Brand Management of Urban Tourist Destination Based on Dimensions of Tourist Attractiveness

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Abstract: At the very core of an urban tourist destination is a multidimensional construct of tourist attractiveness, which should be appealing to potential tourists and influence their decision to visit. Given the challenges of increasing global competition and the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, urban destinations must adequately identify the key dimensions of their attractiveness and ensure their visibility and differentiation. The purpose of this paper is to identify the role that different dimensions of tourist attractiveness have in managing the brand of an urban tourist destination, with a special focus on forming the expectations, attitudes and intentions of potential tourists. The methodology used in the paper includes: theoretical conceptualization of urban tourist destination, definition of dimensions of tourist attractiveness and determining the role that dimensions of tourist attractiveness have in managing the brand of urban tourist destinations. One of the conclusions of the research presented in the paper is that the dimensions of tourist attractiveness, both physical and social, play a key role in the strategic processes of brand management of an urban tourist destination.

1. INTRODUCTION

The global tourism market of today is characterized by strong competition, resulting in the need to manage the brand of urban tourist destinations as a strategic activity that has a strong potential to achieve the emotional connection between tourists and destinations that would consequently influence the decision to visit. There is a large number of different and spatially concentrated dimensions of tourist attractiveness in the cities, such as: architecture, cultural heritage, historical city centers, monuments, museums, galleries, religious buildings, accommodation, restaurants, night clubs, casinos, festivals and events, friendly and hospitable local population, interesting ambience and atmosphere, security, as well as many others. It is these dimensions of tourist attractions that have the “power” to attract tourists from all over the world, offering them numerous opportunities to gain different experiences and consequently meet their needs embodied in travel motives.

The subject of the research presented in this paper are: urban tourist destinations and their characteristics; brand management of urban tourist destinations with special emphasis on models for measuring the brand of the city and urban tourist destinations; dimensions of tourist attractiveness of importance for the strategic brand management process of an urban tourist destination. The methodology used in the paper is based on secondary qualitative research. The structure of the paper includes several sections, each of which is dedicated to a specific topic that the research covers. After the introduction, the first part of the research presents the conceptualization of urban tourist destination; the second part examines the role and importance of brand management for urban tourist destinations; while the third part presents the most important...
models for measuring city brand and urban tourist destination. The fourth part analyzes the role of the dimensions of tourist attractiveness in the brand management of an urban tourist destination. The last part of the paper is dedicated to recommendations for future research and concluding remarks.

2. CONCEPT OF URBAN TOURIST DESTINATION

Urban tourist destinations, which include cities as a spatial area with a high concentration of dimensions of tourist attractions and where, consequently, many tourist activities take place, are becoming one of the most important forms of tourist destinations, both in terms of the number of tourists visiting them and their consumption at the destination. Also, urban tourist destinations are becoming more and more the primary motive for travel and not a casual visit on a trip to “summer” and “winter” destinations or a day trip during their stay. A typical form of urban tourism is the city break, which is defined as “a short tourist trip to one city, without an overnight stay in another destination” (Lebrun, 2014: 195) which is based on the search for experiences regarding the dimensions of tourist attractiveness of an urban tourist destination.

Taking into account different criteria, urban tourist destinations can differ on the one hand, while on the other hand they can have numerous common characteristics, based on which Smith et al. (2010) present a typology of urban tourism destinations: global or world cities (cities that, thanks to the impact of globalization on the economy, culture and politics, dominate the international environment, such as London or New York); national capitals (capitals of states); cultural capitals (cities with rich cultural heritage and a large selection of museums, galleries, operas, concert halls); cities with monumental heritage (cities with cultural heritage that have a very visited historical core, such as Venice); art cities (cities with a high concentration of museums, galleries and other art facilities, such as Florence or Madrid); industrial cities (individual industrial cities or industrial zones of cities are transformed into tourist attractions, which is, among other things, a characteristic of Glasgow and Bilbao); creative cities (cities that encourage the creative industry, such as Barcelona); sports cities (cities that host mega sporting events, such as the Olympic Games, the World Cup and similar sport events); festival cities (cities characterized by cultural events and festivals, like one of the most famous in Rio de Janeiro) and futuristic cities (known for the continuous development of high-tech technologies, but also innovative architecture and ultramodern attractions, such as Dubai or Tokyo).

Considering the mentioned typology, it can be noticed that urban tourist destinations are complex concepts, primarily in terms of content and dimensions of tourist attractions that do not allow their classification into only one thematic category, but the most common case is that based on the observed criteria these destinations can fit in several different categories.

3. BRAND MANAGEMENT OF URBAN TOURIST DESTINATION

Potential tourists would decide to visit a certain urban tourist destination if they perceive it as attractive. Vengesayi and Mavondo (2004) state that this attractiveness is determined by the feelings and beliefs that the destination is capable of giving them the satisfaction they expect from it. The basis of the attractiveness of an urban tourist destination are the physical and social dimensions of tourist attractiveness, which are the reason why tourists decide to visit it. On the other hand, the existence of these dimensions of attractiveness, by itself, is not enough for tourists to visit an urban tourist destination, but it is necessary to have information about them,
based on which they acquire knowledge, create perceptions and develop emotions about them and the destination itself. This is the basic role of brand management. Also, urban tourist destinations with a good brand reduce the perception of risk by tourists of making the wrong decision when choosing a destination.

It is evident that the brand creates expectations from the urban tourist destination, which implies that the quality of the brand directly affects the decision of tourists on which destination to visit. In this sense, well-created messages about the urban tourist destination that are relevant to potential tourists in terms of their needs and motivations arising from them are the starting point in the process of creating the desired brand of the destination. However, for the competitiveness of the destination, it is necessary to develop a special emotional connection, which is why the brand communication must be based on a unique identity and authenticity, both the destination itself and its dimensions of tourist attractiveness.

Tourists today have a great choice when it comes to destinations that can meet their needs, which is why Pike (2005) believes that it is increasingly difficult to distinguish them. This results in them becoming easily replaceable. It is the branding process that should contribute to their identification (Vengesayi, 2003), differentiation (Kladou et al., 2017), and consequently competitiveness and taking the desired position in the tourism market. Very similarly, Blain et al. (2005) believe that the destination brand ensures its recognition, conveys the promise of an unforgettable travel experience associated with the destination and ultimately strengthens memories of pleasant experiences from the destination.

Considering the importance of this strategic process, Dickinger and Lalićić (2016) believe that the branding campaign of a tourist destination should shift the focus from functional to emotional attributes, given that functional attributes no longer have the “power” to attract tourists, primarily because of their large similarities in the global tourism market. In that sense, Hudson and Ritchie (2009) cite as a good example the so-called “innovative destinations” that focus on positioning in the minds of stakeholders by branding a destination experience, which should convey the promises of an unforgettable trip that is strongly associated with that destination. In this way, a strong emotional connection is created between the tourist and the destination. Anholt (2006) states that every human activity consists of a rational and emotional part, with city brands supporting the emotional part of every decision about the city and strongly influencing the rational part. Therefore, there are associations such as Paris-romance, Milan-style, Tokyo-modernity, Barcelona-culture, Rio de Janeiro-entertainment.

4. MODELS FOR MEASURING CITY BRANDS AND URBAN TOURIST DESTINATIONS

The World Tourism Organization and the World Tourism Cities Federation (2018) have created a model for measuring city performance related to tourism based on five key performance areas (KPAs): destination management, economic perspective, social and cultural perspective, environmental perspective and technology and new business models. About-France.com (2020) in its report “France’s top ten tourist cities” have ranked cities not by size, nor by the number of tourists who actually visit them, but by what they have to offer and their general tourism-friendliness. The ranking takes into account many criteria, notably urban environment and cityscape, museums, historic monuments and other attractions, accessibility, and things to see and do in the immediate vicinity. The Institute for Urban Strategies-The Mori Memorial Foundation (2019) ranks the world's major cities according to their “magnetism”, i.e. the ability to attract
people, capital and companies from around the world, which it presents in its Global Power City Index model. Bloom Consulting (2017) in its Digital City Index model measures the interest in a city and its attractiveness based on online searches of people around the world about a city using Digital Demand-D2 software. The World Cities Ranking (2020) in its ranking of The Best Cities analyzes 13 criteria, namely: landmarks (the most important criterion given that landmarks make the city unique and contribute to its attractiveness); location; pedestrian zones; affordability in terms of value for money; security; cleanliness; possibility for shopping; climate; people; nightlife; public transport; the size and ease of coming to town. Anholt (2006) bases its City Brands Index on a hexagon, with elements relating to people’s perceptions of: the presence (city’s international status and standing); the place (perceptions about the physical aspects of each city); the potential (considers the economic and educational opportunities that each city is believed to offer visitors, businesses and immigrants); the pulse (explores how exciting people think the cities are, and how easy they think it would be to find interesting things to do, both as a short-term visitor and as a long-term resident); the people (whether the residents are friendly towards foreigners); the prerequisites (perception of the basic qualities of the city).

Saffron (2014) developed The Saffron European City Brand Barometer which measures the strength of city brands through analysis that takes into account various parameters such as: cultural factors, city recognition based on a photo without reading a name or background description, people’s association about the city, media recognition, etc. Starting from the fact that coming to and leaving the city by investors, tourists, students and professionals in various fields affect the development of the city, Global City Lab (2019) created The City Brand Valuation Model (CBV model) which aims to assess the brand value of cities and which gets published on the Global Top 500 Cities list.

5. DIMENSIONS OF TOURIST ATTRACTIVENESS SIGNIFICANT FOR BRANDING OF URBAN TOURIST DESTINATION

Urban tourist destinations, among other things, are characterized by attractions that are the reason for the arrival of tourists. Starting from the fact that for different tourists some attractions are more important than others, Leiper (1990) divides them into: primary (known before the trip and that affects the decision to visit), secondary (known before the trip, but do not affect the decision to visit) and tertiary (not known before the trip, so tourists become aware of them at the destination). Boivin and Tanguay (2019) and Brida et al. (2012) have a slightly different approach. They propose a systematization according to which the attractiveness of an urban tourist destination is determined by primary elements, as basic motives for visiting the city, as well as secondary and additional elements that are important for the success of urban tourism. The primary elements include cultural, entertainment and sports facilities, as well as physical and socio-economic characteristics of the destination. Secondary elements include accommodation services and shopping opportunities, while additional elements include parking lots, information centers, tourist guides, landmarks and signposts (Brida et al., 2012: 731; Law, 1992: 603).

To a certain extent, it is possible to agree with the described systematization of the elements of destination attractiveness. However, it represents a general approach to the problem. The complexity of motivational factors, on the one hand, and the tourist attractions of an urban tourist destination, on the other hand, require a more detailed analysis. It is questionable whether, for example, sports or entertainment facilities are the primary attraction for tourists who decided to visit an urban tourist destination motivated by culture as a motivating factor, or shopping opportunities can
be classified as secondary attractions for tourists whose primary motive is shopping. Observing
the above, the division into primary, secondary and additional elements/attractions of an urban
tourist destination needs to be created depending on the motivating factors of tourists, which im-
plies rejecting the general and accepting a number of different, specific approaches. In addition,
it is necessary to observe those attributes of an urban tourist destination that do not independ-
ently represent an attraction for tourists, but represent a supplement to primary and secondary attrac-
tions in terms of increasing their attractiveness. These are, in fact, the attributes of the destina-
tion that become tourist attractions only when they “join” the primary and secondary attractions.

Observing the above considerations, the paper introduces the concept of dimensions of tour-
ist attractiveness, which is a broader concept than tourist attractions, as they include their pri-
mary and secondary form, but also those attributes of the destination that do not represent attrac-
tions for tourists, but in combination affect expectations and experiences of tourists. Start-
ing from this approach, the paper proposes a division into primary and secondary dimensions of tourist attractiveness, which as such, represent the basis for brand management of an urban
tourist destination (Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Primary division of dimensions of tourist attractiveness](image)

Source: Authors

On the other hand, starting from the basic division, taking into account the characteristics of the
dimensions of tourist attractiveness of urban tourist destinations as criteria, the paper proposes
a systematization that includes (Figure 2):

- physical dimensions of tourist attractiveness of urban tourist destinations (tangible/visible
tourist attractions, tourist services, certain attributes of the destination that do not repre-
sent attractions, but have an impact on tourist experiences, as well as economic character-
istics, such as prices of board and non-board services), and
- social dimensions of tourist attractiveness of urban tourist destinations (ambience, atmos-
phere, authenticity, security).

Tourists and visitors, through brand management, form certain perceptions about physical and
social dimensions of tourist attractiveness (as well as an urban tourist destination) based on
emotions, as a psychological construct.

In relation to the physical and social dimensions of tourist attractiveness, it is necessary to identify
those who have the greatest potential for developing an emotional connection with tourists. This
connection should be based on the basic values of the urban tourist destination, its uniqueness and
authenticity, the advantages it offers in relation to the competition, promises of quality experiences and the like. Of special importance in this process is that the urban tourist destination has a so-called “tourist icon” that provides it with global recognition, such as the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the Statue of Liberty in New York, the Acropolis in Athens, the Colosseum in Rome, the Pyramids in Cairo, the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, the statue of Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro and others. Other dimensions of tourist attractiveness are also very important in the brand management process, such as: The Rio de Janeiro Carnival, numerous fashion events in Milan and Paris, the Oscars by the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Los Angeles, the Oktoberfest in Munich, the race with bulls in Pamplona, etc. In addition to the above, urban tourist destinations must be recognized as those that are characterized by the interesting and quality ambience and atmosphere, such as New York, Berlin, Paris and others.

Figure 2. Dimensions of the tourist attractiveness of an urban tourist destination in relation to their characteristics

Source: Authors

6. CONCLUSION

The brand management of an urban tourist destination is based on different dimensions of tourist attractiveness, which are the reason why tourists are interested in the destination and consequently the decision to visit it. Depending on its characteristics, the brand management of an urban tourist destination should focus on those physical and social dimensions of tourist attractiveness that have the greatest potential to establish emotional connection with tourists. These dimensions, individually or jointly, affect the reason for the arrival of tourists, “promising” them pleasures and experiences, which increase the competitiveness of the destination in the global tourism market. At the very core of this approach are needs and motivations, based on which tourists search for urban destinations whose dimensions of tourist attractiveness have the potential to satisfy them by offering what they are looking for, which unequivocally implies the importance of knowing the characteristics of tourists as the most important stakeholders. Today, when urban tourist destinations are affected by the consequences of the COVID 19 pandemic, especially in terms of the reduced number of tourists visiting them, the role of brand management is even more important, given that developed brands have great potential to overcome the crisis situation more easily and with fewer consequences and consequently maintain or even improve their positions on the global tourism market in the post-COVID era.

For the brand management process, it is necessary that urban tourist destinations continuously monitor global trends and innovate their offer. In this sense, it is especially important to explore the concepts of “smart city” and “smart destination”, which through information and
communication technologies improve the quality of life, as well as the experience of tourists. It is the concept accepted by the United Nations World Tourism Organization in the Nur-Sultan Declaration on “Smart Cities, Smart Destinations” (UNWTO, 2019). Also, it is necessary to make an analysis of contemporary online media, above all social media, and determine their impact on the branding process of urban tourist destinations, and identify those social media that have the most important role in this process.

REFERENCES


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