

# DESTINATION MARKETING IN TOURISM

Alexandru NEDELEA

"Ștefan cel Mare" University of Suceava, Romania  
[alnedelea@yahoo.com](mailto:alnedelea@yahoo.com)

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## Abstract:

*Destination marketing is part of a broader concept of territorial marketing. Tourism destination marketing is the management process through which national tourism organizations and tourism enterprises identify their own tourists, real and potential; communicate with them to find out and influence their wishes, needs, motivations and dissatisfactions, at local, regional, national and international level, in order to formulate and adapt tourist products accordingly, in order to obtain optimal tourist satisfaction, fulfilling their thus the objectives. The main purpose of destination marketing is to build a local partnership aimed at gaining a competitive advantage in a global market.*

**Key words:** destination marketing, tourist destination, regional marketing

**JEL classification:** M39, L83

## 1. INTRODUCTION

**Territorial marketing** represents the set of techniques and methods that have as their object the establishment of strategies for capitalizing on the attractiveness elements of territories in a multiple competitive market, so as to influence, in their favor, the behavior of its public through an offer whose value is perceived sustainably superior to that of competitors. (Suditu, 2015)

Territorial marketing aims to bring together public and private actors interested / responsible for economic and tourist development in a territory, by implementing marketing tools (methods, techniques, analysis tools), with the aim of substantially improving the attractiveness of the respective territory. Through professional territorial marketing, the attractiveness of territories can be strengthened and multiplied. (Ward, 1998)

**Regional marketing** activities can be conventionally divided into non-profit marketing (performed by public entities and public organizations) and profit-oriented marketing (performed by private law agencies in order to increase profit by promoting goods and services). (Prodan-Șestacova, 2022)

By properly implementing the regional marketing strategy and carrying out the activities described above, public entities can aim for the following results (Bretcu, 2011):

- development of local/regional infrastructure;
- creating and disseminating the image of a locality/region;
- attracting tourists;
- attracting investors and expanding businesses, which lead to an increase in budget receipts and an increase in the number of jobs;
- increasing sales of local/regional products both internally and externally (export);
- changing the composition of the inhabitants and demographic growth

The regional marketing and branding process includes:

- Regional policy analysis;
- Analysis of specialization and regional identity;
- Elaboration and approval of the Regional Marketing Strategy with the identification of financial sources for the implementation of strategic objectives;
- Organization of the awareness campaign and training of interested factors (producers, service providers, consumers, institutions, etc.);
- Creation, registration and certification of the regional logo/brand;

- Facilitating the association of producers/service providers under the umbrella of the regional logo/brand;
- Creation of the communication and promotion platform;
- Promotion of the region and regional products,
- Control of the implementation of the marketing policy;
- Updating marketing strategies as needed.

Among the tools of regional marketing we mention:

- the regional marketing strategy
- logo/regional brand
- mass media
- promotion platform on the web page and social networks
- events
- regional ambassadors
- banners
- published materials

The advantages of regional marketing and branding

- Promoting the image of the region and the regional brand, so that they are known at the national level (the greater perception of the region offers greater opportunities for development and attractiveness);
- Preservation of regional individuality;
- Development of an authentic brand that attracts the desired attention of the target audience;
- Creation of the communication and promotion platform and network;
- Attracting more people to the region, including retaining young graduates;
- Attracting investors and investments in the region;
- Attracting funds and access to financing through a regional approach;
- Creation of public private partnerships;
- Creating new opportunities for economic expansion;
- Increases influence and power of persuasion;
- Creation of associations with the ability to lobby for some decisions at the national level;
- The appearance of regional ambassadors who convey messages to interested actors.

**Place marketing** (sometimes also called "territorial marketing") represents the activity that aims to satisfy the needs and wishes of the beneficiaries of a locality, region, country, etc. by creating and exchanging products and services directly related to the respective locality, region, country, etc.

Beneficiaries of a place can be both natural persons (for example: residents, visitors, tourists, etc.) and legal persons (for example, companies that open their production units, outlets or establish their headquarters within the respective place). Overall, the beneficiaries of a place can be classified into four main categories: visitors, residents (current and potential, permanent or temporary), companies (investors), Export markets (people or companies from outside the place - other towns, regions, states, etc. - who purchase local products or services, provided by the place in question).

*The site planning group* (Moisescu, 2023) consists of:

- representatives of citizens - usually representatives of civil society (civil society includes all non-governmental organizations and institutions, independent of public authorities, which express the interests and will of citizens);
- representatives of business people - usually representatives of professional, sectoral organizations/associations, which express the interests and will of business people and investors;
- representatives of the local/regional administration.

Within the working group, specialists or experts from various fields (business consultants, researchers, university teachers, etc.) are often co-opted, both from within the local community and from outside it.

The site planning group has the following roles:

- to diagnose the state of the community and, respectively, the problems it faces and their causes;
- to design a perspective solution to the community's problems, depending on the values, resources and opportunities available to the community;
- to develop a long-term action plan through which to implement the designed solution, specifying as precisely as possible the intermediate stages of investment and transformation.

Site audit (S.W.O.T. analysis of the site):

- a) Establishing the economic and demographic characteristics of the place.
- b) Identifying the main competitors of the city and the competitive advantages in relation to each.
- c) Identifying the main trends and regional or international developments that can influence the place.
- d) Analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the place, through the prism of their importance and performance from their point of view (S.W. - "strengths and weaknesses").
- e) Identifying the opportunities, in terms of their attractiveness and the likelihood that the destination could successfully bring them to fruition, and the threats facing the place, in terms of their potential negative impact and their likelihood of appearance (O.T. - "opportunities and threats").
- f) Establishing the main problems of the place. After identifying problems, planners must appoint committees to study each problem, which then present conclusions and recommendations. This information must be publicly debated to allow:
  - community participation in their discussion,
  - their examination by the press,
  - the use of recommendations by strategy planners.



## II. PLACE BRANDING

There are several principles and criteria that should be considered in a place branding program:

- Purpose and potential. Place branding adds value to a city, region or country by aligning the message that place conveys with a strategic vision to increase the reputation of that place.
- True. Many times places suffer from an outdated, unfair, unbalanced image, and the purpose of place branding is to ensure that a true, complete and contemporary image of that place is communicated.
- Aspirations and improvements. The place brand must present a credible vision of the future of that place, which supports an increase in the economic, political, cultural and social well-being of the people living in that place.

- Creativity and innovation. Place branding should discover, release and help channel the talents and skills of the population and foster their creativity to innovate in education, business, government, the environment and the arts.

- Complexity and simplicity. The reality of places is often contradictory, yet the essence of effective branding is simplicity. It must discover the richness and diversity of places and people and communicate it to the world in a simple, honest and motivating way.

- Connectivity. Place branding connects people and institutions in the country and abroad. The precise purpose of the branding strategy helps to unite the government, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, while stimulating the involvement of the population.

- Things take time. Place branding is a long-term action, the implementation of which requires effort, wisdom and patience, and the results will exceed the investment.

**The brand of a city** represents the sum of all perceptions and associations that people have in relation to a certain city.

The most important result of branding a city is the fact that it tries to reflect on what the city was, what it is now and what it should become in the future. It is a process with well-defined principles in which the city's identity, history, soul, values, pride and, of course, the aspirations of the city can be reflected at the same time. A deep process of reflection involves the participation of the whole community, not only politicians, civil servants or consultants, but also local organizations, citizens and the business environment.

### III. THE TOURIST DESTINATION

According to Webster's Dictionary, the term destination is used to mean "the place chosen for the end of a journey", for example a geographical region (a location, a resort, a region, a country, etc.) where the tourist intends to spend time away from home.

A tourist destination is a physical space where a tourist spends at least one night. The tourist destination includes both the tourist product and the range of services associated with it that are offered to the tourist during a day of travel. A tourist destination can be an entire country (Austria for example), a region (Carinthia), a city (Klagenfurt) or a small resort (Ski resort Schleppe Alm - Klagenfurt). I have chosen Austria as an example to show how in a country with developed tourism there is a succession of top tourist destinations of different sizes, geographically linked starting from the national level down to the level of a small local tourist resort. A similar example but on a smaller scale can also be found in our country: Romania - Bucovina - Gura Humorului - Şoimul slope.

A tourist destination can be understood as a space located in a specific geographical area, with tourism flows that are not random, but based on certain spatial and socio-economic reasons. To be considered suitable for receiving tourist flows, these areas must meet certain characteristics, such as:

- Accessibility
- Attractions for tourists
- Adequate tourist infrastructure
- Political stability and security
- Acceptance and favorable reception of tourists by the population of the destination
- A relatively affordable cost of living
- Marketing and promotion strategies, a brand concept.

From the point of view of the number of attraction elements, the places can be classified into one of the following categories (Kotler et al, 2001) :

- *no attractions* (small localities that are characterized by a non-specific structure and that are extremely similar to each other, each having a fixed set of buildings representing components of local authorities, the same type of restaurants, motels or shops, alongside a housing stock without any specific element; these places need to reform their infrastructure and create attractive elements that give them specificity),

- with a *single attraction* (for example, the hometowns of some personalities, localities where a certain historical vestige is located, etc.; these places must create new elements of attraction, in the current conditions managing to keep a visitor within it for an extremely short period of time),
- with *few attractions* (localities that count a combination of several attractions, but insufficient to retain a visitor for a significant stay; these places must also create new elements of attraction),
- with *many attractions* (these places do not need to invent new attractions to increase their charm; their problem is to maintain the infrastructure and services necessary to cope with the number of visitors).

### **Types of tourist destination**

The international specialized literature gives several definitions for types of tourist destination:

- *Cultural destination* is one that focuses especially on cultural heritage, including monuments, museums, cultural events and local traditions. Cultural destinations can provide opportunities for tourists to learn about and experience the culture and history of a region (Richards, 2011).
- *The ecotourism destination* aims to promote the conservation of the environment and the active involvement of tourists in ecological and nature protection activities. These destinations are often located in protected natural areas and promote sustainable and environmentally responsible tourism (Weaver, 2008).
- *The spa destination* specializes in offering relaxation treatments and services based on the use of natural resources, such as thermal water or the sea. Spa destinations are popular for their therapeutic and relaxing benefits (Akgün and İnce, 2014)
- *The gastronomic tourism destination* focuses on the culinary experience and the discovery of the local cuisine. These destinations offer tourists the opportunity to taste traditional dishes, explore local food production and understand a region's gastronomic culture and history (Hall et al, 2015).
- *The rural tourism destination* is located in or near rural areas that promote authentic experiences related to rural life, agriculture, local traditions and nature. These destinations offer tourists the opportunity to connect with the countryside, experience agricultural activities and understand the way of life of rural communities (Hall et al, 2009).
- *Adventure tourism destination* specializes in offering adventure and adrenaline activities and experiences such as mountain climbing, paragliding, diving or cave exploration. These destinations attract tourists who are passionate about extreme activities and exploring spectacular natural environments (Swarbrooke and Horner, 2016).
- *The luxury tourist destination* offers high-quality and exclusivity services, amenities and experiences for high-income tourists. These destinations are distinguished by luxury hotels, fine dining restaurants, brand shops and personalized activities, addressing a premium market segment (Lashle et al, 2007).

## **IV. DESTINATION MARKETING IN TOURISM**

### **4.1. The concept of destination marketing in tourism**

Wahab, Crampon and Rothfield (1976) provided the first definition of tourism destination marketing as: „the management process by which national tourism organizations and tourism enterprises identify their own actual and potential tourists; communicates with them to find out and influence their wishes, needs, motivations and dissatisfactions, at local, regional, national and

international level, in order to formulate and adapt tourist products accordingly, in order to obtain optimal tourist satisfaction, fulfilling their thus the objectives” (Wahab et al, 1976).

The main purpose of destination marketing is "building a local partnership aimed at achieving a competitive advantage in a global market" (in other words "acting locally, competing globally"); the challenge must also be adapted to a global and excessive level in a demanding market (Soteriades, 2012).

Marketing strategies and policies of tourist destinations refer to the marketing mix (product policy, distribution price and promotion policy) as well as to the specific characteristics of the tourism area (personnel policy, partnership policy, etc.). in this context, the marketing of the tourist destination should not only be seen as a tool to attract tourists, in as large a number as possible, to the tourist destination, but it should represent a mechanism that facilitates regional development objectives and makes investments more efficient so that the strategic objectives of the tourist destination to be achieved.

To be successful a destination must offer quality tourism experiences and excellent service value. However, they depend on the capacity of local organizations and companies to work in partnership, to ensure a high quality of the tourist services offered.

The marketing of tourist destinations represents a systematic approach to the theoretical-methodological and organizational-practical foundations for the formation and promotion of destinations on the tourist market, aimed at the formation of analytical and creative thinking, the skills and competencies of using marketing tools in the practical activity of organizing the activity of tourism in a country, region, locality, hospitality sector entity. This discipline serves as a scientific basis for the development of an optimal marketing policy for tourist destinations, a basis for adopting strategic and tactical managerial decisions regarding the formation of a national/regional/local tourism product.

Destination marketing aims at identifying the target groups of tourists, establishing the communication strategy with them to find out their preferences and expectations, the motivation for choosing a travel destination in order to adapt the tourist product to the consumer profile of the tourists.

Currently, states, regions and localities are increasingly calling on promotional tools due to the appearance of new competitors, especially in the field of tourism, but not only.

Destination marketing is part of a broader concept of territorial marketing. He focuses on the issuing markets, to attract tourists to the area.

#### **4.2. The ADN of the Tourist Destination**

Creating a visual identity for the tourist destination starts with defining the ADN of the place. The more time and energy invested in documenting and consulting the public, the greater the chances of success in shaping an impactful brand.

Those who determine a destination's marketing strategy, generically referred to as "destination marketers", need to understand the difference between the types of values a place can offer. This process starts with the clear definition of the intrinsic character of the destination, also called the ADN of the tourist destination. DMOs (Destination Management Organizations) that build their brand on true local identity will have the ability to improve the experience and value they deliver to the operators they partner with.

The process of becoming a destination sought after by visitors starts with setting a local mindset. There must be a community belief in the tourism industry and the fact that it contributes to economic and social development but also to strengthening the community. When this happens, tourism becomes the responsibility of the entire community and marketing and promotion efforts are taken over by everyone.

A destination management organization (DMO) will have to integrate in the premises of the development of a marketing strategy a series of meetings with local actors involved in tourism activity: representatives of tourist information centers, tourism companies, public institutions, tour

guides tourism, university teachers, event organizers and administrators of protected natural areas, marketing agencies, business consultants, etc. Their opinion must be taken into account in establishing the local ADN and in the process of developing a destination brand to identify with.

### 4.3. Development of Marketing Plans to Attract Visitors

Developing a marketing plan to attract visitors involves the following preliminary actions (Kotler et al, 2001):

- segmentation of the tourism market according to:
  - the elements of attraction sought: sun, sea, skiing, sports; natural beauty; culture, history, people; recreation; events; theme parks; unique products (drinks, gastronomy), etc.
  - a location: local, regional, national, international range;
  - consumption behavior: seasonal / permanent, short / long duration of stay, high / low daily expenses, etc.
  - characteristics of the tourist: age, income, family life cycle (single, married with/without children, etc.), lifestyles, ethnicity, religion, etc.
  - the advantages sought by the tourist: price, convenience, quality, services, diversity, facilities (hotels, ports, etc.);
- identification of the main trends of the tourist market; for example, in Western European countries (and not only) these trends include:
  - an increase in the percentage of retirees in the tourism market;
  - an increase in the percentage of couples in which both spouses are working, resulting in shorter and more frequent vacations;
  - business trips combine business and leisure activities;
  - changes in hotel design taste (small number of floors, more green space, traditional architecture, energy efficiency), etc.
- identification of the natural market, attracted by the existing characteristics of a place (identification of the profile of current tourists and the profile of potential tourists);
- identification of the investment market, attracted by new features that could be added to the respective place; this stage highlights whether it can be useful to allocate funds for the improvement and expansion of tourist infrastructure (hotels, restaurants, access/transportation routes, etc.) and for the creation of elements that could attract new categories of tourists (amusement parks, leisure centers /treatment etc.);
- the precise delimitation of the targeted tourist segments (segments of the natural market supplemented, if their size is small, by parts of the investment market).

Tourism markets and attractions are dynamic, changing over time. Thus, the attractiveness of a place can be diminished by: violence, political instability, natural disasters, pollution, overcrowding, etc. In order to maintain and develop its tourist attraction, a place has the following means at its disposal:

- heritage development (preserving the history of the place, buildings, population and customs, human creations that illustrate the historical past, etc.)
- creation and development of theme parks,
- organization of events,
- the establishment of mixed public-private partnerships, in which the authorities release, systematize and evaluate land, invest in infrastructure, subsidize or provide tax incentives for private investments in hotels, conference centers, transit systems and parking spaces,
- the expansion of public services, in particular public safety, traffic control, medical assistance, sanitation and street cleanliness,
- ensuring easy access to points of interest (means of transport and planned routes, printed or multimedia information materials, etc.).

## CONCLUSION

Tourist destinations are a mix of tourism products, experiences and other intangibles promoted by tourist destination organizations to consumers.

The marketing activity carried out at the level of the tourist destination is a strategic mechanism whose main objective is the development of tourism taking into account the protection of the environment and the satisfaction of the needs of tourists and actors involved in the tourist activity.

There are several essential actions to turn an ordinary place into a tourist destination: transforming potential resources into attractions, provision of a range of accommodation units for tourists, providing transportation to, from and within the destination, ensuring the successful integration of tourist-related development into changing activity patterns of the place on a sustainable, long-term basis.

Destination marketing is becoming more and more competitive around the world. The provision of innovative and well-coordinated tourism products are therefore extremely important for a tourist destination. Consumers value their travel experience as a whole and associate their destinations with the full range of local manufacturers and suppliers.

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