

The role of branding and its position in the tourism destination management

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Abstract

In the field of destination and tourism it is considered to be a quite new way of attracting the tourists. This approach offers more complex opportunities to represent the tourism as it should be represented. Destination management organizations tend to understand the concept of branding but majority of them implement only some aspects of what branding means. Many destinations use a same way of presenting themselves to the world. The key is difference and fulfillment of expectations in sake of tourist to become loyal to the place they like to visit. This paper offers an insight on branding role and its position within the field of destination management.

Key words Brand, Management, Destination

1. INTRODUCTION

Brand building in context of tourism destination management is yet known but still a young area. We can say that this field is source of a great economic activity and tending to grow really fast. There exists the strong and global competition which forces the destinations to develop in various directions. The brand and building of the brand belong to one of those directions. It is necessary and unavoidable in sake of success. With a strong brand the destination become highly competitive and resistible when unexpected circumstances appear.

2. BRANDING INSIGHT

It has become the hot topic in context of destinations and tourism, especially because of Travel and Tourism Research Association's Annual Conference in 1998 [1]. According to Terzibasoglu [2] destination can be seen as an area that includes all services and goods a tourist consumes during his or her stay. The destination marketing organization and the enterprises are involved in the building of a brand and marketing of destination tourist services [3]. The destination image can be seen as the sum of beliefs and impressions people hold about places [3]. According to Simonin [4] destination image can be defined as the way a country exists in people's minds and hearts as well as to the position it occupies in relations to other countries. John Stuart, former CEO (chief executive officer) of Quaker Oats said: "If this business were split up, I would give you the land and bricks and mortar and I would keep the brands and trademarks, and I would fare better than you" [9]. This statement strongly support the importance of branding phenomenon.

3. IDENTITY OF DESTINATION

Brand identity specifies what the brand aspires to stand for [3, 18]. It has three main roles. It is a set of associations that brand strategist seeks to create and maintain, it represents a vision of how a particular brand should be perceived by its target public [6, 16] and it should help establish a relationship between a particular brand and its clientele [3].

Appeal and also experience should be formed by attraction, public and private amenities, accessibility, human resources, price, image and character [7]. It is really important to correctly identify possible competitive advantages and to select the right one of them to deliver it into a selected target market [8, 18].

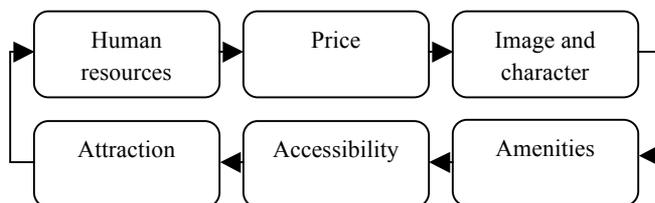


Fig. 1. Forming of destination appeal and experiences [7].

The importance of a favorable image for a destination to attract tourists is undoubtedly of highest value as a positive image has more chance to be considered in the destination selection process than a negative image [10]. Selecting a consistent element mix to identify and distinguish destination through positive image building is a must [3, 14]. Positive image of a destination brand conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination [3, 7]. The brand plays a two-fold role. It is a major tool to create a product or service differentiation, and it represents a promise of value from a consumer's viewpoint [11]. Many destinations promote scenery, history or culture. However, effective destination branding requires a unique selling proposition that is sustainable, believable, and relevant [12]. Differentiation is critical in decision making process [1]. Destination image is located at the intersection of its positioning and branding and visitors perception [13].

The fundamental problem for destination branding is difference between the message and the context in which this message is perceived [5]. Messages are processed out of reach of marketing competences. It's processed in the minds of people [5, 15]. Message misunderstanding is closely followed by lack of patience so results can appear and insufficient creativity which results in destination branding inefficiency [5, 15]. Intense global competition in the tourism industry forces destinations to develop strong, unique and competitive destination brands [3]. However destinations are not a single product but a composite product consisting of a mix of different components [3, 13]. Destination marketers have little control over the destination mix they are branding [13]. They cannot be sampled or tested out before the purchase like most products [13]. It is necessary and unavoidable for effective branding to make clear what message the destination wants to convey. The destination cannot build the reputation, it can only be acquired. *"The way to gain a good reputation is to endeavor to be what you desire to appear"*, Socrates.

4. EFFECTIVE REBRANDING EXAMPLE

The Tourism Board commissioned a rebranding project to improve the competitiveness of the city of Pula. It is a famous destination in Croatia with 60,000 inhabitants. Past research information revealed that the vast majority of visitors associated Pula primarily with the Roman amphitheater. The rebrand needed to extend that image of Pula and show its many and varied qualities [17]. There were united two basic identities that simultaneously functioned under the single brand of Pula - The Tourism Board and the City Administration. Number of monuments and sites were promoted including nature and cultural events. A variety of different communication elements have been merged under one identity to achieve a synergistic effect. Following season recorded a better than expected growth in visitors, despite the global economic downturn [17].

CONCLUSION

Recognition and representation of these constructs in the brand imagery and communication is vitally important, not just because of authenticity achievement but because of ensuring sustainability as well. The brand has to define values and identity. It needs to be driven by people and community and their shared values. A place needs to adopt constructs determining the unique sense of destination. Positioning of people at the very centre of the brand building strategy is more inclusive, collaborative, and sustainable process that encourages the co-creation of key brand constructs [4]. The sustainability of a place brand does not reside only in the big operators of the place's industries, but it resides inside the communities in their 'way of doing things'[3]. Ultimately, the community owns the brand, it co-creates and defines the brand values by the day-to-day practices and habits.

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