
Editorial: architecting destination brands in leisure and tourism industry

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Destinations reinvent themselves a new brand focus based on the perceptions of tourists and leisure shoppers. Destination brands inculcate new value dimensions among the customers and develop a dynamic environment of market competition often as a new challenge, a new line of work, or a new image among leisure and tourism services marketers. As the competition in the industry is growing, firms tend to architect brands by filtering the market information and learning from competition and leveraging customers' experiences to develop brand loyalty and customer centric strategies to acquire and retain customers. Leisure and tourism firms need to learn to communicate exactly how range of product, services, and customer values fit into market demand, and focus on the re-inventing new strategies to lead the market (Clark, 2011). A large number of international tourists leaning on ecological attractions is rapidly increasing and as the demand for access to eco-tourism is outpacing capacity, some companies are in race to drive profit by creating destinations. Such trend in tourism industry as an outgrowth of globalisation has paved path for place branding. The concept of place branding has run over various social, political and economic conflicts in developing as strong brand perspectives, there is a need to define and implement brand architecture strategies to empower place branding concept (Rajagopal and Rajagopal, 2009).

Tourism firms should take the advantage of social media to develop customer-centric approaches and co-create their brands with the customers. Co-creation and stakeholder viewpoints should be considered by the firms to architect branding process and streamline the destination-branding activities in the firm and region. The study provides a critical discussion of the different approaches to branding, and the adoption of branding philosophies, in the destination context (Saraniemi, 2011). Co-creating brands are advantageous in developing a brand thrust in the market and up-hold brand equity of the products and services of the firm against the competitors, which could help the firm in

leveraging profitability and determining the new rules of brand management leading to efficacy of the attributes, derived advantages and brand system emerging in relation to the buying power of the customers. Previous studies determine that tourist motivations are influenced by both push and pull forces; and these forces describe how an individual is pushed by motivating variables into making travel decisions and how they are pulled or attracted by destination attributes (Chan and Baum, 2007; Stratigea and Hatzichristos, 2011). It is argued that the combination of strategy, creativity and leadership is going to be the key to the success of global brands and it is necessary to understand how these three disciplines interact, and specifically how this interaction may differ across the markets where the brand is active (Sicco, 2005).

There has been relatively little discussion available in reference to the multiple attributes of brand destination with a focus on brand position. Destination branding in a way is meaningful to the multiplicity of target audiences of interest to stakeholders as it effectively differentiates the destination from competing firms (Pike, 2005). Brand architecture is not a static framework, and need to be monitored and modified continuously. The strategic positioning of services attributes and effective marketing of leisure and tourism packages augment the customer perceptions and help building the long-run place brand values. Destination marketers can focus on the commonality between destination image and destination personality in order to communicate unique destination features and to influence tourist behaviour (Hosany et al., 2007).

This issue of the journal presents five academic papers on destination branding, consumer behaviour, role of technology and impact of social media on tourism branding. These papers discuss primarily on the branding and consumption patterns that plays an important role in determining the attributes of leisure and tourism services and set direction for firms to develop business relations. The process and dynamics of destination brand architecture and transformation in the marketing strategies have been presented in these studies through empirical evidences. We hope that the anthology of five research papers included in this issue would contribute to the existing literature on leisure and tourism marketing, and scope for future research on the subject. The managerial implications suggested in the above studies would drive thoughtful insights in improving the performance of customer centric measures in leisure and tourism firms around the global destinations. The papers published in this issue demonstrate that leisure and tourism research has diversified scholarship.

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