Chapter 10

Nautical Stations: Catalysts for Sustainable Tourism Development – The Case of the Sines Nautical Station

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ABSTRACT

The Nautical Station concept is achieved through the establishment and/or assertion (depending on the extent of maturity) of a tourist destination arranged from maritime products that value, in a unified way, all the resources of a territory (foundation, environment, and sociocultural roots) and all the touristic offer already existing in this regional area. It combines a set of nautical activities that forms the central element of product management, based on a local/regional partnership, according to a set of quality criteria to be defined by the certifying entity, which in the Portuguese case is Forum Oceano – Association of Maritime Economy. This chapter analyzes the development of the certification process of the Portuguese Nautical Stations, the theoretical model that manages it, and its application to reality based on the study case constructed by the Nautical Station of Sines, one of the first 15 certified in Portugal.

INTRODUCTION

Touristic territorial competitiveness has been continuously increasing due to the ability of its agents, which shown competent to build networks and establish partnerships that translate into an aggregation of skills and resources, shaping collaborative projects based on a system of values where cooperation, coopetition and negotiation are prominent in favor of the sustainable development of the territory.

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Numerous case studies corroborate the impact these more or less formal structures have on the creation and innovation of the offer and quality of the touristic experience. In defining and planning strategies, product creation or promotion, collaborative work between public and private institutions, is imperative in overcoming obstacles, achieving goals and in affirming touristic destinations facing the increasingly global competition.

Nautical Stations are by nature networks or partnerships that aim to create and/or assert (according to the degree of maturity) a touristic destination consisting on maritime products that add value to all the resources present in the territory (infrastructural, environmental and sociocultural) assimilating and benefitting the existing touristic offer in a specific geographical area. These Nautical Stations strengthen a set of nautical activities that establish the essential feature of product management based on a local/regional partnership, according to a set of quality criteria to be determined by the certification entity, which, in the Portuguese case is the Forum Oceano - Association of Maritime Economy.

Portugal has been recognized as a country where the usefulness and application of this concept will greatly contribute to influence sustainable tourism in not only sea areas, but also in inland waters, due to its geographical and climatic characteristics, its connection to the sea and the standard that Coastal and Maritime Tourism has been acquiring in its tourism development. This conviction acted as a key element on the development of an entire process that culminated in the certification, at the end of 2018, of the first fifteen Nautical Stations in Portugal.

The aim of this work is to analyze the development of the Nautical Stations’ certification process in Portugal, the theoretical model upon which it is build and its application to reality, based on the case study set up by the Sines Nautical Station of Sines (SNS), one of the first fifteen already certified in Portugal. The SNS aims at innovation and entrepreneurship, training and promotion of sustainable competitiveness as well as promoting the creation of new companies associated to the Nautical Tourism, providing value to business opportunities affiliated and articulating nautical products to other touristic offers available on the territory, in a context of sustainability.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

This work was made by using the case study’s investigation methodology. This methodology is based on empirical research with mainly qualitative techniques based on real circumstances, where multiple sources of evidence are used in a particularly inductive form and partly deductive scientific approach (Eisenhardt 1989). Yin (1989:23) establishes the case study as an “empirical research that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident; and where multiple sources of evidence are used.” According to Larrinaga (2017), this methodology has the same scientific legitimacy as the quantitative methods since the necessary procedures are fulfilled. This author also considers that this method of investigation is especially useful when one intends to understand a real case phenomenon, observing all relevant variables, searching and evaluating complex situations or phenomena.

Given the descriptive nature of the study and the goals that guide the present work, it was selected the use of desk research (or secondary data search), a technique applied mainly in investigations in the Marketing area, but hypothesized to other areas of management, human and social sciences. It consists of exploratory research through the collection and use of available information (Crouch and Housden, 2011). In this context, to support the case study, a bibliographical research was implemented through the
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