Chapter 4

Sustainable Tourism Marketing Strategy: Competitive Advantage of Destination

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ABSTRACT

The chapter describes how sustainable tourism marketing strategy can bring competitive advantage to a destination. It defines tourism destinations; characterizes the principles of sustainable tourism development and its role in competitiveness of the destination. The chapter also shows a destination’s best practice in the implementation of sustainable tourism marketing strategy. The destination was subject to research using onsite and internet surveys, semi-structured and informal interview and the results were subjected to evaluation using the VRIO model.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism as has a positive impact on economic growth and employment in destinations, and it is an important aspect in the life of people around the world. Tourism helps to raise local awareness of the financial value of natural and cultural sites. It strengthens the preservation and transmissions of cultural and historical traditions which can contribute to the protection of local heritage, maintains and rediscovers native cultures, stimulates a feeling of pride on the culture and crafts, and strengthens local community by creating job opportunities.

In order to be successfully promoted in the targeted markets, a destination must be favorably differentiated from its competitors. To ensure destination’s competitiveness tourism should be fully integrated into local economic development, should be based on the diversity of opportunities offered by the local economy and at the same time on sustainable development. Economic, environmental and social sustainability are key factors for the competitiveness of destinations and the welfare of their residents. In order to decrease or better to avoid negative impacts of tourism, sustainable tourism strategies should be implemented.

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Sustainable Tourism Marketing Strategy

The environmental consciousness of visitors continually increases in the last couple of years what results in growing demand for sustainable destinations. Visitors are increasingly deciding on destinations and activities carried out during their vacations about how healthy and sustainable are these destinations and activities perceived.

The main objective of this chapter is to show that destination competitiveness can be achieved by the adoption of policies and strategies aligned with sustainable development.

The presented best practice is based on local produced or available resources. It is realized with the idea of sustainable existence of a business concept which combines educational and production areas, recreational and historic zones e.g. thematic gardens, historic village, periodic seasonal events, and specialized boutique shops and is indeed local owned and operated, and so that less vulnerable to leakage.

The applied marketing strategy focuses not only on attracting visitors to the destination that would not be otherwise so frequently visited, but it also has a significant impact on the local community. Newly created job opportunities provide economic prosperity and could further develop and improve the life standards and prosperity of the destination.

BACKGROUND

Tourism destination, sustainability, competitiveness, marketing strategy, and changes in visitor’s behavior related to this chapter are characterized as follows.

Tourism Destination

Tourism is bounded to a specific territory, in which it develops and thus supports the stability of the local economy. The development of tourism can contribute to the economic wealth of territories that dispose of potential for tourism.

Destinations offer an integrated experience to a visitor and traditionally, are defined as territories, geographical areas, such as a country, an island or town (Davidson & Maitland, 2000), with political and legislative framework for tourism marketing and planning. Destinations are places towards which people travel and where they choose to stay for a certain period (Leiper, 1995) and can be recognized as a perceptual concept, interpreted subjectively by visitors, where a combination of all products, services and experiences are provided locally (Buhalis, 2000). Destinations are also considered as geographical region understood by visitors as a unique entity where facilities and services are designed to meet the needs of the visitors (Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert, Shepherd & Wanhill, 1998).

Destinations are complex and dynamic systems consisting of subsystems that have a direct or indirect impact on tourism development. Development of tourism in the destination is typically spontaneous, unless specifically influenced by destination management organizations. It can be analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively using statistical data, indicators and models that contribute to the detection of patterns as well as a prediction of future development of tourism.

Sustainability

Development of tourism has economic, socio-cultural and environmental impact on destinations and should ideally be a complement to other activities that secure the livelihood of destinations’ residents