BRAND MANAGEMENT IN DMO'S: CASE STUDY ON DMO'S ROLE IN TOURISM MARKETING IN TURKEY

DMO'larda Marka Yönetimi: Türkiye'de Turizm Pazarlamasında DMO'ların Rolü

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Özet

Uluslar arası düzeyde turistik faaliyetlerin artması bu endüstrideki rekabeti çok arttırmıştır. Bu endüstrinin müşterileri de artan rekabet ortamında gidecekleri yer ve özellikleri konusunda daha seçici davranmakta ve kendi beklentilerine uyan yerleri tercih etmektedirler. Turizmde yeni müşteri çekmek ve var olan müşteriyi elde tutmak için uygun yönetim ve pazarlama teknikleri kullanılması gerekmektedir. Rakip firmalar DMO'lar ile bu seçici müşteri katmanına ulaşmaya çalışmaktadırlar. DMO uygulamalarında en etkin pazarlama yollarından biri ise markalaşma ve marka yönetimidir. Bu çalışma genel olarak üç kısımdan oluşmaktadır. Ilk kısımda DMO oluşumları ve uygulamaları genel olarak anlatılacaktır. Ikinci kısım markalaşma ve markalaşmanın DMO'larda nasıl uygulandığına değinecektir. Son kısımda da marka yönetimini İstanbul'un tanıtımında çok başarılı bir şekilde uygulayan ICVB (Istanbul Convention and Visitor Bureau) vaka çalışması olarak ele alınmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: DMO, ICVB (Istanbul Convention and Visitor Bureau), marka yönetimi, markalaşma, tourism marketing

Abstract

The tourism industry is very competitive with increasing international arrivals and receipts annually, and the customers are getting more sophisticated in their choices. To attract them and to change the potential customers to real and repeat one needs constant application of suitable management and marketing techniques. Competing destinations use destination management organizations (DMO's) in order to reach these specialized targeted consumers. Destination management is most effective when accomplished through management and marketing techniques like branding and brand management. As a whole, the study consists of three

parts, where the first part comprises of destination management organizations formation and applications in general, second part about branding and how it is applied by DMOs and the third being about a case study on ICVB (Istanbul Convention and Visitor Bureau) which had done a great job in promoting Istanbul as a well-known brand destination.

Keywords: *Brand management, branding, DMO (destination management organization), Istanbul Convention and Visitor Bureau, tourism marketing*

INTRODUCTION

Today, it seems that destinations around the world are taking tourism development and marketing more seriously than ever, while destination marketing organisations (DMOs) are trying to strengthen the market advantages of destination tourist offers in the hope that they could increase their share from the international flow of visitors and tourism income (Pike, 2004). Also, according to the UNWTO Business Council, the current trend in almost all regions of the world is towards semi-public but autonomous tourism organizations involving a partnership with both private sector and regional and/ or local authorities. DMOs in successful examples, seems to answering all the stated needs.

1. Destination Management Organizations and Their Applications

The real-life practices revolving around destination marketing has recently become immense on an international scale with various responsibilities, activities, targets and managerial tasks pursued by DMOs (Pike, 2004). The countries who are aiming to have a high market share within the global tourism product are using all the strategies applicable in order to stand out from the severe competition by showing and communicating their competitive advantages and positive image. Countries 'compete in the market for tourists, factories, businesses and talented people . . . the need for attracting tourists and factories and companies requires conscious branding strategies for the different target groups (Morgan, Pritchard and Pride, 2004). One way of achieving this is by using the destination management and marketing, which focus on promoting the destinations as being the countries or regions or cities or towns by their brand names established.

Destination Management Organizations (DMO) have all the necessary information about the defined destination and by integrating and coordinating all the related accommodation, transportation, entertainment, F

& B establishments and technical support, not only support and manage to build up the image and brand of the destination but also help to promote and communicate it to the target groups and consumers (Tavmergen and Aksakal, 2004: 76). DMO's have played a leading role in tourism development for many years now which may be briefly described as any organization at any level that manages the promotion and marketing of an identifiable region or destination. DMO's may include National Tourism Offices (NTO's), State Tourism Offices (STO's), Regional Tourism Offices (RTO's) and Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVB's). It is important to stress that the main aim of DMO's is enhancing sustained destination competitiveness. The World Tourism Organization (2004) defines DMOs as the organisations responsible for the management and/or marketing of destinations and generally falling into one of the following categories (Presenza, Sheehan and Ritchie, 2005):

• National Tourism Authorities or Organizations, responsible for management and marketing of tourism at a national level;

• Regional, provincial or state DMOs, responsible for the management and/or marketing of tourism in a geographic region defined for that purpose, sometimes but not always an administrative or local government region such as a county, state or province; and

• Local DMOs, responsible for the management and/or marketing of tourism based on a smaller geographic area or city/town.

Structuring and management applications do effect the effectiveness of DMOs. According to the UNWTO Business Council, the current trend for promoting destinations in almost all regions of the world is through some sort of destination management organizations. Many countries are aiming towards semi-public but autonomous tourism organizations involving a partnership with both private sector and regional and/ or local authorities. Over the last decade the functions and responsibilities of governments as well as the private sector and society has changed a lot (Hawkins, http://www.gwutourism.org/dm.htm). The traditional approach was centralized promotional and developmental efforts in tourism whereas it is changed towards decentralization of tourism management and promotion and towards public-private sector partnership. With such change, the new, flexible and multi-disciplinary approaches to destination management are needed. To answer this need destination management organization are formed or already existing ones changed their way of doing business. The

different relevance of DMO processes concerning resources and processes on different axis are shown below in figure 1.

Fig1. Different relevance of DMO processes.

Resource: Ruggero Sainagh, From contents to processes: Versus a dynamic destination management model (DDMM) 2005 Elsevier

1.1 Blueprint For Building A Successful Tourism Program By DMO's

There are different applications and ways for DMO's to follow up in their programs to successfully develop and promote a tourism region. A 5 point check list stated below covers a general frame, though as an autonomous body, DMO's should be very flexible in their implications (GACB, 2005).

5 Point Check-List

1.   Conduct a visitor-demand study

- Identify the travelers of your region, learn about them:

  o   What are their demographics? (age, family type)

  o   Visitor segments, needs and interests…

  o   seniors, families, corporate business people

  o   outdoor recreation, sightseeing, shopping, entertainment, business meetings

- determine:

  o   purpose of their trip

  o   attitude about places traveled to and through

  o   length of stay

  o   size of travel party

  o   reasons they would stay longer (new attractions, facilities, events, services)

- Ask questions/conduct surveys…talk to your visitors!

2.   Inventory existing resources

- Identify the primary reason people visit your area like education, business, leisure etc.

- Identify major generators of visitors

- List "everything" to see and do

3.   Position your city's attractiveness among competing cities and towns

- Identify your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis)

- Figure out applicable strategies for each case from SWOT analysis like strength and opportunities / strengths and threats/ weaknesses and opportunities / weaknesses and threats . Apply them

- Are you a sustainable or eco-friendly community. If not become one.

- Is signage of the region adequate, legible? If not improve.

- Remember the 'IMAGE' of your community is critical in tourism promotion.

4.   Develop and implement a destination marketing plan

- Identify different visitor segments you want to target and determine benefits, appeals and incentives for each

- Match your resources to the needs of each segment

- Make it in writing

- Assign tourism-development and promotion

- responsibilities and budget

- Determine lodging tax formula and proper use of funds

- Hire an expert to conduct a market study on the economic feasibility of

5.   Keep that in mind that to promote your destination / city / region as one that delivers a "feel-good" experience

- Solicit continual local and regional support of your tourism-promotion efforts.

- Keep that in mind that the people "buy" travel destinations for the same reasons they "buy" other products…they want to experience pleasure, satisfaction and reward

The important competitive factors for destinations to communicate to their target market may be stated as; built and cultural attractions which are the motivators for the visit, amenities which include basic infrastructure

such as utilities and roads and direct services and accommodation, F & B and shopping facilities, the image, the attributes attractive to target group, unique qualifications, time and age characteristic with heritage, Protecting the basic characteristics, service quality and perceived price/quality ratio (Usta, 2008:224-225).

DMO's not only communicate the destinations' attractions, amenities, image and quality but also engage into research, represent their destination in markets, organize workshops, trade shows and familiarization trips, participate in joint marketing schemes and co-branding projects, support new or small business, involve in consumer assistance and protection programs and provide general tourism education for locals (Kotler, Bower and Makens, 1999, 668-669).

DMO's proper management could be checked by finding answers to related questions stated below thus which could be grouped under implementing a strong foundation for DMOs (GACB, 2005)..

- How is it funded?

- Who does it report to?

- Does it have a job description?

- What is the organization's mission? Vision? Applicable strategies?

- What are their primary markets?

- What is in a name?

- Establishing short and long term goals

- Constant and effective communication between related bodies

It is also stated that in order to apply effective destination management, the organizations should (Carter and Fabricius, 2007):

- Delivery of services on the ground to ensure that it meets or even exceeds the visitor expectations

- Contribute to the long term development of the local community in the economic and social sense ,like providing employment and developing infrastructure.

- Ensure a responsible and sustainable balance in the destination between economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts

- Ensure a suitable physical, social and economic environment in which to develop tourism

- Create an effective destination branding by co-branding and cooperating the organized efforts between the related establishments

Any destination's tourism marketability may be evaluated according to their attraction for tourists and their tourism infrastructure. Environments that have cultural sites, natural beauties, nice climate, museums, sustainability, high service quality, interesting local arts and heritage, unique geography and cultural history are all potentially rewarded destinations for tourists. With the new trend in destination management and the changing role of destination management organizations, the promotional and developing efforts for destination are maximized with additional benefits of gained synergy. The development and marketing of tourism destinations has attracted attention on the collaboration and community approach in which convention and visitors bureaus (CVBs) are playing important roles in coordinating marketing activities and developing desired image of the destination in the marketplace (Wang, 2008).

2. Branding by DMOs

In today's highly competitive market, many destinations - from individual resorts to countries - are adopting branding techniques similar to those used by 'Coca Cola', 'Nike' and 'Sony' in an effort to differentiate their identities and to emphasize the uniqueness of their product (Morgan, Pritchard and Pride, 2004). DMOs are very professional in this sense since they adopt and apply a highly targeted, consumer research-based, multi-agency 'mood branding' initiative leads to success.

Understanding that marketing though covering means more than "selling" or "advertising", destination promotion is normally the DMOs' major activity and budget item. To this end, after developing a marketing plan, DMOs can use different promotion tools such as personal selling, direct marketing, advertising, sales promotion, publicity and public relations,

and image management. Even though the selling of the tourism products and services of a destination may be primarily done by the individual firms offering them and the travel trade for reasons of efficiency and effectiveness, the DMO can still be viewed as "managing" the selling of a destination as a whole in the broader sense. While managing sales, there are lots of activites covering; attending trade shows, exhibitions and events, familiarization tours for meeting and incentive planners and travel writers, telephone call centers and tourist information kiosks (Presenza, Sheehan and Ritchie, 2005).

Although the concept of branding has been applied extensively to products and services, tourism destination branding is a relatively recent phenomenon. In particular, destination branding remains narrowly defined to many practitioners in destination management organizations (DMOs) and is not well represented in the tourism literature (Blain, Levy and Ritchie, 2005). "According to legend, the practice of branding products originated when an ancient ruler decided that products should bear some sort of symbol so that, if something should go wrong, buyers and authorities would know who was to blame. Forced to identify their products with themselves, the story goes, producers began to take greater pride in their products and to make them better than those of their competitors, thus reversing the negative intent of the order of their king"(Zikmund & D'Amico1996:289).

Today though branding serves very many other purposes like creating identity, protection form competition, enhancing image, facilitates market segmentation, over time, building brand equity and creating and keeping brand loyal customers, to repeat business (Powers, 1997:222). DMOs may use brands' power for a competitive advantage in a crowded marketplace. That power can be measured by awareness, consistency and perceived quality (Walsh, 2002).

The tourism industry is a very competitive industry which is made of very specialized consumers who look for the image and prestige in the products and services that they buy. Due to this nature of tourism marketing branding gains a special importance to this group.

Effective branding is created by constantly putting the associations through communication vehicles (Higley, 2001). In today's crowded marketplace, getting your brand known which is called brand awareness, is not an easy job. What may be even more difficult it to effectively convey what the brand stands for - brand identity (Nykiel, 1989:97). In this regard, many businesses make the mistake of putting popularity and quantity before

quality. Identification of an operations' best customers is based on the "RFM principle" that is recency, frequency and munificence. The firms best customers are those who purchased recently, purchase frequently and deliver the greatest monetary earnings to the firm (Powers, 1997:109).

The public perception of a destination is often embodied by the way in which the 'brand' is presented. While consumers are more brand aware than ever before, research suggests there may even be a perceived stigma associated with tourism sector. Integrating a branded concept into a tourism is a way to minimize the stigma, bringing guests back to the tourism region. Tourism has a huge emotional appeal in buying, a strong interest, attractiveness, safety and sometimes luxury factor in it, so customers like the availability and consistency that accompanies a known brand name product.

In order to gain the advantages of branding, DMO's may use internet and their databases in the following ways (Kotler & Armstrong, 2001, 626-627):

•   Deciding which customers should receive a particular offer: Companies identify the profile of an ideal customer for an offer. Then they search their databases for individuals most closely resembling the ideal type.

•   Deepening customer loyalty: Companies may build customers' interests and enthusiasm by remembering their preferences, special information like birthdays and action on it. Data base management is a great help doing this

•   Reactivating customer purchases: The database can help a tourism / tourism company make attractive offers of product replacements, upgrades or complementary products just when customers might be ready to act. A rich customer database allows a company to build profitable new businesses by locating good prospects, anticipating customer needs, cross-selling products and services, and rewarding loyal customers.

•   Longer duration: Audiences in traditional media, like television and radio, encounter a brand's messages in 30-second increments. However, online audiences encounter the brand for a much longer duration—often 10 minutes or more. Therefore, the depth and appropriateness of a brand's messaging and content becomes more critical online (McCasland, 2003).

•   Targeted promotions (Oliva, 2001): As with any database used for marketing purposes, Web-based CRM systems can also be a tool for targeted promotions, allowing tourism companies and marinas to cater to their customers' needs by reviewing their customer history.

3. ICVB's Contribution To Tourism Development in İstanbul

A vibrant business tourism sub-sector can contribute significantly to any city's economic growth. In fact, for some cities in the world, up to 40 percent of their tourism business is generated by the convention and exhibition market (Law, 1993). In addition, congress tourism is developing as a major urban activity in a number of cities around the world and often becomes the impetus for tourism development. The attractiveness of a destination is clearly among the most important factors for its selection for business tourism activities, which in turn leads to significant economic benefits for the chosen city. The amount of money spent by each tourist, the number of accompanying persons or party-size, and their length of stay (total room-nights generated) depend heavily on destination characteristics and attractiveness (Petersen, 2004).   Although, attractiveness is highly subjective, it is fair to conclude that those destinations that offer a variety of attractions and any needed special services, that are safe and secure, that possess unique attributes, and that offer value will by consensus be deemed attractive.

İstanbul is an important tourist destination in Turkey and is raising its profile as an international travel destination. It is a city with a wealth of natural, historical, cultural, religious, sports, and commercial attractions that appeal to a wide gamut of travellers. Over the past several decades, tourism development has increased İstanbul's supply of tourism services and facilities, propelling the city to a new level of international competition. In fact, İstanbul ranked 7th place after New York City in a list published by *Travel and Leisure* (2005), of the top 10 travel destinations in the world and 3rd place among the top 10 European destinations (*Turkish Weekly*, 2005). Two of İstanbul's five-star hotels were also placed in this list: the İstanbul Four Seasons Hotel was ranked 2nd place and the İstanbul Çırağan-Kempinski hotel was ranked 7th best hotel in Europe's best hotels list (*Dünya Gazetesi*, 2005).

Efforts to develop İstanbul as an important tourism destination started when the city hosted the 1996 World Habitat Convention. Since then, a great deal of work has been done by the private sector, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MCT), and the İstanbul Convention and Visitors Bureau (ICVB), which spearheads efforts to bring international meetings to

İstanbul. Particularly because long lead times and investment plans are required for organizing conventions, the ICVB is involved in numerous activities to facilitate these plans, including:

- assisting meeting planners in preparing competitive and highly attractive bids, providing a wide range of information and material on İstanbul and Turkey;
- publishing promotional material (e.g., İstanbul monthly bulletin and fact sheet, quarterly ICVB news, İstanbul meeting planners guide);
- coordinating site visits for representatives of decision-making bodies, acting as a liaison between local contacts and meeting planners;
- providing literature, brochures, CDs, DVDs, films, and other audio-visual materials on tourism and conventions in İstanbul and Turkey;
- helping planners and organizers to select suitable convention facilities, accommodations, and other convention suppliers from among its members; and
- helping to promote İstanbul and Turkey to attract to increase volume of participants.

Although the ICVB is making important headway toward achieving this goal, there remains a need for a strategic development plan specifically for business tourism in Turkey.

3.1. Istanbul's Business Tourism Capacity

While İstanbul is Turkey's largest and most high-profile city and its leading business center, it has the second best capacity (after Antalya) for business and specifically; meetings and conventions (TÜRSAB, 2004). Demand for İstanbul as a convention and incentive destination is rapidly increasing (Erol, 2003). İstanbul hosted 37 international meetings in 2004 and 55 in 2006, in which year, İstanbul ranked 8th in convention delegates statistics in the world with 44,547 attendees (Öncü, 2007). In İstanbul, more than half (54%) of total capacity for meetings and conventions is supplied by five-star hotels and 18 percent by four-star hotels (Yücel, 2002). During convention and festival seasons, İstanbul hotels reach 100 percent occupancy. The city's existing meeting infrastructure fulfills criteria for quality standards required for convention centers and hotel meeting facilities.

While İstanbul has experienced many improvements to infrastructure and superstructure as well as new investments and development in recent years, the city urgently needs congress hotels that can host 4,000 to 5,000

attendees. To complement its new congress hotels and centers, and two convention centers that are preparing to open in 2007, İstanbul needs greater technical and financial assistance for promotion and a sound planning system for MICE tourism (TÜRSAB, 2004).

During this capacity development stage, stakeholders in business tourism in Turkey in general and İstanbul in particular need to consider customer needs, which includes both organizers of business tourism activity as well as the travelers themselves. Key factors in decisions involving destination selection for business tourism organizers include: location, cost, quality and availability of venues and accommodations, quality of service, weather, cost and duration of travel to destination, international air routes, safety and security, range of options for leisure and recreation activities, shopping facilities (Kennedy, 2007). Istanbul meets most of the criteria (e.g., geographic location between Europe and Asia, mild climate, wide spectrum of available activities and attractions, reputation for high quality service, affordability and value) which can be considered highly promising for the development and growth of business tourism. İstanbul is also an attractive business destination from a safety standpoint, as it was found to be one of the safest major cities in the world by the European Union's 2006 Crime and Safety Survey, with a crime rate of only 18 percent, (ICVB, 2006) compared with 32 percent in London, 27 percent in Amsterdam, 26 percent in Belfast and Dublin, 24 percent in Copenhagen, 23 percent in New York and Stockholm, 20 percent in Brussels, and 19 percent in Rome (NTV, 2007)

Conclusion

Nowadays, global tourism seems very competitive and in order to stand out from the crowd many destinations are getting help from destination management organizations (DMOs). They are the organizations which not only promote and market the region in the tourism market but also manage all the marketing and related functions. Today DMOs are trying to strengthen the market advantages of destination tourist offers in the hope that they could increase their share from the international flow of visitors and tourism income. Today in order to communicate their destination's competitive advantage to the target groups, destination management organizations role has been changed from being traditionally centralized, passive towards being more flexible and towards coordination where the branding strategies gain special attention for attracting and bringing repeat customers to the destinations.

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