

Marketing Innovations for Sustainable Destinations

22 The Role of Brands in Dialectical Relationships between Destination and Tourist Products

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 Published by Goodfellow Publishers Limited, Woodeaton, Oxford, OX3 9TJ
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Design and setting by P.K. McBride

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Introduction

The term ‘tourist destination’ has different meanings, often conflicting, both in the literature and among practitioners. Sometimes *destination* is understood as a geographical area, as a place.¹ In other circumstances, the perceptual dimension is preferred – that is, the tourists’ point of view. In other cases, the two perspectives overlap, considering destination in terms of both producers and consumers. Tourist destination definitions can be placed into two fundamental perspectives – the demand and the supply points of view (Franch, 2002). The first group of definitions tends to qualify and assimilate tourist destinations as a set of attractiveness factors, both natural and artificial, able to pull in tourists. Therefore, the destination and the tourist product concepts tend to converge (Answorth and Goodall, 1990; Bieger, 2000; Buhalis, 2000; Davidson and Maitland, 1997). The second group of definitions tends to identify destinations as including producers – assimilating the destination into the territory and supply system (Brunetti, 2002; Martini, 2002; Tamma, 2002).

Some contributions have assumed, more or less explicitly, an overlapping perspective with regard to the destination concept, trying to combine a demand and supply points of view (Casarin, 2002; Della Corte, 2000; Furlan, 2007). It is in this conceptual framework that we introduce the tourist destination concept. The destination can be qualified:

as a place populated by a combination of businesses and tourism resources able to attract significant inbound tourist numbers, building products capable of meeting visitors’ needs. The destination is a relatively homogeneous area from a territorial, social, economic and cultural point of view. In the overlapping perspective, it must tend to have the same connotations also in terms of demand, to be holistically perceived by current and potential tourists.

Following the ‘experience economy model’ developed by Pine and Gilmore (2000), the tourist destination is the place where the offer is made up of a bundle of commodities, goods, service and experiences, both assembled by producers and self-composed by tourists. These offers progressively increase in value. Tourists can be considered to

1 Cf. Hanna and Rowley, 2008. The identification of a tourist destination from a geographical point of view is complicated in itself. As the authors emphasise, this ‘is complicated by the fact that a destination may include several towns, cities or municipalities, other government provinces or even an island archipelago may be the entire country’. This depends on the definition of the ‘hierarchy of destinations’ (Martini, 2002), anticipating the need for strict connection with demand.

Chapter extract

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