
Editorial: Co-creating leisure and tourism destination branding strategies

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Globalisation has taught entrepreneurs many lessons to develop appropriate strategies to sustain market competition. Most companies lean towards growing locally by taking consumers into confidence and co-creating destination brands of products and services to gain competitive advantages. Consumer experience, interactions on social media, and psychodynamics through interpersonal communications are the major drivers for co-creating consumer brands. The leisure and tourism destination brands are largely co-created by the companies with the support of consumer led resources. There are many social networking tools like Facebook, YouTube, and blogs that reveal the consumer preferences on leisure and tourism services and allow the companies to understand the gaps in the current offers. The consumer information from the various digital platforms are analysed by the companies to develop new business paradigm through the process by which products, services, and experiences are developed together with stakeholders and open up new value dimensions involving consumers in business. The leisure and tourism industry has been benefitted enormously by the use of social media that has developed a positive grapevine effect in the society about the attributes of the services of the leisure and tourism companies. The communications flowing through the social media is significantly magnified in the leisure and tourism business. Most leisure and tourism companies like transport, hotels, restaurants, and ecological parks engage consumer analysts and motivators as active co-creators of value for building destination brands (Ramaswamy, 2009, Rajagopal, 2015).

Successful brands of the leisure services companies like Six Flags (USA), Disney Parks (USA, Europe and Japan), Disney Cruise Line (USA, Canada, and Caribbean), and Essel World (India) grew with the customer involvement, and their brand performance has been achieved through the co-creation by aligning consumers and market players engaged in the service delivery and monitoring customer satisfaction. Taking advantage

of social media, some multinational companies have invested resources to diffuse new ideas and stimulate co-creation of innovative products and services. Most local leisure and tourism brands are grown in the emerging markets around the ethnic needs of consumers and are built as low-cost value-generating business postures considering the affordability and adaptability potentials of the consumers. Most of the ecological parks in the leisure and tourism destinations are built with the brands that are home grown but nurtured internationally as destination images. Often such co-created brands initially serve the niche markets and gradually commercialised in alliance with large companies to fit into the extended geodemographic market segments. Managers in the increasing globalisation and competitive market environment recognise the importance of brand co-creation involving consumers to gain competitive advantage as well as to build organisational knowledge. Hence, firms with potential to sustain the market competition and become market leaders foster building consumer communities to grow sustainable brands.

The emphasis on co-creation of destination brands for marketing the leisure and tourism services and partnering with the local companies is gradually generating larger and sustainable market share. The co-creation of destination brands also encourages public-private partnerships in managing leisure and tourism services like 'Incredible India', a destination brand that was also promoted by the government. With such shift in thinking in developing destination brands from corporate to consumer driven tools, many companies in the leisure and tourism industry, where learning-organisation principles are being applied to create sustainable business models, have evidenced change in organisational culture and improvement in the core competencies. Simultaneously, they become inspirational leisure destinations such as host springs under medical tourism, where even relationships with customers and companies tend to improve mutually. In order to be competitive in leisure and tourism industry, companies must grow innovative and lay greater emphasis on brand building. The brand power, market competitiveness, and competitive benefits to the customers drive the leisure and tourism services in the competitive marketplace. The behaviour of consumers, in general, is responsive to a judgemental brand that is endorsed by the peers and consumers at large.

The leisure and tourism companies are architected on a vision to create value to customers and earn profit through their applied entrepreneurial skills and customer centric marketing actions. Entrepreneurship and marketing theories share some commonality as both disciplines focus on identifying opportunities and transforming resources into value-creation or co-creation for consumers (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2003). The concept and approach leading to co-creation of destination brands among the multinational companies are leaning towards the consumer-driven brand architecture, in which brands are developed by analysing the inside-out emotions of the consumers in the emerging markets and then moved to the global marketplace. In this process, the emerging markets play as key drivers and serve as routers of consumer experience. However, some companies with the capital intensive brand building process, who get the brands developed through advertising and communication following time-tested methods, struggle to overcome the constraints and leverage the consumerism of emerging markets.

In this issue of the journal, there are five papers that address the brand management and marketing practices in reference to destination image, niche tourism, value for money in leisure marketing, ecotourism, and leisure shopping. These papers discuss

contemporary research propositions and attempt to establish convergence between the role of consumers and companies in managing and buying decisions in a competitive leisure and tourism marketplace. I hope the anthology of research papers appearing in this issue will enrich the existing literature on the topic and stimulate future research.

References

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