Chapter 11
Enhancing Coopetition Among Small Tourism Destinations by Creativity

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ABSTRACT

This chapter addresses on coopetition among tourism destinations with a focus on small ones and investigates on existing experiences, elaborating on the benefits of combinations with creative strategies and actions. Small destinations can achieve competitive advantages and access to strategic resources by adopting a cooperative behavior that, as observed, has no borders both geographical and of contents. Creativity can enhance coopetitive strategies and, consequently, gives positive impacts and advantages to tourism destinations. This area of research can be enriched with more contributes to assess costs and benefits in order to allow an evaluation of results and the designing of effective strategies. When adopting a coopetition strategy among destinations, the author foresees positive impacts and the achievement of economies and synergies that allow the increasing of the competitive advantage.

INTRODUCTION

It is widely agreed by the scientific community that the geographical context of a tourism destination is defined by the tourist and that the size of the borders vary according to the distance from his or her place of origin. Notwithstanding, in continually increasing places, public and private operators have established or are establishing DMOs-Destination Management Organizations in order to organize relations and resources under a strategic framework.

In the present competitive scenario, small tourism destinations are facing several challenges from the cultural, from the organizational and from the marketing side of things. As well, the implementation of stand-alone strategies, led by public authorities mainly in the absence of a public-private-partnership, might be self-defeating and in fact negative impacts may occur in the brand reputation of the area and from the use of public funding.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-2016-0.ch011
While competing, tourism destinations are addressing fields of cooperation tending to combine them with creative strategies and activities. This is observed in experiences of coopetition among destinations from all over the globe: they are promoted by diverse organizations, developed with different motivations and having peculiar creative bonds. The Treviso area (Italy) is one of these niches and in this chapter the World Championship of Tiramisu will be described as one of the best practice.

Creativity can potentially support destinations to enhance coopetition among them and achieve a competitive advantage by benefiting from economies and synergies. This aspect could be more relevant for the small destinations whose lack of resources often limits their own competitiveness. More studies should be carried out measuring this phenomenon, its costs and results in order to allow destinations, mainly the small ones, to design and assess an effective and consistent coopetition strategy among destinations strategy.

**BACKGROUND**

A large literature is present regarding coopetition in the field of co-located tourist firms; following, the author will discuss its distinct aspects and will then elaborate on coopetition among destinations and on the concept of creativity adopted for the objectives of this chapter.

**Coopetition Within Destinations**

In academic literature, coopetition is usually a term that is referred to businesses that by adopting the natural option to compete, in some case, they choose to cooperate at certain levels in order to get benefits or advantages (Gnyawali & Madhavan, 2001; Moore, 1993). Coopetition is defined as “simultaneous competition and cooperation among actors in some activities” (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000, p. 412).

Within tourism destinations, competition is balanced with cooperation (Palmer & Bejou, 1995). Tourism destinations typically contain a number of small enterprises that compete with one another, but these same firms also coopete to attract visitors and compete with other destinations (Dayamanti, Scott, & Ruhahen, 2013). In this case, the domain of the research is focused on co-located firms that while competing, simultaneously cooperate in some areas, such as strategic planning, in order to compete at a level of destination. The academic literature in tourism mainly focuses the efforts on the coopetition within the tourism destinations and investigates on this topic by describing four themes, as listed (Buhalis & Cooper, 1998; Gnyawali & Madhavan, 2006; Mariani, 2007; Kylanen & Mariani, 2012).

1. Process of developing coopetition,
2. Intensity of coopetition,
3. Dynamic behaviour of coopetition, and
4. Level of relationships.

Scholars in strategic management, based on empirical researches, recognize two distinct processes leading to or developing coopetition; one is rationally planned and the other is emergent (Dayamanti, Scott, & Ruhahen, 2013).