutch consumer and the statistics of vacations to Sri Lanka.

- Controlling the campaign-budget
- Reporting results to the Sri Lanka Embassy in The Netherlands and to the Sri Lanka Tourist Board in Colombo.
- Organizing a short meeting every month with Sri Lanka Embassy to discuss results and, if necessary, with Tourist Board.

By having an office constantly monitoring the campaign, it can be decided in an early stage if the campaign needs to be adjusted or if it can continue as is. Moreover the office will bring more structure to the campaign, because there is one central reference point for everyone involved.

7. Conclusion

To return to the central question: *How can the Sri Lanka Tourist Board stimulate the Dutch leisure travelers to visit Sri Lanka, despite the current issues that this country encountered?*

After the analyses, an entirely different approach is made. Instead of a passive attitude without great mass-media campaigns, there will be an open and pro-active attitude, with use of advertisements, TV-commercials, the Internet and brochures. By emphasizing all the positive aspects that Sri Lanka has to offer, people become aware of Sri Lanka as a tourist destination.

After one year, it will be possible to evaluate the results: what is the increase of Dutch tourists in Sri Lanka compared to last years? Have more vacations been booked? One can also hold a survey where people are asked if they are familiar with the campaign.
If the campaign and efforts have achieved good results, a decision can be made whether or not to continue with the same campaign or a think of a new marketing campaign, or maybe attract a different target group.

The brand positioning is meant internationally and can be interpreted by each country individually. The ideal situation for Sri Lanka would be to reach an agreement that satisfies both the government of Sri Lanka and the Tamils. In this way, Sri Lanka has a constructive basis on which they can build a stable and booming tourism industry.

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