

ABSTRACT

Different actors in the tourism industry and tourism researchers use the concept of “a destination” in different senses. It is therefore important to formulate the definition that will be used in this study.

The World Tourism Organisation (WTO) Think Tank in 2002 defined tourism destination as a physical space in which the visitor spends at least one overnight. It includes tourism products such as support services and attractions, and tourism resources within one day’s return travel time. It has physical and administrative boundaries defining its management, images and perceptions defining its market competitiveness. Local destinations incorporate various stakeholders often including a host community, and can nest and network to form larger destinations.

The spectrum of destinations is enormous. At one end are compact destination products such as theme parks, Ayurvedic treatments and spas. These may be destinations for a day trip, short stay or occasionally longer holidays. They are often owned and operated by a single company. At the other end of the spectrum are groups of countries or whole continents. For instance, the European Travel Commission (ETC) Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) that market Europe and the Pacific as tourism destinations. Between these extremes is a great range of types and scales of destinations: large geographical areas, individual countries, regions, cities, towns resorts, local tourism destinations and combinations of the above. However a solitary vacationer may be simultaneously considering and comparing destinations from both the extremes.

The tourism industry is very much a service industry. However, compared to most other service industries it has several differentiating features, deriving from the complexity of destination products and intrinsic characteristics of tourism. There are two particularly significant features of destination management.

Firstly, tourism destinations are typically not created by one single company, but instead by a network of independent companies and other actors, which together produce the services and facilities required to create the tourism destination product. Secondly the tourism product consumed at a particular destination is assembled from the variety of products and services available, but this assembly is conducted largely by the consumer, and not by the producer. A traveler typically knows which accommodation services he/she will be using during his/her visit to a destination, as these are reserved in advance, but rarely they know anything over and above that. They experience the destination only when they actually visit it.

By nature, destination management is a collective phenomenon. No individual corporation or firm has total ownership or control over the destination product, except in a few cases (e.g Disney in Orlando). Instead, the planning, management and implementation of a destination product are highly related, and involve inter-organisational negotiations and co-ordination.

Developing management strategies for destinations is a complex processes, partly because of the characteristics of the destination product. Destinations cannot be marketed as enterprises, due to the dynamics of interests and benefits sought by stakeholders. In addition most destinations are amalgams of independent small and medium sized enterprises, which already have their own marketing strategies. The responsibility of management and in particular, that of marketing management of the destination product has traditionally been transferred from individual companies to a destination Management. All destinations are products. The tourism products that is being sold to the consumer is an experience which consists of activities performed by several independent service firms.

India is yet to be marketed to its full potential as a tourist destination. We have to explore some possible ways of marketing India. The first step in any marketing exercise is to identify the customer and his or her needs and inclinations. Tourism is a leisure occupation for those who can afford it. The target groups that we have to attract are people who have the time and money.

Destination marketing is increasingly becoming extremely competitive worldwide. This Paper explains the destination concept and attempts to synthesize several models for strategic marketing and management of destinations. It provides an overview of several used and illustrates examples from around the world. The paper also explains that marketing of destinations should balance the strategic objectives of all stake holders as well as the sustainability of local resources. Destinations need to differentiate their products and develop partnerships between the public and private sector locally in order to co-ordinate delivery. Taking advantage of new technologies and the Internet also enables destinations to enhance their competitiveness by increasing their visibility, reducing costs and enhancing local co-operation. Destination marketing must lead to the optimization of tourism impacts and the achievement of the strategic objectives for all stakeholders.