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Enogastronomic Tourism: can it mitigate the Intangibility of the Destination? Streetfood as a new Business Model for the Management of Tourist Regions

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Abstract

According to the literature, one of the most obvious and immediately perceptible limitations in tourism concerns the intangibility of the product/service provided, defined as the inability to assess objectively the tangible and intangible aspects of a tourist destination if not having visited it before, making – actually – uncertain the selection process of the interest variables. This means that when we decide to visit a destination we have to rely on a set of images, descriptions, videos and information from which we extrapolate a mix of probably interesting elements able convince us and bring us towards the chosen place. For this purpose, is it possible to consider the search for a particular gastronomic product – presumably already experienced anywhere else – as a factor that could partially break down the intangibility of the destination? It is clear that the methods of territory tourist attraction don't work exclusively through the traditional communication levers but, in recent years, there are many alternative forms that allow the development of destinations. Among the most diffused ones, we can certainly consider food and beverage events, which – more and more – are closely linked to other concepts today extremely popular, like the streetfood and craft beers. We are witnessing a rediscovery of traditional food values, together with the discovery of a new market segment dedicated to craft beer, which today is experiencing one of the maximum growth periods, reaching to touch quota 1000 in Italy, between microbreweries, brewpubs and beer firm. The matching with the streetfood is the piece that makes up the puzzle of this new model of tourism management. The objective of the study is to investigate about the economic value generated by these events, by measuring what are the material and immaterial benefits of which an area can benefit when it becomes the venue of these events.

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1. Literature Review. Planning and management of a Brand Image System for Tourist Destinations: a theoretical approach

A tourist destination brand is defined as the sum of the elements that help to identify – in a systemic manner – the image of a destination and guide consumers towards a conscious decision, through various elements: brand value, favorable reputation, prestige, meaning warranty. According to Peroni (2008), the process of construction of the territorial brand requires the presence of “specialized actors” and the strict management of application techniques, in addition to the need to possess interpretation skills, high-level experience and creativity by professionals designated for work. For what concerns the economic budget necessary to develop an efficient destination system image, it must be considered various parameters, among which: the amplitude of the territory taken into consideration, the size of the target goal, the ability to influence the above-mentioned target chosen through the levers of communication mix, the gap between the current offer and the potential one to be achieved once implemented the project, the ambition level of the objectives to be achieved and the pressure of competition. It not infrequently happens that – in tourism – the confusion of roles and the wrong distribution of the areas of responsibility between the various actors nominated for the implementation of a Destination Branding lead to failure the strategies of territorial attraction.

For these reasons, it is useful to identify four separate entities that should work together and share their expertise in order to build a project for the construction of a Tourist Destination. The first protagonist is the client – usually called OPT, but in most cases corresponding with a politician of the territorial area concerned – and it has the task of establishing the targets system, to provide the means, financial instruments and organizational measures for tourism planning, representing the political intentions and the strategic ambitions of territorial development of the represented area. It’s of fundamental importance that this subject can enjoy the full cooperation of the management and the staff of tourist and administrative services that he owns and, at the same time, ensure to the external consultants the full access to information sources. The second actor within this framework is the market researcher, it has the function to find qualitative and quantitative data about the supply and demand for tourist activities, identify threats and opportunities through the classic SWOT matrix, and determine which are the main competitors of the considered area. The third person is the Brand Consultant who, through its knowledge and professional skills, is able to identify the number of components and attributes that the offer should possess in order to build and position a Tourist Destination, also considering the other territories with which the location will have to connect (province, region and district). The fourth and last actor in this process of Destination Branding is the art director – best known as the creative director or Brand Designer – working in coordination with the industry of advertising, materializing in terms of images, text, visual symbols and communication material the strategic package conceived by Brand Consultant.

1.1. Strategic positioning and brand reputation: how to locate the current and potential “customers wallet”

In order to identify the profile of existing and potential customers of a tourist destination are generally used initiatives of benchmarking, which is the monitoring of the marketing strategies that have been taken from other locations of similar size and that allowed the increase in number of consumers, gaining prestige and popularity in the market destinations. It’s clear the need to consider examples of best practice, taking into account not only the results achieved by competitors in terms of absolute value, but also the real potential of the area to implement, in order to not take the risk of playing a strategy winning in the wrong place, if it doesn’t have the minimum requirements necessary to get closer to it. The study of the current and potential target can be done simply by consulting the database of local, national or international publications, magazines and anything that can help to acquire enough data to draw these profiles, avoiding the expenditure of large capital amounts to financing researches; only later it’s possible to proceed with the sumministración of questionnaires to local tourist operators, government executives and tourists.

Once the required profile have been individuated, will be defined a scale of priorities to be evaluated by the client, before to proceed to the construction of the Brand Image System. As regards the reputation of a tourist destination, according to Kotler (2011) it is the result of three conceptual categories: the Destination Brand Behaviour, all the tangible and intangible resources of an area which in time identify a territorial brand behavior considering the contact points with the customer; the Destination Brand Design, a set of images and design used to

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