



WWJMRD 2021; 7(1): 15-18
www.wwjmr.com
International Journal
Peer Reviewed Journal
Refereed Journal
Indexed Journal
Impact Factor MJIF: 4.25
E-ISSN: 2454-6615

Tatyana Dimitrova
"Brands and Stories" Ltd.,
Sofia, Bulgaria

Branding and Sustainable Development – Know How Questions to Managers

Tatyana Dimitrova

Abstract

Branding and Sustainable Development are the two faces of one coin- here you will find how much it costs.

Keywords: tourist brand power; destination management; sustainable development

Introduction

The tourist industry is changing rapidly, answering the needs of people and societies. Branding and sustainable development are two ideas of the past century that mark the future of tourism. Knowing them better we can find better solutions for our shared future.

The idea of branding evolves in time. Alexova and Dimitrova (2020) summarize the main steps of branding concept like this: "By the end of the twentieth century, when marketing was a huge competitive field in which new ideas for product positioning were sought, years after Smith (1956) introduced "the concept of market segmentation", Al Ries and Jack Trout (1981) wrote the book "Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind", which draws a new way to the consumer's mind through positioning. In the 1970s, the term trademark was widely used, and in search of product innovation to build a successful brand, Al and Laura Ries (2004) introduced "The origin of brands", a valuable textbook of business lessons for the survival of the first and the possibilities of the second, and what will make audiences choose your brand among other actors in the same field. By 1996 the advertising message with a certain positioning characteristic already needs a much more complex metaphorical imagery - building a brand and brand personality. In 1996 Simon Anholt (Anholt, 2013) introduced the concept of "nation branding". According to the father of national brands "Branding is the process of building, planning and communicating a name and identity in order to build or manage a reputation." (Anholt, 2007). Today all tourist destinations create their own brand and national branding is considered to be the opportunity to be competitive and strong among the high competition in the global tourism market. Dimitrova (2020) includes the brand as an obligatory element in the functioning tourist system of Gunn (1994).

The idea of sustainable development is rooted in the middle of the XX c, but its first vivid steps Dogramadjieva (2000) finds in 1972 when it was "officially presented in the report of the Club of Rome "Frontiers of Growth" and the title of the United Nations Conference on the Environment, held in Stockholm, was "Only One Earth". "The result of this meeting was that the Stockholm Declaration and Action Plan were adopted" (Dogramadjieva, 2000). Since then the efforts are in conservation of natural resources at national and international level, in stopping pollution and demographic changes, in educating the new generation. Dogramadjieva (2000) summarizes that Popova finds "greening" as a feature that characterizes the tourist demand since the mid-80s years. "The growing concern of tourists for the environment, the increased interest in healthy recreation, in cultural and historical sites and close contact with the local population in tourist destinations give reason to "greening". Its manifestation is associated with new models of tourist behavior and new

Correspondence:
Tatyana Dimitrova
"Brands and Stories" Ltd.,
Sofia, Bulgaria

requirements for the tourist product.” (Popova,1997).

In 1992 “after the Conference on environment and development in Rio de Janeiro and the adoption of its documents, sustainable development had turned into an official politics based on a wide range of principles and recommendations for activities as well as for concrete commitments. Nearly 120 countries have established their national committees for sustainable development for managing the activities following the decisions taken in Rio de Janeiro and for elaborating national strategies for sustainable development.” (Marinov V , et al, 1998)

Both branding and sustainable development are possible if only implemented in the local tourist policy of the destination. They both need management, but they offer decisions in different directions. “The main aim of sustainable development is to restore the dynamic balance between society and the environment” (Rusev, 1995). The main goal of building a brand of a tourist destination is being competitive and achieving fame and popularity of the destination identity stated through the brand. Brands attract more visitors in the destination. “One of the real challenges to the acceptance and successful application of sustainable development” is the “carrying capacity of the destinations” (Butler,1999). Both the brand and the sustainable development mission introduce products using the resource potential of the same destination. Could these products co-exist? Can we shelter these two different ideas – branding and sustainable development - working together in the practice of tourism management?

Materials and methods

The development of tourism as an industry requires systematic coordinated efforts. **The survey is focused** on gathering the two ideas (branding and sustainable development) in one research, finding where the main intersections between them are and asking the right questions, finding some of the answers (the final decision will be a challenge for managers).

Methodology is based on:

- literary review through which we will illuminate some theory that gives some of the answers to the questions.
- selection of problems and solutions in implementation of sustainable tourism policies in different destinations, one of them presenting the idea of sustainable small-scale tourism, the other presenting the idea of achieving sustainability in the large tourism industry using the research of Dodds and Butler, (2010) and two researches of Alexova (2020, 2020).
- analysis and synthesis of secondary information.
- analysis and synthesis of primary information based on the author’s branding in Sofia, Bulgaria in 2015-2020.

The main methods used include: empirical-theoretical methods such as scientific analysis and synthesis; deduction and induction; collection and processing of primary information (some of it gathered in the process of developing brand Chiprovtsi by the author in 2020); comparative analysis and secondary analysis of data; analysis of literature sources for the destination; expert evaluation.

3.Results

Branding and sustainable development would have common opportunities and a way forward if sustainable

tourism development was still associated only with the practice of alternative activities (ecological, green, rural, adventure tourism) on a small scale and unpopular destinations. The reason is in the essence of the brand.

Constructing and positioning the brand of any destination is a process of building “identity and reputation, as implied by Anholt's (2007) definition of destination branding. When constructing the brand we derive elements of identity, ie. from the culture and history of the destination, positioning the most competitive element of the identity of the destination. Deeply based on identity, the development of the brand inspires cultural and historical tourism and products that are part of alternative types of tourism.

“Entrepreneurs in tourism are gradually realizing their long-term interest in tourism development, resource-saving and tolerant of the environment in the broadest sense. A number of tourism enterprises adopt the principle that in tourism "ecology is a long-term economy" and consider the protection of the natural and social environment as a factor for increasing competitiveness and long-term investment” (Marinov, 1992).

How can these two ideas work for product policy with no contradictions?

Branding and sustainable development both need long-term, responsible strategic planning. Through the brand we form and manage a complex tourist destination product. By adding a new brand element, historically connected to the destination through an area outside the busy tourist center, we can also manage the tourist flows via the brand - casting of tourist flows from the places with the greatest anthropogenic pressure. Through the brand we manage the emotional in public behavior and we can promote some of the instruments for sustainability as a tourist product: our goal is to achieve a rational solution for conservation of the resource by introducing a new product that offers environmentally friendly decisions- planting herbs/trees for the bees. We could also influence on the tourist interest – i.e. a new tourist route, connected to the brand story or the brand personality, that inspires people to follow the example of the brand personality, new creative or rural tourism products could be offered via the brand and included actively in mass tourism.

The main problems concerning brand development of tourist destinations are the lack of a brand that will bind the efforts of all the stakeholders, the public authorities, the NGOs; the local Strategies for development of the tourist destination give the right direction of development of the destination to a clear formation of the product range, but branding does the next step – constructing and managing the brand. Tourist destinations have only strategies that can never be effective without brand - knowing what products they can offer, destinations don’t have the know-how to manage the product. Investing in development of digital technologies is essential for changing the lives of citizens, but this is another offer of tools and language for communication, and what does it say? Brands are those that send the main message of the destination, not the new attractions – attractions evidence the message. Culture strategies give vectors for directing these instruments, but does not provide the basic material out of which the instruments should develop cultural products and messages. This material remains dependent on the artists, on their

knowledge of the destination and on the level of their cultural dioptrics - the way they see the world and the depth with which they realize the spiritual pillars of the destination and those of the world. This is a sad reason tourist destinations produce empty messages.

Sustainable development problems and solutions in small-scale tourism.

In "Methodology for sustainable development of a tourist destination" Alexova (2020) applies her methodological framework for "research, analysis and assessment of the tourist potential, which includes: external and internal environmental factors, tourist resources, material resources, human resources and administrative capacity". She studies the interrelationships between them, defines strategic goals, priorities and proposals for sustainable development of tourism at local level. "The successful development of sustainable tourism at such local level is associated with the conduct of systematic marketing research and application of criteria and indicators for analysis and assessment of tourism potential, clear definition and pursuit of strategic goals and priorities" (Alexova, 2020).

Alexova appoints that there are problems at an advanced stage in the development of the tourist destination – these problems are "the (high) volume of tourist flows and many facilities built above the allowable capacity" (Alexova, 2020); the main threats to sustainable development according to her are the rising of unemployment, "grey sector" and the "lack of statistical information". In another research again in 2020 the same author underlines that the main limiting factors of her study are "the lack of monitoring of tourist visits, sufficient statistical information and previous systematic research studies, the lack of traditions in the tourism sector, and the fact that the municipality has never worked preoperatively for the tourist development." (Alexova, 2020)

Problems in the smaller tourist destinations offering alternative tourism are different from those offering mass tourism and they reveal irrelevance of global or regional policy in solving the specific local cases. Providing examples in mass tourism problems we rely on Dodds and Butler (2010), who resume that "the overall sustainable policy implementation faces problems from many barriers, including both private and public sector issues." (Dodds and Butler, 2010) Some of these problems, noted by Dodds and Butler (2010), are: "little motivation for individual actors (whether governments, elected officials, or individual operators) to invest or engage in protection or conservation for more sustainable tourism" (Dodds and Butler, 2010); tourism still doesn't have its recognition as an important sector; no stable control over tourism policy and no transparency how much it is in help to sustainable tourism or which the problems to achieving success are; intensive natural resource depletion, which is a threat to ecosystems; difficult to create and more difficult to implement preventive policy; the overall scope of sustainability is far away from reality; importance of local participation in tourist policy.

Dodds & Butler (2010) present a research methodology entailed a multi-method research approach with a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research techniques including: "a literature review, a questionnaire survey and stakeholder interviews, as well as an in-depth examination of selected tourism policies and literature

about sustainable tourism case studies. The research engaged a triangulated approach to identify policy implementation barriers." (Dodds & Butler, 2010)

Discussion

Hundreds of scientists analyze branding and sustainability. I haven't seen the two ideas in one research. At least this research points some questions that form the problems.

Conclusions

The sustainable development problems of tourism are marked to underline this idea should be a "holistic approach to the management of the industry in all its forms and sectors, regardless of scale" (Dogramadjieva, 2000). Sustainable development is a global idea, a new life-style motivation and a policy, applied by governments according to the specific resource of every destination and to the conservation needs of the resource, to economic, social, political and even cultural specifics of the destination. Branding is applied at different levels – national, regional, city destinations. Branding is a big idea for managing the destination product, that can help sustainability, they are two future parts of one coin. Sustainability and branding are facing many problems and know-how questions. May be we are on the way to solve them together or separately ... Managers will answer us.

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