
Creation and Promotion of Branded Tourism Products – Analysis of Selected Issues

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Abstract:

Purpose: The principal aim of the article is to identify the main factors that influence the creation of a branded tourism product. Its implementation and operation is to be long-term and integrated with the tourist development of the locality or tourist region.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Promotion of a branded tourism product is primarily the totality of activities and decisions connected with advertising and shaping a positive image of the brand in the closer and further environment of the place of tourist reception. This is particularly important when such products are offered to consumers from European Union countries, who attach great importance to branded products. The research hypothesis was defined as follows: creating a branded tourism product must involve investing in local tourism, i.e. in the development of tourist facilities.

Findings: Local authorities, within the framework of the local tourism policy, should influence appropriate development of the components of their local tourism product, i.e., natural, cultural and social attractions, general and tourist infrastructure, services and transport accessibility, promotion of the tourism product.

Practical Implications: Experience and conclusions of this study indicate that it is an important activity on the part of local authorities to foster the development of appropriate tourist and quasi-tourist infrastructure and to initiate pro-development activities, such as public-private partnership, obtaining resources from European funds, supporting private initiatives in the field of tourism development.

Originality/value: The paper is of practical use. The results can be used in particular by local decision makers in the development of local tourism products and in the creation of local tourism-based development strategies.

Keywords: Promotion, branded tourism products, local tourism policy.

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Paper Type: Research work.

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1. Introduction

A branded tourism product can be defined as a set of characteristics of a tourism product (functional, economic and psychological) related to consumers' (tourists') conviction of benefits resulting from its use (e.g. high quality, local specificity, comfort of stay, good local cuisine). This belief can be perpetuated through its internal structure, distribution system and sales method, promotional activities and recommendation by other customers. The task of a branded product is to create a positive tourist image of the local tourist economy, to differentiate itself from competitors' products and to satisfy tourists' needs and expectations through its constituent range of products, attractiveness, uniqueness and usefulness. The brand of such a product is supposed to attract tourists to a given tourist reception area.

A branded tourism product has a strategic purpose, not an operational (temporary) one. Its implementation and operation is to be long-term and integrated with the tourist development of the locality or tourist region. A tourism product brand is meant to be, among other things, one of the tools for promoting the local tourism economy and a symbol that distinguishes one tourist reception area from another (Olins, 2004).

A tourism product brand is not just an identifier of its origins. It is also a tool for communication and establishing a lasting relationship between the local tourist area and tourists. This relationship distinguishes the area and is part of the competitive advantage being built. A tourism service brand is intended to identify the service provider and at the same time differentiate it from competing services. Tourists come into contact with them primarily through the material conditions of their provision and the way they are served (Diakonidze, 2019).

Promotion of a branded tourism product is primarily the totality of activities and decisions connected with advertising and shaping a positive image of the brand in the closer and further environment of the place of tourist reception. This is particularly important when such products are offered to consumers from European Union countries, who attach great importance to branded products. The promotion of a branded tourism product should be combined with the promotion of the country as a tourist destination. A country's brand and image has a significant impact on the market position of all the tourism products of a country and their attractiveness to tourists.

2. Activities in the Field of Creating a Local Tourist Product

Creating a branded tourism product should involve investing in tourism, i.e., in the development of tourist facilities. It is not enough to have a beautiful landscape or a clean environment to speak of a tourism product, let alone a branded one. Mountains, seas, lakes and other natural assets were not created for commercial purposes. Man has only added tourist infrastructure to facilitate the admiration and

enjoyment of nature (Kondej, 2003). It is therefore necessary to organise accommodation and catering facilities of appropriate quality and standard and to prepare leisure time opportunities by arranging walking and cycling routes, tourist equipment rentals, cultural events etc.

An important addition to a tourism product is the municipal infrastructure and services auxiliary to tourism (e.g., banking, telecommunications, postal services, crafts, medical services). All these elements working smoothly together, forming a uniform functional whole and characterised by high standards, have a great impact on creating the brand character of a given tourism product. Developed tourist attractions and assets should bring tangible economic and non-economic benefits to their creators. For this to happen, the created tourism product must be skilfully sold (Adamopoulos and Thalassinos, 2020).

Much in this respect depends on the attitude of general as well as local tourism policy actors. For example, France, through its tourism policy, aims to, inter alia, intensify external and internal tourism promotion, improve the quality of education of personnel in tourism, create competitive conditions for the distribution of French tourism products. Tourism policy should lead to rational use of the natural tourist values of a given area and to the creation of tourism development programmes in economic regions. A good tool in the area of creating branded tourism products would be the implementation of public-private partnerships, i.e. the use of the synergy effect resulting from the combination of the assets of local government and private capital within the framework of a local tourism undertaking. One example is the Podlaskie Stork Trail as a joint venture of municipalities from the area of three national parks, the North Podlaskie Society for the Protection of Birds, the Polish Tourism Development Organisation and Ecoton.

Local tourism policy is first and foremost the activity of policy actors, aimed at defining economic, political, social and cultural objectives related to the development of tourism, achieving comprehensive positive effects resulting from the existence of demand and supply, seeking to satisfy social needs for tourism and specifying the measures necessary for this (Panasiuk, 2006; Filipe, 2014).

3. Benefits for the Local Tourism Policy from Creating Branded Tourism Products

The main economic benefits associated with the development of local tourism through the creation of, inter alia, branded tourism products include:

- inflow of cash (including foreign exchange) to local budgets (communes, districts, regions) and to tourism and tourism-related businesses;
- increase in the competitiveness of the local tourist economy against similar economies; a branded tourism product increases opportunities to compete for tourists;

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- development of tourism and tourism-related investment activities in the area in connection with the development of tourism; quantitatively and qualitatively appropriate tourism and tourism-related infrastructure is the basis for building a branded local tourism product;
 - better use of existing local tourist and quasi-tourist infrastructure; improvement of its efficiency and effectiveness of operation; increasing the point and area servicing ratio;
 - improvement of the quality of functioning of the local municipal infrastructure; tourism is very often a factor in projects of an infrastructural nature, i.e. roads, construction of sewage treatment plants and waste dumps, supplying water, gas and electricity to all households and businesses; increase in the capacity of this infrastructure;
 - creation of additional year-round and seasonal jobs;
 - creating a positive image of the local tourist economy, e.g. environmentally friendly;
 - contribution to GDP and economic growth of the region and the country.

The local tourism economy forms a kind of tourism management and organisation system, consisting of managers and managed, namely:

- authorities of a tourist municipality (or a tourism-oriented municipality) responsible, among other things, for the development of technical and economic tourist infrastructure (often referred to as quasi-tourist infrastructure or infrastructure complementary to tourism), i.e., sewage network, water supply, environmental protection installations, sports and recreation installations, road network, street lighting, etc.,
- local tourism enterprises for which the provision of tourism services is the basis of economic activity, i.e., travel operators, hotel and catering enterprises, travel agencies (travel agencies and intermediaries) and others,
- tourism enterprises that have their branches in a given region and influence the volume and quality of tourism service supply,
- tourism-oriented actors, i.e., those complementing the basic range of the tourism product, i.e. companies: producing tourist and sports equipment, souvenirs, providing publishing and cartographic services and others,
- entities whose revenues are indirectly dependent on reported tourist demand - i.e., providing services known as ancillary services, i.e., banks and insurance institutions, construction companies, design offices, health care facilities, agriculture, crafts, retail chains (Jędrzejczyk, 2000).

The essence of the local tourism policy is the shaping of the tourism supply system. Therefore, one of its tasks is to create local tourist products that would be directly associated with a particular place and at the same time have a brand character. Activities related to creation of tourist products should be connected with activity of local authorities (including local tourist agencies). They should be supported by regional authorities (regional tourism organisations) and central authorities

(including the National Tourism Organisation). These measures in most countries most often address the following issues:

- spatial planning;
- economic planning;
- vocational training;
- co-financing of promotional activities in the field of export promotion;
- acquisition and distribution of EU funds for tourism development;
- tourism marketing (including territorial marketing);
- State interventionism in tourism consumption;
- research on the tourism sector (Niedzielski, 2008).

Selected practical objectives of local tourism policy that have a direct and indirect impact on the creation of local branded tourism products include:

- permanent observation of the socio-economic effects of tourism development;
- systematic and complete penetration of the local tourist market;
- diversification of the local economy;
- identification of the destination's target tourism capacity;
- bringing service providers together in local structures;
- inspiring pro-tourism legal, fiscal and financial solutions;
- selective development of tourist infrastructure;
- adaptation of buildings in a tourist destination to the type of landscape that is traditional for that destination;
- extension of the car-free leisure area;
- conducting joint marketing and above all promotion of the tourist destination;
- privileging the local community to take advantage of tourism development;
- informing the local population in good time about the intentions of the tourist development and the possibility of their participation;
- developing consumer (tourist) protection;
- consciously supporting the cultural distinctiveness of the tourist destination;
- raising tourist awareness among the local population;
- taking action to extend the tourist season;
- supporting tourism in rural areas as a complementary source of income;
- preference for tourism as an employer in the local tourism market (Gaworecki, 2003).

Important guidelines in implementing local tourism policy in the area of creating local branded tourism products include:

- the rational use of the natural tourist qualities of a given destination and the traditions and customs of the local people in order to preserve its individual character;

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- in the case of a tourist destination with an international character, the offer of the tourist economy in terms of leisure and entertainment services, which should be adapted to the nationality, age, income and tastes of tourists;
 - providing tourists with an atmosphere of hospitality throughout their stay in a given location;
 - the price level of the local tourism market, corresponding to the purchasing capacity of tourists;
 - tourism development programme, characterised by a certain flexibility and allowing, on the one hand, the development of complementary tourism goods and, on the other hand, guaranteeing the preservation of tourism assets subject to tourism exploitation (Gaworecki, 2010).

4. Conclusions

Local authorities, within the framework of the local tourism policy, should influence appropriate development of the components of their local tourism product, i.e., natural, cultural and social attractions, general and tourist infrastructure, services and transport accessibility, promotion of the tourism product (Stasiak, Włodarczyk, and Kaczmarek, 2010). Creation and promotion of local brand tourism products, as a result of implementation of local tourism policy, should also be based on concepts of activities undertaken by regional and general tourism policy entities in this respect, and first of all it should be complementary and sometimes compatible with concepts of tourism development in a given region (voivodship) created by local self-governments.

According to the predictions of global tourism experts, the quality of services provided and the state of the environment will be the deciding factors in choosing a travel destination (Pawlicz, 2008). Accessibility to tourist infrastructure (including accommodation) is one of the most important factors directing tourist traffic to a given country, region or destination. A similar determinant can be found in the case of the USA or Western European countries. Very often tourists are guided in their travels by the size and structure (availability) of hotel accommodation in the destination town or region.

The standard and availability of hotels shapes tourists' desire to visit a particular place and is very often a factor that determines their trip (Szostak, 2004). Therefore, an important action on the part of local authorities is to foster the development of appropriate tourist and quasi-tourist infrastructure and to initiate pro-development measures, such as public-private partnership, obtaining resources from European funds, supporting private initiatives for tourism development (loan guarantees, easing of fiscal restrictions, initiation of training and professional retraining of inhabitants, etc.).

Promotion of the destination, municipality and individual tourism products, including branded ones, is also an important activity within the scope of local tourist

policy. This is one of the most important tasks in a market economy. This entails meeting requirements constituting the essence of proper promotion, which include promotional professionalism, reliability of information, linguistic correctness, versatility of promotional materials, continuous activities, promotion in publications, trade fairs, media (including electronic media).

A tourist destination is such a settlement unit which, due to its tourist values and attractions, infrastructure, services and transport accessibility, is a destination of tourist migration, i.e. a place where tourist events and destinations are concentrated (Panasiuk, 2019). Promotion of a tourist destination should refer to the entire tourist destination, the local tourism economy, individual tourism products and even individual components of tourist infrastructure.

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