



Research Paper

Destination mutant brands: An empirical perspective of tourism professionals and host community to create Mutant Brand Cape Verde



Edson Redy Moreira dos Santos*

The School of Business and Social Science (IS CET.pt) – Portugal, Rua de Cedofeita n. 265, 4050-180 Oporto, Portugal

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 17 June 2013

Accepted 26 December 2013

Available online 21 January 2014

Keywords:

Destination branding

Brand identity

Mutant Brands

Cape Verde

Mutant Brand Cape Verde

ABSTRACT

In spring of 2010, as an attempt to compete in the international marketplace, the Ministry of Tourism of Cape Verde embarked on a mission to create Brand Cape Verde. The concept of destination branding is premised on the objective of understanding the key elements of visual communication identity as well as the differentiated attributes of a place. As new technological advances continue to break new grounds and penetrate all sectors of commerce, an innovative branding strategy has been introduced in the destination branding context – Mutant Brands – as a means to visually communicate all the key elements of a place. The present study aims to present the contemporary branding strategy concept of Mutant Brands, highlight the authentic attributes that make Cape Verde a unique destination, provide a new perspective for destination branding, and present insightful empirical research regarding the implementation of Mutant Brand Cape Verde. To accomplish the set objectives, 17 in-depth interviews were conducted on the island of Santiago in Cape Verde, during the months of March and April. Results indicated that Brand Cape Verde failed to aggregate the differentiated characteristics of the islands in the branding strategy. As a result, the implementation of a brand strategy based on the concept of Mutant Brands proved to be adaptable in the context of Cape Verde.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Tourism is an international phenomenon that encompasses a variety of activities, services, and industry seeking to deliver a memorable travel experience, which includes transportation (air, land, and water), accommodation, eating and drinking establishments, purchase of goods, entertainment, and adventure. Official data from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2013, pp. 01–04) revealed that in 2012, 'for the first time in history this movement surpassed a record 1 billion tourists globally, a 3.8% growth compared to 2011'. As this phenomenon continue to show resilience over the global economic turmoil, facts from the World Travel and Tourism Council reported that in 2012, 'international total travel and tourism contributed 9.3% of global GDP (USD 6630.4 bn) and generated over 261,394,000 jobs (8.7% of total world's employment), e.g. 1 in 11 of the world's total jobs' (WTTC, 2013, pp. 03–04).

Due to the economic benefits that tourism activities have brought to Cape Verde, local authorities have recognized that this sector plays a fundamental role in the socioeconomic development of the archipelago. However, the government has also realized that in order to galvanize all the opportunities that the sector presents,

the country needed a meaningful and competitive tourism identity that would strategically position its products and services in the international market. As a result, in spring 2010, under the direction of the Ministry of Tourism, the General Directorate of Tourism of Cape Verde launched a national campaign to create an identity for the country's main economic contributor. This campaign sought to mark a historical transformation for the tourism sector by creating the country's first destination brand. Between 25 March and 7 May 2010, a total of 151 proposals were submitted.

The adaptation of branding techniques and strategies adapted by destination marketing organizations (DMO) are growing in frequency. Morgan and Pritchard (2004, p. 60) asserted that 'branding is perhaps the most powerful marketing weapon available to contemporary destination marketers confronted by tourists who are increasingly seeking lifestyle fulfillment and experience'. Used as a communication tool to divulge the destination's core personality and identity, Dias and Marques (2011, p. 80) emphasized that for a destination brand to be consistent and solid, it should be 'built from bottom-up, and never from top down, where the decisions are controlled exclusively from the executive department'. The former encompasses the place's cultural identity, history, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, reflecting the host community.

As competition among destinations competing with the same products increases, destination-marketing organizations (DMO) have been searching for ways to create a visual identity based on

* Tel.: +351 238 591 7122.

E-mail address: edson.redy@gmail.com

the characteristic and core essence of the destination, as well as possess the ability to interact with the target audience. Focusing on the unique and differentiated characteristics of a destination, as an attempt to provide a new perspective for destination branding, this study introduces an innovative branding strategy aimed to visually summarize and communicate a destination's competitive advantage. This approach is based on the implementation of the Mutant Brand concept. The concept of Mutant Brand is a new approach to contemporary branding which can easily be adapted to destination branding by materializing the spirit, sensitivity, and emotions of the place. This technique is also designed to capture the public's expectations; motivate the desire to participate; represent a common vision; possess a flexible structure with notable traces that allow the viewers to identify their values in the observed object; and most important "break away" from the traditional and stagnated graphic design. According to the author that coined the term Mutant Brands (Kreutz, 2001), this concept is the emotional nature of brands that serve as a contemporary communication tool with an open, innovative, artistic, indeterminate, subjective characteristic, encompassing a game of eclecticism that brings the brand to life and allows it to interact with its audience.

The objectives of this study are aimed to present the contemporary branding strategy concept of Mutant Brands, highlight the authentic attributes that make Cape Verde a unique destination, provide a new perspective for destination branding, and present insightful empirical research regarding the implementation of Mutant Brand Cape Verde. To accomplish the set objectives, the research design utilized in this study was an exploratory research based on a qualitative study. An in-depth interview was used to collect data from participants. A total of 17 interviews were conducted during the months of March and April 2013. The participants in this research investigation comprised: 2 tourism technicians from the General Directorate of Tourism of Cape Verde (DGT), 3 local travel agents, 2 local tour operators, and 10 members of the host community.

2. Destination branding

'A place-branding strategy is a plan for defining the most realistic, most competitive, and most compelling strategic vision for a country, region, or a city; this vision then has to be fulfilled and communicated' (Anholt, 2003, p. 214). It is for the reasons stated above that Kotler and Gertner (2004, p. 41) assert a perspective that 'country names amount to brands and help consumer to evaluate products and make purchase decisions'. To this end, destination branding can be defined as a 'the set of marketing activities that (1) support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word, mark or other graphic that readily identify and differentiates a destination; that (2) consistently convey the expectation of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; that (3) serve to consolidate and reinforce the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination; and (4) that reduce consumer search costs and perceived risk' (Blain, Levy, & Ritchie, 2005, p. 337).

However, more than just a name or a symbol design to convey a memorable travel experience or reduce search cost Santos and Campo (this issue) argue that when cultural heritage and historical traits are attached to the destination branding process, it is more likely that the brand will be believed and trusted. The manifestation of a destination's cultural diversity can be strategically positioned to 'provide a memorable travel experience, which cannot be compared to any other place' (Santos & Campo, this issue, p. 09). To that extent, an effective destination brand strategy can have greater use if the place's local culture and history are

attached to the brand, which in turn, can serve as a tool used to communicate a destination's differentiated attributes (Walker, 2010). Communicating these differentiated attributes effectively may at times determine the brand's acceptance in the external market. Equally important, if the brand is identified by the host community as not possessing authentic characteristics that portray the reality of the destination, the brand may run the risk of communicating mix-messages to its visitors (Wang, 1999).

As the battle of consumer mind position increases and the economic global crisis continue to hover over the marketplace, DMOs have been forced to push their boundaries to strategize innovative approaches in order to attract potential customers. By doing so, they have carefully attempted to craft their brands by incorporating the destination's tangible attributes and intangible characteristics, all while strategizing a holistic integrated marketing communication approach, to draw-in potential visitors. Creating a destination brand that communicates the essence of a place can generate certain advantages in terms of 'implementing coherent strategies with regards to managing the destination's resource, reputation, and image' (Pike, 2004, p. 77), as well as provide an umbrella of trust and guarantee of quality (Anholt, 2004). This approach also seeks to fulfill three major objectives: 'attract tourists, stimulate inward investment and boost exports' (Dinnie, 2008, p. 17). It also 'improves diplomatic relations' (Moilanen and Rainisto, 2009, p. 12).

With new technological advances surging daily, designers and DMO's have joined forces to create an authentic communication tool as a means to articulate the key elements of a destination. Based on the theory of transformation, this innovative branding strategy seeks to break the standardized form of design by modifying/transforming the colors, patterns, and structure of a brand.

3. Mutant Brands in the destination branding context

Deriving from the Latin word *mutare* – to change – mutation emanates from the natural forces of nature and the need to transform as a survival tactic, which has always been a part of the human evolution (Kreutz, 2001). The concept of Mutant Brand is based on the Depth Hermeneutic theory, defined as the theory and practice of interpretation (Prasad, 2001), proposed by Thompson (1990). This innovative branding strategy was developed by Kreutz (2001, 2005), in Brazil who specializes in Social Communication. Although having been put to practice in the early 1990s by the designers of Brand MTV, the concept is relatively new in the academic field. Therefore, theoretical insights to understand the issues involved in its branding approach may at times seem too complex.

However, as an attempt to exemplify this contemporary communication strategy (Kreutz, 2005, pp. 90–163) analyzes a 'compilation of representative examples, which allows us to understand the dimension of this strategic approach of communication at various levels of development, and how it reflects new forms of interaction between the brand and its audience'.¹

Though some marketers and managers argue that Mutant Brands may run the risk of not having the ability to position in the minds of consumers, Kreutz (2001, p. 104) defends that this post-modern branding strategy presents the following advantages: 'easy adaptation to new situations; maintains the public's attention; interact with the audience; possess innovative, flexible, and dynamic features'. Further, dividing the concept into two strategic components: Poetic Mutant Brands (as being spontaneous and

¹ For more information, visit <http://www.observatoriodemarcas.org/images/stories/flip/google/index.html>; <http://www.observatoriodemarcas.org/images/stories/flip/marcasmutantes/index.html>

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1011147>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1011147>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)