
Strategies for Branding Cultural Tourism

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Abstract: Cultural Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing markets in the tourism industry. Cultural attractions are often used to brand and position the country's tourism competitiveness. Cities and local communities are working together to increase access to cultural attractions and demonstrate its uniqueness, creativeness and innovation to attract domestic and international tourists to cultural attractions.

“Failte Ireland (2012) talks about the need to create memorable moments to make the customers feel valued, by providing the right products, right quality, right time, and right place. Cultural tourists have been described as creative tourists (Lord, 2002) where experiences must be provided to allow visitors to experience their creativity”. (Du Cros, H. & Mckercher, B, 2015).

This paper will discuss about the necessary strategies for branding cultural tourism to position attractiveness, uniqueness, experience, and find creative ways to continue to attract tourists in this segment of tourism. Thousands of tourists are highly motivated to visit cultural attractions and many museums and art galleries are available to national and international tourists interested in cultural attractions. Meanwhile, cultural tourist assets are at risk by an excessive number of visitors, therefore, it compromises its human carrying capacity and the sustainable development of these cultural sites.

Keywords: *Cultural, Tourism, Attractions, Brand, Strategies, Segment, Position, Sustainable, Development.*

Introduction

The challenges of branding are creating a connection between the brand and the person, customers and potential customers. Creating a brand name for a cultural tourist destination means presenting an experience on how potential tourists will be able to enjoy while visiting specific cultural place, city, museum, art gallery, theater, and event. Culture is perceived as a significant asset for the development of tourism and attract national and international tourist to the cultural destination with the contribution of the community, government, non-for-profit organizations, and private organizations. These actors play and active role in the promotion of cultural tourism and branding cultural assets by collaborating and creating a strategic planning to make the cultural assets of the place attractive enough to appeal to the attention of domestic and international visitors. The cultural assets of a city and a country represent the competitive attractiveness of the place to increase the number of visits to these destinations.

Literature Review

Tangible cultural heritage

“Cultural heritage is the legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations” Tangible heritage includes buildings and historic places, monuments, artifacts,

etc., which are considered worthy of preservation for the future. These include objects significant to the archaeology, architecture, science or technology of a specific culture.

Objects are important to the study of human history because they provide a concrete basis for ideas, and can validate them. Their preservation demonstrates recognition of the necessity of the past and of the things that tell its story. Preserved objects also validate memories; and the actuality of the object, as opposed to a reproduction or surrogate, draws people in and gives them a literal way of touching the past. This unfortunately poses a danger as places and things are damaged by the hands of tourists, the light required to display them, and other risks of making an object known and available” (UNESCO, 2017).

Du Cros, and Mckercher, (2015) discussed how the cultural management of tangible heritage should aim to search for the values of the community and desire to protect its own cultural assets to share with future generations. Investigation, and documentation represent very important aspects to help communities to create capacity for developing cultural touristic products as an initiative of the community.

Intangible cultural heritage

“Museums, cultural community centers and institutes, among other from the public and non-for-profit sectors, have been at the local level in the increasing systematic approach to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (ICH). Although the development of widely adopted management approaches is still in its early stages, overall it appears the most countries seem to have adopted a three stage approach comprising:

- 1- Involvement of communities;
- 2- Documentation and development an inventory
- 3- Building capacity within communities to continue transmission of ICH” (Du Cros, Mckercher 2015).

Du Cros, and Mckercher (2015) discussed how the intangible manifested through performance, festivals, handicrafts, listening storytellers, food-tasting, local markets, and promotes deeper engagement to understand the local culture.

The Art of Branding

The art of branding a cultural destination success will be based on presenting the uniqueness, experience, and creativity of the place and specific cultural traditions and customs that cannot be found in specific destination.

“A brand is a set of associations linked to a name, mark, or symbol associated with a product or service. The difference between a name and a brand is that a name doesn’t have associations; it is simply a name. A name becomes a brand when people link it to other things. A brand is much like a reputation” (Tybout, 2005).

Cultural assets are considered tourism products which can become part of a brand name. If cultural assets are tourism products, the key of branding the cultural tourism products relies on the promotion of the benefits, uniqueness, and experiences that tourists can enjoy while visiting the cultural destinations.

Presenting Cultural Experience in the destination

Reading an article about a cultural destination experience in a specific country will get the reader interested about the value added that the place has to offer, uniqueness represents an essential element to position the destination in the minds of potential travelers. The cultural attractions can be the heritage of the destination and creating a connection between cultural tourism and potential visitor represents the first step to get the traveler engage in traveling to the cultural destination.

Generating Demand

One of the challenges of the cultural destination is generating demand. The brand name will appeal to the intellect, emotion, and value-added of the unique cultural experiences that can be explored in the destination. The aim of the brand is to present the history of the culture, traditions, and customs that potential travelers can be able to explore.

Specialize on specific cultural promise

The brand name should express the specific benefit of visiting the cultural destination. In other words, specializing on a cultural benefit and attractiveness that the destination can offer and create an experiential promise if visited.

Collaboration

“Creating effective collaboration is also a challenge because the tourism and cultural sectors often seem to be speaking a different language. This is largely to do with the culture of the two sectors, because the tourism sector is largely commercial, whereas the cultural sector often has a non-profit ethos” (OECD, 2009).

Collaboration presents some challenges because the actors involved find no value in contributing with each other to develop tourism. In one hand, the public organizations are in charge in looking after the interests of the residents and citizens. On the other hand, the private sector is interested in growing their businesses and maximizing its profitability.

Meanwhile, the public, private, and non-profit organizations can come together to increase the brand's value. The community is also an important actor, but unfortunately sometimes, it is not being taken into account to determine what is best for its own future. Therefore, it does not contribute to the sustainability of the brand and the corresponding ethics and corporate social responsibility that it can provide to its residents.

Sustainability of cultural tourism sites

The sustainability of cultural tourism brand will depend of the contribution it makes to its residents and citizens and how its community promotes the sustainable development of it. The tourists' visits will contribute to the sustainable development of the cultural tourists' destinations.

Positioning

Brands have a remarkable ability to impact the way people view products. Consumers rarely just see a product or service; they see the product together with the brand. As a result, how they perceive the product is shaped by the brand. Advertising has the role of positioning the cultural tourism destination in the minds of national and international tourists. Innovative cultural tourism destination marketing and advertising are boosting the competitiveness of a cultural destination by presenting the cultural assets of the destination.

Segmentation

“As Lilien and Rangaswamy (2003) put it: Segmentation is best viewed as the first step in a three-step process of segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP). Segmentation groups customers with similar wants, needs and responses. Targeting determines which groups a firm should try to serve (and how). Positioning addresses how the firm's product will compete with others in the target segment” (Dolnicar, 2012).

“Hooley, Saunders, and Pierce (2004), in their book on marketing strategy, propose a few basic principles to guide marketing action:

Principle 1: Focus on the customer

Principle 2: Only compete in markets where you can establish a competitive advantage

Principle 3: Customers do not buy products (they buy solutions to their problems).

Principle 4: Marketing is too important to leave to the marketing department.

Principle 5: Markets are heterogeneous.

Principle 6: Markets and customers are constantly changing” (Dolnicar, 2012).

Marketing

“Marketing is defined as a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain

what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others” (Kotler and Armstrong 2003).

“Many of the adverse impacts noted in cultural tourism are a direct result of the failure to adopt a marketing management perspective, rather than because of adopting one. As a result of failure to identify clearly the core product, the target market, financial, and non-financial objectives, and a plan of action to achieve them, mixed messages can be sent to the travelling public” (Du Cros, Mckercher 2015).

“Destinations which lack a richly built heritage need to find new means of competing with those that do” (Richards and Wilson, 2007).

Challenges

“Three key challenges emerged from the study: cash, consistency, and clutter. These are the “three C’s” of branding”. Executives need to deliver short-term financial results, but brands are long-term assets” (Tybout, 2005).

Du Cros, and Mckercher, (2015) discussed how the greatest challenge for ICH is how to promote cultural assets that are private and personal at the same time and can be marketed to tourists.

Tourism Carrying Capacity

“The definition, assessment and implementation of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) needs to be considered as a process within a planning process for tourism development. These two processes are parallel and complementary and can provide a general framework guiding local community, planners, and decision-makers. This framework consists of principles, goals, objectives, and policy measures regarding tourism development in an area based on the area’s distinctive characteristics/features respecting local capacities to sustain tourism. Setting capacity limits for sustaining tourism activity in a place involves a vision about local development and decisions about managing tourism. These should be carried in the context of democratic community strategic planning, which requires participation of all major actors and the community at large. Consultation with relevant stakeholders is a key issue at all stages. The whole process is dynamic and cyclical” (Coccosis, H., & Mexa, A., 2002).

Sustainable development of brands and Corporate Social Responsibilities

“Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can make a significant contribution towards sustainability. According to the definition of the European Commission, CSR is “*a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis*”. CSR is part of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (European Commission). It is important to point out that CSR measures are voluntary and should therefore exceed legal regulations (e.g. environmental regulations, employment rights, etc.). Furthermore, it is a multi-stakeholder concept where dialogue between the stakeholders plays a major role. In this context, stakeholders are not only beneficiaries but also partners in developing and implementing CSR projects for businesses” (ECM, 2017).

The legal environment

“Government at a variety of levels in many countries may increasingly impose taxes, laws, and other restrictions upon travel-related commerce, as part of their political, social, economic, and ecological agendas” (Wang, 2011).

Discussion

Accessibility

It represents an important aspect to boost the brand name as a cultural destination, because more people will be able to visit the cultural assets. Meanwhile, if it is difficult to access the cultural destination people will not visit as much because the cost and length to reach the destination.

Creativity

Creativity has become a more important element in regional development strategies because: The rise of symbolic economy privileged creativity over cultural products.

Regions and cities have increasingly used culture as a form of enhancement and therefore need to find new cultural products to create distinction in an increasingly crowded marketplace.

Simplicity

The brand name should present simplicity on its message, its slogan is easy to remember, an image position the destination as a must see cultural destination. It is important to keep in mind what is the target market that it is appealing to. It is not about the culture it is about the experience, therefore, selling the experience is key to attract potential tourist and interest in the cultural assets.

Challenges

It takes time to develop a brand name or reputation of the cultural tourist destinations. Brand names need to be managed well to guarantee longevity.

It is essential that the brand name provides consistency with its promise. In other words, the brand must fulfill the benefit, uniqueness, and creativity it promotes.

There is a lot of competition among cultural tourism destination, and potential tourists are constantly exposed to thousands of advertisements and promotion of cultural assets which are constantly competing, therefore, creating distinction.

Tourism Carrying Capacity

Tourism carrying capacity contributes to define the planning, goals, objectives, and the policies of the development of the tourism cultural product and establish sustainable tourism parameters to protect the cultural assets.

Human carrying capacity refers to the number of people that can visit a place at the same time. For example, some cultural assets have a limited number of people can visit the cultural attraction at the same time.

Sustainable development of brands and Corporate Social Responsibilities

Cultural tourism destination and promoters should actively participate in developing tourism cultural products based on the corporate social responsibility and demonstrate how the preservation and/or promotion of the cultural assets will make a contribution to the social, economic and environmental needs of the community, city, and country.

The legal environment

In one hand, laws and legislations can contribute to increase the number of national and international tourists and local communities by facilitating easy access to these destinations. In the other hand, strict laws, and legislations can affect and restrict the access of international tourism to these destinations.

Marketing

Marketing represents an essential tool to boost branding of cultural tourists' destinations. It contributes to the development of the cultural tourist destination by giving promotion to diverse cultural assets to attract domestic and international tourists. Marketing is not an isolated effort and it can create an opportunity for the community, government, non-for-profit organizations, and companies to come together contribute to sustainability of the cultural assets of tourist destinations. Marketing strategies contribute to branding and image development, Internet platforms provide information to national and international tourists, travel organization can create joint ventures to share tour operations, organizations can create new cultural tourists' destinations by creating cultural events in several regions in the destination, discount coupon to cultural sites can increase the interest to new creative and cultural sites.

It is necessary that the cultural tourist destination follow the rules, and laws of the country to successfully brand the tourists products to national and international tourists.

Conclusion

This paper discussed about the necessary strategies for branding cultural tourism to position attractiveness, uniqueness, and experience and find creative ways to continue to attract national and international tourists in this segment of tourism. Thousands of tourists are highly motivated to visit cultural attractions and many museums and art galleries are available to tourists interested in cultural attractions. Meanwhile, cultural tourist assets are at risk by an excessive number of visitors, and compromises its human carrying capacity and the sustainable development of these cultural sites. Therefore, government organizations should design tourism policies that will improve the human carry capacity of the cultural assets but defining the number of visitors that can be in one cultural asset at the same time.

Culture is perceived as a significant asset for the development of tourism and attract national and international tourist to the cultural destination this can only be possible with the contribution of the community, government, non-for-profit organizations, and private organizations.

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