Chapter 16

The Sea by Tradition: From the Slogan to the Brand – Exploring a Successful Case of Territorial Strategy Anchored in the Sea and Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is considered an important tool for the economic growth of territories. However, in an increasingly competitive market, for destinations to stand out from others, it is crucial to build their image considering attributes that are important not only for tourists but above all, for local communities and stakeholders. Additionally, for territories to preserve their functional and symbolic dimensions, it is important to invest in clustering and networking strategies that may strengthen them at local and global levels. In that sense, this chapter presents the trajectory of Ílhavo, a municipality in central Portugal, that reformulated its territorial strategy by defining the sea as the core element that links its past, present, and future. Furthermore, the chapter describes the implementation of the aforementioned strategy, from 1998-2018, reflecting on their implications in terms of brand image and tourism development.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is considered an important tool for the economic growth of territories, creating employment, increasing exports, promoting urban regeneration and even contributing to poverty reduction (Butler, 2009). The recent success and strong growth of this industry has shown to be closely related to the phenomenon of globalization and the power tourism holds by involving a wide range of actors. However, managing destinations and the tourist chain implies dealing with a set of public and private, collective
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and individual agents, as for instance hotels, tourist attractions, transport and other service providers, government agencies, tourist offices, as well as representatives of the local communities (Zemla, 2016).

Considering the current dynamic of markets, the established networks in a destination play a crucial role to reinvent its culture and strategies in order to survive and create a sustainable competitive advantage (Gajdošík, Gajdošíková, Maráková, & Borseková, 2017). For that purpose, investing on innovation as a way of differentiating itself from the rest (Alonso-Almeida, Rocafort, & Borrajo, 2016), is a prerequisite for success, especially in collaborative marketing environments, where partners can choose between various forms of relationships, from the most informal to the most inclusive ones (Wang & Krakover, 2007).

That is to say that in a global, open and competitive world, the regions that survive are probably going to be those that invest in local networks, implementing clustering and networking strategies (Ramos & Fernandes, 2014). Moreover, some authors refer that the success of tourism depends very much on each region attributes and the use of their authenticity, avoiding “imports” as much as possible in order to distinguish themselves from competitors (Costa, 2006).

Within this context, it is increasingly important for territories to include their functional and symbolic dimensions in the process of building their own image. Moreover, strategic planning, as well as marketing and local branding, should be based on heritage identities and economical, technological, relational, social and symbolic attributes of the cities or regions (Gaio & Gouveia, 2007).

Ilhavo, which is located in the Portuguese Central coast, is presented in this chapter as a case worth being studied, due to the implementation of a new territorial development strategy that has started in 1998. This strategy, led by the local Municipality governance, was underpinned in the creation and further development of a territorial brand and a properly structured plan, which has involved dozens of partners and has covered several goals with a significant impact on tourism development in Ilhavo. It reinforces Ilhavo’s historical and cultural aspects related to the sea as a distinctive and differentiating key element to a new brand’s construction.

Furthermore, this chapter approaches and describes how the aforementioned strategy has been implemented in Ilhavo within the past 20 years and what the implications for this municipality have been in terms of brand image and tourism development. It considers the importance of management and organization, besides the relevance of tourism to the development of territories. Moreover, it takes into account not only the focus on what is authentic, unique and differentiating, but also the benefits of a territorial brand for destinations.

TERRITORIES AND MARKETING

The concept of Territorial Marketing was introduced in 1993 by Kotler, Haider and Rein (Aragonez & Caetano Alves, 2012), who presented a new approach called Strategic Marketing of Places comparing cities to products for the first time in literature. With the evolution of this concept, City Marketing gained notoriety in the 1980’s, motivated by the broadening of its scope (Marco Antonio de Moares Ocke & Ikeda, 2014).

It emerged, then, as a necessity marked by 1. a cycle of reforms promoted by Governments, 2. less economic interventionism, 3. the emergence of new information and communication technologies and, 4. above all, globalization, characterized by an increasingly competitive world market (Salvado Alves, 2008). Altogether, those elements guaranteed great protagonism to territories, which has led them to
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