Managing Tourist Destinations: Different Approaches to Destination Management in Italy

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Abstract

North West After a short review of international literature about destination management, this paper analyzes two different approaches to organize and manage tourist offering used by two Italian regions: Marche and Emilia Romagna. The main objective is to derive - via inductive logic - the conceptual meaning of these approaches compared to the literature on Destination Management and highlight its key managerial implications. The study shows that organizational solutions adopted by the Emilia Romagna region are innovative and original, because they were based on the consideration of a network of operators grouped by service category provided or tourist resources owned rather than focusing on territorial resources as a whole. The case of Marche region, moreover, shows how it is possible to design a hybrid organizational model capable of enhancing both specific themes of supply through the creation of proper networks of tourist operators, according to Emilia Romagna model, and the sub-regional areas grouped in S.T.L. (Local Tourist System). Despite the limitations due to the small number of the cases analyzed, the paper highlights some significant results which open up further research paths, aimed to improve tools and approaches to Destination Management.

Key words: tourist product, experience, destination management, destination marketing.

Introduction

The concept of tourist destination often has different meanings, not always compatible among themselves, both in the literature and among practitioners. Sometimes *destination* is understood as a geographical area, as a place[i]. 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 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 both natural and artificial attractiveness fac-

tors able to pull in tourists. Therefore, the destination concept and the tourist product concept tend to converge (Buhalis, 2000). The second group of definitions tends to identify destinations including producers – assimilating the destination into the territory and supply system (Tamma, 2002; Brunetti, 2002).

Some contributions have assumed, more or less explicitly, an overlapping perspective with regard to the destination concept, trying to combine demand and supply points of view (Casarin, 2002). It is in this conceptual framework that we introduce the concept of Tourist Destination. 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* 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 simple indifferent addressees of undifferentiated economic proposals, or as an active subject, heavily involved in the production and consumption process of the tourist product with a high immateriality content (services and experiences), until they themselves become a sort of "product", in the case of "product/transformations". Tourists become *the result of the transformation process put in place by tourism producers to meet their expectations of change and needs at the physical, emotional, psychological and social levels[ii].*

It follows that although the tourist product sometimes converges with the resort (the destination), *it should be more appropriately considered as a result, an output from the activities carried out by the destination actors.* As such, it is a *package composed of many elements bundled by one or more producers or by tourists searching for a global tourism product*

A destination *is a "stage"*, where various tourism products can be arranged in order to satisfy the desires of different market segments. When this *stage* is able to satisfy the needs of a single market segment (through one type of product), the destination concept and tourism product concept tend to overlap, at least in the perception of intermediaries and users. Assuming, however, that the supply point of view cannot escape the fact that the product is the result of activities performed by destination producers and that although the two con-

cepts are dialectic (the tourist experience is strongly linked to the place in which it occurs) there is a strong distinction between them.

If from the demand-side tourist experiences may qualify as "*personal and engaging events that involve moving in space and with a time duration that includes one night*", from the supply-side *the tourist product is the result of systemic offer of goods, services, information, tourist attractions, environment, etc.* . This offer is arranged in a tourism production system in order to provide customers some economic proposals that, going beyond the simple mix of goods and services, is more decidedly and deliberately directed towards providing *products with strong experiential content.* Products offering a strong experiential content also imply the involvement of a variety of actors and resources on the supply-side, including public and private actors, entrepreneurs, information agents, environmental, financial and technological resources, intangible assets, etc..

Consequently, important and strategically relevant competition in the tourist market occurs *among tourist destinations* rather than among individual firms. Whether the destination reveals a shared strategic intent or the activities are spontaneously produced by actors, tourists enjoy and perceive a *comprehensive experience* containing all attractions, goods, services, experiences and transformations they received during their stay (Keller, 2000).

Synthetically:

1. *A tourist destination is a geographical area with a block/basin of resources and companies producing commodities, goods, services, experiences and transformations coherent to an emerging and/or deliberate logic;*

2. *A tourist product is a bundle of commodities, goods, services, experiences and transformations assembled by actors internal or external to the destination or directly by tourists, through needs, motivations and personal cognitive system.*

Tourists have the opportunity to use more or less organised resources, commodities, goods, services, experiences and transformations that actors offer them through the destination. What they experience from the point of choosing a destination to the point of returning home represents the *comprehensive tourist experience*. This highly experiential meaning of the concept of tourist product is consistent with the new trends in consumption, particularly in tourism. The "postmodern" consumer has become less and less rational in choice and increasingly inspired by strong emotional and affective motives (Fabris, 2008). In this perspective, new customer profiles emerge - tourists looking for authentic experiences, not artificial or deceptive, looking for experiences that can express

profound human identity, able to connect intimately with the cultural heritage of the genius loci (Pencarelli e Forlani, 2002; Cova, 2002).

Depending on how it is perceived, the experience may have created more or less value, influencing customer satisfaction, his/her willingness to return to the destination or to provide positive or negative word-of-mouth, with important consequences for the image of the destination (Figure 1).
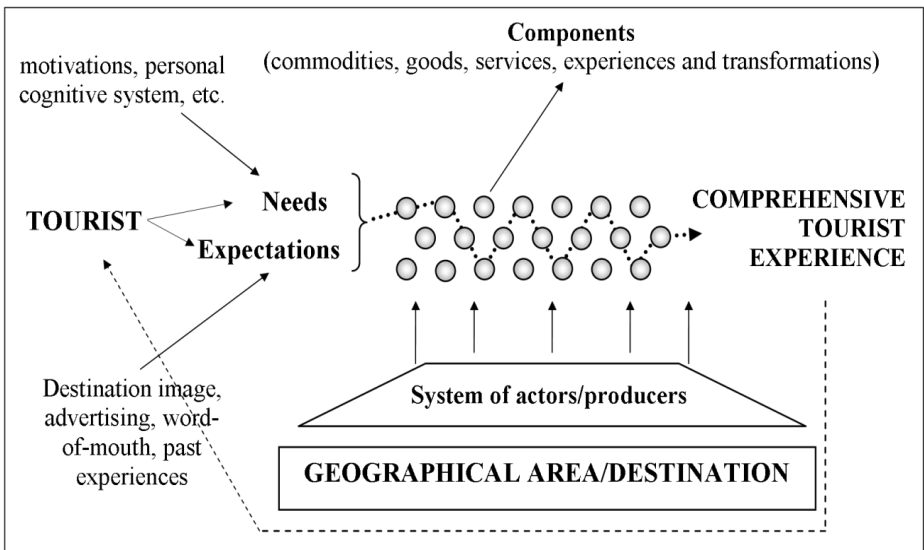

Figure 1. Tourists, destination and tourist product

Source: our data

The conceptual approach we chose considers tourism experiences as personal and engaging events experienced through a bundle of goods and services. This inevitably questions the validity of the strategic and organizational solutions adopted to create and provide tourist products up to now.

Destination management literature has produced several hypotheses for managing tourist destinations. Some studies suggest spontaneous forms of self-regulation, others consider essential the presence of a strategic leader. A semi-hierarchical model was proposed by Brunetti (2002), which argues that before talking about strategic government of tourist destinations we must specify the limits, indicating that is necessary to maintain a proper balance between strict

management and spontaneity. Tamma (2002) highlights that the characteristics of each destination can bring to the fore several key figures and that there is no single subject which in theory could act as an authority to regulate and coordinate the development of the destination. On the other hand, there are those like Buhalis (2000) who affirms that destinations should be managed by a Destination Management Organization (DMO) responsible for destination designing and marketing and having the power and resources to undertake actions aimed at achieving strategic objectives[iii].

From our point of view, tourist destinations need to identify an entity capable of exercising highly complex and articulated functions (planning, coordination, support, advice, monitoring, marketing, promotion, etc.) and which all the destination actors hold to be legitimate. This role could be played by *meta-management* representative of public and private members and underpinned by private legal rules in order to facilitate the opening up of ownership. The process of creating this strategic leader is very important in terms of its legitimacy. It may take two forms: *top-down* or *bottom-up* (Martini, 2002; Golinelli, 2002).

However, the context strongly influences both organizational solutions and the pertinence of Destination Management principles and tools. Where resources and tourist activities are poorly integrated (*fragmentation model*), it is extremely difficult to design Destination Management strategies that express a strong and unified supply management (Sciarelli, 2007). Conversely, where there are players who take on a leadership role in organizing and controlling supply (*leadership model*), or there is good degree of cooperation between operators (*cooperation model*), it is easier to build a *board* and identify key players.

Other scholars (Flagestad & Hope, 2001) argue that in "*corporate*" destinations management is not dissimilar to managing a multi-unit enterprise. The management of "*community*" destinations is more problematic because resources are owned by several independent subjects. In this case, management must address many conflicting interests and becomes extremely difficult, but it is necessary for long-term destination success (Buhalis, 2000). Finally, we must consider the destination's geographical extension and its cultural homogeneity. The territory must have a shared identity that allows the leader to activate relationship systems based on trust among actors[iv]. Following a "traditional approach", *we can affirm that tourist destination management primarily involves the territorial government. Secondly, it involves resources activated through projects able to promote cooperative systems and to create tourism products capable of addressing competitive challenges.*

Methodology

The aim of our empirical research was to evaluate two different approaches to organize and manage tourist offering used by two Italian regions: Marche and Emilia Romagna. The Marche region extends from the Adriatic coast to the Appenine mountain chain, offering a rich territorial geography that encapsulates all of the geographical features of Italy. This region enjoys important historical and artistic heritage resources and contain numerous cities of art and important spiritual and religious sites. In terms of tourism, Marche counts more than 232,000 beds with approximately 2 million of tourists per year and the highest average length of stay in Italy (more than 6 days). In addition, tourist numbers have a high concentration in the coastal areas.

In terms of regional organisation, Marche region has opted for the *S.T.L.* model (Local Tourism System – *Sistemi Turistici Locali*), in accordance with national laws and in line with the "traditional" Destination Management approach. In fact - according to Regional legislation – S.T.L. "are the instrument through which the public and private sectors cooperate to manage activities of tourist product formation. The creation of S.T.L. follows a "bottom-up" process, while the creation and dissemination of criteria for formal recognition and the administrative act of recognition remains with the regional government. According to the Regional Law of 2006 (Art.8, comma 4), which draws from National Law n.135 of 29 March 2001, the Systems:

"a) indentify tourist products appropriate for the territory in question, also to the point of putting them out on the market, and create a total picture of the value of local resources with particular attention to the specific characteristics of hinterland, mountain and coastal zones;

b) organize reception activities, integrating and harmonizing these with other activities present in the territory in question." [translated from Italian]

In other words, *STLs* are public and private actor networks aimed at tourism development, operating in a specific and bounded sub-regional geographical area which have the task of designing and marketing tourism products produced and consumed inside the area (Figure 2).

Figure 2. STLs in Marche Region

The STLs analyzed however, show more shadows than lights, particularly regarding marketing policies, financial sustainability and entrepreneurial commitment. The latter, in particular, is often weakened by the excessive public component within the governance as well as the lack of cooperation between players (see Gregori et al., 2010).

Emilia Romagna region, however, offers a different interpretation of Destination Management philosophy. The Emilia Romagna region is more important than the Marche region in terms of tourist numbers - about 8 million tourists a year and more than 432,000 beds - but has similar characteristics. As well, this region is located in central Italy and faces the Adriatic Sea to the east. It borders the Marche region to the south. Both of these regions extend from the Adriatic coast to the Appenine mountain chain, offering important historical and artistic heritage resources and contain numerous cities of art. Emilia Romagna is also characterised by a concentration of arrivals in their coastal areas, particularly in some areas so well known that they overshadow even the regional brand (for example, Rimini).

The Emilia Romagna region has opted for a different organizational solution, defined as Product Unions (*Unioni di Prodotto*) and Product Clubs (*Club di Prodotto*).

Product Unions are governed by art 13 (Aggregazioni di prodotto di interesse regionale) of Emilia-Romagna's Regional Law n. 7 of 4 March 1998, com-

ma 1 , which states "The Region favours the process of aggregation and promo-tion projects so as to reward joint actions taken to develop the regional tourist economy, to strengthen and integrate tourism products as well as to increase and improve available resources". The following comma identifies priority tourism areas around which Product Unions may be created – in this case, Adriatic Coast, Green Appenines, City of Art/Culture and Business as well as spas[v].

This represents an important organizational innovation from the traditional model of regional tourism organization. In this case, the objective is to link re-sources, businesses and public actors not necessarily connected to the territory, but related by their capacity to offer value propositions directed toward specif-ic market segments, so-called "tourism sector" defined by regional law - *The Adriatic Coast*, *Spa and Fitness*, *Appennines and Nature*, *Art Cities*. In other words, *they have pursued strategies not based on valuation of areas on the whole, but focused on resources and attraction groups linked by the same thematic characteristics from the point of view of service offering.*

In fact, in the Product Unions, the players are dispersed throughout the en-tire region, as you can see in the case of "Spa and Fitness" illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Product unions in Emilia Ronagna Region, the case of "spa and fitness"

Similarly, Product Clubs are networks linked to projects aimed at creating value propositions for specific market segments. They are associated with dif-ferent legal forms and their members may have different locations[vi]. All Clubs

formed in the Emilia Romagna region are potential members of Product Unions[vii], just as other associations of tourism operators can participate in the STLs in the Marche region. The matrix in Figure 4 distinguishes *STLs*, *Product Unions* and *Product Clubs* - on one hand considering the *location of members and resources* (concentrated or dispersed), and on the other hand the degree of thematic coherence in the *services offering* (low or high).
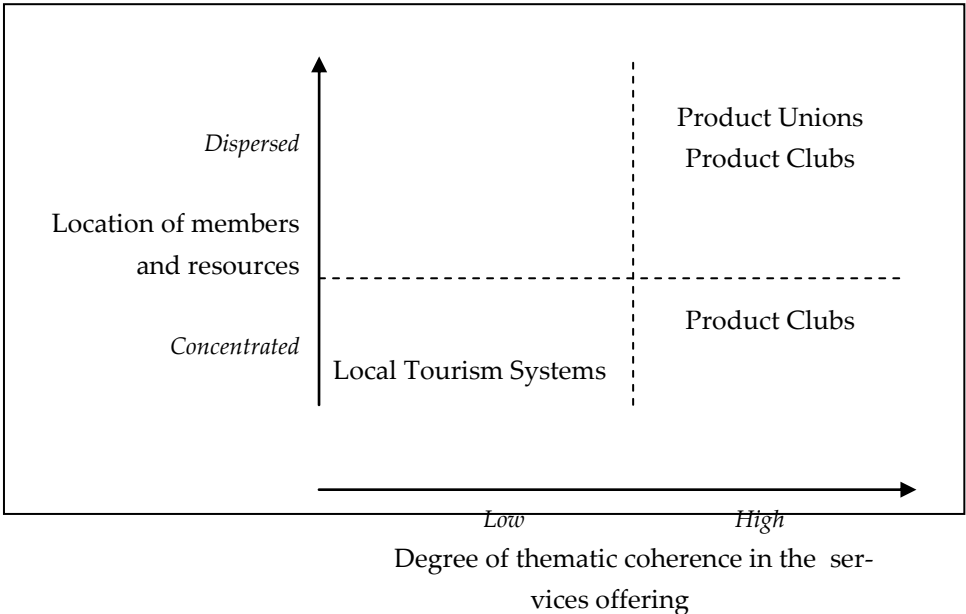

Figure 4. STLs, product unions and product clubs positioning matrix

Source: Pencarelli and Splendiani, 2008

Unlike STLs, the Product Clubs analysed (Pencarelli and Splendiani, 2008) have been shown to posses a strong entrepreneurial drive that has enabled effective marketing actions such as bundling, communications and commercialization. This is facilitated by a better focus on the offering, and members (numerically lower than those of *STLs*) are able to organise themselves for specific projects, with faster and more readily identifiable feedback.

Research on Product Clubs reveals that *creating mono-thematic offers may fail to generate acceptable performance, both for buyers (tourists and intermediaries looking for multi-thematic and multi-experiential travel) and for local stakeholders. In the cases*

analysed, there was a noticeable tendency to diversify offerings towards segments other than the main one, focusing on all territorial resources and attractions considered to be important attractiveness factors for external stakeholders and cohesive forces for all the members involved.

The comparative analysis between the two regions shows how different philosophies and organizational approaches adopted by the regions under investigation are complementary, not alternatives. The challenge for local tourism policies is to identify the best mix of organizational solutions and paths aimed at exploiting resources and attractions through market-driven strategies, given the coexistence of "territorial" and "thematic" network of operators. Destinations need to have leaders capable of setting, promoting and marketing tourist products with a strong experiential content, able to balance the functional benefits associated with the quality of services and value associated with the symbolic image of the destination.

Referring to the models explained above, *a hybrid organizational solution is that toward which the Marche region is moving, characterized by a path that can be interpreted as an attempt at an integrated approach to Destination Management.*

The regional government is currently supporting the creation of a network of stakeholders in the sector of the *spa and wellness*, with the aim of enhancing regional thermal resources. The consequence is that Marche's model is still based on the *STLs*, but at the same time they will be joined by specific entrepreneurial networks devoted to enhance thematic clusters of resources and services.

In fact, the size of the sub-regional *STLs* failed to provide proper exploitation of thermal resources due to the scarcity of supply (approximately two thermal operators for each *STL*)[viii]. The creation of these networks responds to the need to organize the supply of Spa in order to achieve qualification and integration, since currently, Marche spa and wellness companies have weak strategies driven by poorly-oriented cooperation and are therefore individualistic[ix].

The creation of the networks can help individual enterprises to implement efficiently and effectively a strategic approach substantiated primarily by an expansion of service offering. In this sense, the network may be a desirable way to achieve such a strategic approach, especially where the individual actually proves unable to design their own personalized services and extensions. As well, the establishment of networks makes possible economies of scale (especially for communication policies), the development of learning economies, and a condition of complementarity of resources. The membership of a relational

network also provides the participants with a high degree of strategic flexibility - allowing the extension of the scope of the actors due to influence from different cultures and organizational models.

The study suggests that the success of a destination requires that management understand the perspective of the customer and knows how to create, communicate and deliver value to them through a broad offering with a strong experiential content.

Implications

The path taken by the Marche region in order to integrate the original territorial approach (Local Tourist System) with a product approach (Product Club) in the field of wellness and SPA is still at the beginning, but there are a number of critical factors on which to focus for any future development – a sort of strategic and organizational challenges. The first step is to create a network with organizational structures – that develop a system guided by a strategic leader capable of guiding the actors and policies to implement effective destination marketing and branding, in particular:

- market analysis and segmentation, in order to capture the different needs within the wellness demand;

- creation and delivery of proposals for goods and services tailored to meet the many and varied experiential requirements of customers;

- definition of flexible pricing policies, designed to meet different customer segments, even taking into account the seasonal dynamics of supply and dissimilar content related to the wellness business;

- creation of a brand network capable of supporting highly themed offerings and focused on the need for spa and wellness, but also able to enhance the resources and the territory;

- identification of solutions for the selling products – including partnerships with incoming travel agencies – in order to link sales and promotion policies.

From the point of view of Destination Marketing, the challenge for thermal spa networks will be to gain strategic autonomy within a marketing strategy guided by the regional government. In particular, the critical relationship is that between the thermal network and *STLs*. The first will be distributed throughout the entire region and will be called to work together with all *STLs*

to ensure the integration of the regional supply, as well as the exploitation of thermal resources.

In this context it is very important to consider the choices of Destination Brand Management, potentially capable of making consistent and integrated destination marketing policies, balancing strong appeal of regional brand and targeting of the value proposition to specific market segments (Cf. Anholt, 2008; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Gallarza *et al*, 2002).

Destination Branding policies operate at different territorial levels referring to different objects and therefore involve a multitude of actors[x]. Managing and branding destinations need to cope with the constant dialectic among brands and brand activities. Territorial branding activities are oriented towards expressing uniformity of values and symbols. Territorial brands "should be indicative of the location's vision for the future and receive wide stakeholder support: it is aligned to the "corporate brand"(see Kerr, 2006). Branding activities involving network and business brands, instead, focus on the providers and resources that produce tourist services, focusing on characteristics like quality and professionalism, aiming to improve tourists' loyalty. Finally, product branding activities aim at stimulating purchase of a specific value proposition[xi].

Following Hankinson (2007; see also Morgan et al., 2002), we can affirm that the interweaving and overlapping of different activities makes the role of the key-player very complex. It is responsible for coordinating and giving coherency to various paths and seeking a shared mission aimed at the valorisation of territorial identity. This complexity can be solved through the construction of a adequate Brand Portfolio and its Brand Architecture (see Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000).

The analysis of destination branding policies adopted by the two regions analyzed – Marche and Emilia Romagna – shows that there are two different management strategies of Brand Portfolio and two different structures of Brand Architecture, both with some inconsistencies.

The Emilia Romagna region opted for an Endorsed Identity strategy, that is the decision to articulate the Regional Brand over territorial themes, organized into Product Unions and Product Clubs. This approach does not act directly on the regional brand, but stresses the promotion of networks related to a specific thematic offering. It constitutes, therefore, a strong identification of the regional brand on the themes of supply, and themes are the elements that underpin the

benefits promised to the audience. The risk of this approach lies in a potential lack of enhancement of regional brand.

The Marche region, however, has opted for the Monolithic Identity focusing on a master brand through which to convey the image of a whole with respect to all the targets (Branded House strategy). In this case, although it is necessary to enhance the regional brand, to opt for Monolithic Identity may limit the opportunities for differentiation toward target segments.

The analysis shows that both approaches to Brand Architecture appear inadequate with respect to the strategic and organizational choices made by the regions.

Regional Brand Architecture, in our opinion, should make use of *sub-branding* and *endorsed-branding* policies, in order to guarantee firstly the necessary autonomy of the different brands and, secondly, the exploitation of cognitive associations with the Master Brand, that is - the only factor potentially unifying the entire Brand Portfolio. In conclusion, although at an early stage, the path undertaken by the Marche region can be considered an attempt at a hybrid organizational model as described in this study. This model can be implemented and is potentially capable of ensuring the full development of the complex and composite tourist supply of a broad tourism system such as that of the Italian regions.

Conclusion

First of all, this paper shows that there is no one best approach to Destination Management and Destination Marketing at the regional level. In our opinion is it necessary to combine territorial resources and tourist product perspectives in order to build value propositions with high level of experiential content based on networks able to bundle and synthesize the dialectical relationship between destinations and tourist products. We tried to make clear this dialectical relationship in the first section, explaining the conceptual framework, which points out the differences between tourist destination and tourist products. There is a very strong dialectical relationship between them due to the fact that tourist products are extremely affected by the location in which they are provided (Destination) because they possess highly experiential content. If the concepts tend to overlap on the demand side, on the supply-side the clear distinction between the two cannot be missed. Products are the result of activities carried out by the supply system located within the destination.

The comparative analysis between regions shows how different philosophies and organizational approaches adopted by the two are not alternatives, but complementary. A hybrid organizational model can be capable of exploiting peripheral tourist areas by enhancing resource networks, as the case of thermal network of Marche Region.

The observation of the Emilia Romagna model, although innovative and original, shows that to provide mono-thematic tourism products is not viable for meeting customer needs for those looking for thematic and multi-experiential travel. This is demonstrated by the tendency of tourism firms to diversify the offering with additional services. Local actors also need to reinforce their sense of belonging linked to the territory - an essential element of identity and shared values.

The Marche approach, on the other hand, appears unable to enhance and promote the themes of the offering because branding policies are exclusively focused on the regional brand. The objective of enhancing the competitiveness of thermal resources of the Marche could be achieved through the creation of a network to endorse the STLs. This integrated approach is, in our opinion, better suited to appreciating the resources and actors related to the Spa and Wellness industry while preserving the area's identity - a source of value also in reference to highly themed tourist products.

The case of Marche region – in particular the example of the creation of a spa network within the regional boundaries - show that is possible to integrate local resources with entrepreneurial networks. The tourist offering of STLs can be enriched by activating networks of spa enterprises linked by a "product brand" and the same competitive goals. Accordingly, the Regional Brand Portfolio will be enriched by a new network brand – thermal spa network - which will require clear choices in terms of image positioning compared to competitors, the definition of the symbolic benefits promised to targets, endorsed branding policies to establish the link with the regional master brand and other related brands, etc.

Any strategic and organizational solution, moreover, should be coordinated with destination branding policies and consistent with the Brand Architecture approach. Destinations have to find a proper balance that ensures the necessary autonomy of the different brands and themes of supply while at the same time ensuring the exploitation of cognitive associations with the regional brand, a unifying factor for the entire tourist offer.

Key-factors of communication and branding mainly concern the complexity of the "destination" entity, in which several interests tend to overlap and application of Destination Management issues becomes very difficult. The role of the public entity, in this sense, is to increase the brand equity of region and, this way, increase competitiveness through support and incentives to tourism businesses, whether individually or in network form. For this purpose, the local tourist areas must implement strategic branding approaches by sharing processes among the actors of the regional destination according to participative approaches that involve the multitude of tourist operators that contribute to the destination brand formation and therefore to positioning the region's image. Destinations need to have leaders capable of setting, promoting and marketing tourist products with a strong experiential content, able to balance the functional benefits associated with the quality of services and value associated with the symbolic image of the destination.

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[i] Following 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.

[ii] Here we refer to cases in which tourists who purchase vacations and vacation packages in health spas, instructional retreats, training schools, etc. in which the client pays to be transformed or undergo transformations the results of which depend on both the supplier's ability and the activities applied by the client.

[iii] Cf. Minguzzi e Presenza, 2010.

[iv] Cf. Fyall et al., 2003.

[v] Cf. Art.12 Regional Law 6 March 2007, n.2.

[vi] The geographic extent of the territory is varied. Some Clubs operate nationally, like the "Borghi più Belli d'Italia", others at the regional or interregional level, others at the sub-regional level or in single cities.

[vii] The admissibility of members in Product Union statutes is conditioned by their business activities within the specific "tourism sector" to which belongs.

[viii] The spa towns in the Marche region are ten: Montegrimano, Pitinum Thermae, Terme di Raffaello, Terme di Carignano, Terme dell'Aspio, Terme San Vittore, Terme Santa Lucia, Terme di Sarnano, Terme di Palme, Acquasanta Terme.

[ix] This is even more necessary in light of the changes in consumption of products and services related to spas and wellness. The services mainly related to thermal and curative health needs – i.e., the spa, in virtue of the therapeutic properties - has given way progressively to fruition due to a growing demand for well-being aimed at "feeling good", to experience where health, relaxation and entertainment meet. In this sense, the question of spas grows, requiring more complex and complicated package offerings than traditional treatment services, moving toward supply systems characterized by large and diverse portfolios of services and payment formulas capable of ensuring physical and mental well-being for customers. This is closer to the profile of the leisure traveler that the tourist in need of care. The prospect of a thermal demand has "evolved" and "extended". On the supply side, it requires the inclusion of types of firms that differ from traditional spas. It must include health and fitness clubs, increasingly competing with traditional thermal spa formulas and therefore pushing companies to direct strategies at new levels of competition.

[x] Depending on the object to which the brand is linked, a brand may be:

- *territorial*, referring to a specific geographical area. This may be *institutional*, linked to administrative boundaries (nation, region, province, town, mountain community, protected area, etc.) or *natural* (lakes, rivers, mountains, etc.);
- *of resource*, referring to single resources (natural or artificial). This becomes increasingly important in proportion to the attractiveness of the resource and, therefore, is able to influence the destination choice process. Brand becomes a *medium* of communicating information between tourists and resources;
- *of network*, referring to a supply system based on shared projects. Following the definition of destination used in this paper, "network brand" identifies a group of businesses and tourist resources operating together in a project and sharing a common aim. In reality this is not always true. Brand may be the only element that unites the players. Network brands focus on tourism "producers", and therefore belong to the supply-side. Examples of network brands are those of STLs, Product Clubs and Unions, franchising networks, tourism boards and other type of networks;

- *of product*, referring to a bundle of services or experiences created to respond to a particular need. Product brands focus on tourists' perceptual dimension, communicating the value proposition rather than the players that provide it;
- *of enterprise*, referring to tourism businesses that provide goods, services and tourist experiences (tour operator, travel agencies, hotels, etc.).

[xi] Cf. Ritchie, Ritchie. 1998; Laws *et al*, 2002; Hosany *et al*, 2006; Del Chiappa, 2010.

Cruising or Not? Factors that Influence the Decision to Undertake or Not a Cruise

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify what drive Portuguese tourists to choose to take a cruise or not. This research grounds on "push and pull factor model" developed by Dann (1977) and Crompton (1979). The empirical research was conducted with a web survey applied to Portuguese people by means of snowball sample techniques, from which 362 usable questionnaires were collected. Multivariate, a component analysis and a cluster-analyses were performed to depict the main factors motivating and preventing Portuguese to take or not cruise. The results suggest that taking a cruise is driven by push and pull factors as new experiences, the luxury and comfort on board, the atmosphere on board, the luxury hotel ship and the good entertainment. In contrast, the decision for not undertaking a cruise holiday is mainly driven by lack of opportunity, money and companion .The results also suggest that the non-cruisers' image is not well defined yet, meaning that cruisers are more likely to repeat than the others who never take a cruise. The results show the path to develop this form of tourism that in Portugal is only emerging.

Key words: cruise, cruisers push and pull motivations, cruisers segmentation.

Introduction

The European Cruise industry continues to increase its share of the global cruise market with 25.2 million passengers visiting European ports in 2010 (European Cruise Council, 2011). Cruising can be described as a "multi-center holiday", which means the individual takes the cruise as a moving hotel with