



## **Innovative destination promotion strategies: The cornerstone of the developing countries' struggle towards growth**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In this short paper, the authors try to underline the importance of innovation destination promotion strategies for the developing countries of the world. Their importance in peace, prosperity and economic growth is of major importance and can be the foundation upon which developing countries can built their economies and alter in general their economic and social structures in order to overcome their handicapped and become a part of the developed world. This paper aims in create awareness among people not only in the touristic industry but also, academics, politicians, tourists and people who already live in developing countries.

**Key words:** Tourism, developing countries, promotion, strategies

**Academic Discipline And Sub- Disciplines:** Tourism; Management

**TYPE (METHOD/APPROACH):** Literary Analysis

Language : English

Date of Submission : 2018-02-26

Date of Acceptance : 2018-03-20

Date of Publication : 2018-04-30

ISSN : 278-5612

Volume : 13 Issue : 1

Journal : INTENATIONAL JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Publisher : CIRWORLD

Website : <https://cirworld.com>



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an emerging sector worldwide and comprises significant portion of many developing countries GDP despite the presence of continuing global economic problems. As a result, countries with potentiality to emerge as an attractive tourism destination focus more on their destination promotion strategies while developing their own position in the tourism industry. Tourism is the fourth largest industry in the world in terms of monetary and non-monetary benefits that contributes to the countries' GDP. Proper touristic promotion will enable the participant country to grip the benefits of the tourism sector. Gursoy and Gavcar (2013), underlined that before attaining the benefits from the tourism industry, proper promotional strategies need to be developed in order to let the tourists know about their destination. Innovative destination promotional strategies can serve the specific country by developing its competitive advantage in the tourism sector as suggested by Avci et al (2011).

According to Hassan and Burns (2014) innovative destination promotion helps developing countries to promote peace as well as to ensure an equitable development throughout the country, something which usually results in development policy makers to emphasize in innovative destination promotion activities.

Wang and Pizam (2011) stated that their destination promotional strategies are ineffective and inadequate and suggested to adopt innovative marketing strategies. Their research showed that during the last decade only 0.71% of the total revenue earned from the sector were used for its promotional activities, a percentage that became 0.59% in the current decade.

## 2. DESTINATION PROMOTION

Bonham and Mak (2012) defined destination promotion as an implementation process of destination marketing strategy where the enunciation and communication of values, vision and specific competitive attributes of any destination are promoted to potential visitors. Gursoy and Gavcar (2013) depicted destination promotion as a combination of creating a strong tourism network, raising destination quality, enhances destination profile and attracting tourists through strategic events. The following figure depicts destination promotion in a vivid way:



Figure1: Destination Promotion. Source: (Wu et al., 2014)

## 3. INNOVATIVE DESTINATION PROMOTION

Destination promotion strategy is derived from the recommendation of the board responsible for promoting the destination. If the standard promotional activities fail to attain intended result, Greaves and Skinner (2010) stated that innovative destination promotion strategy needs to be adopted in a way that positive feeling can be developed among the intended tourists. The following section describes some innovative destination promotion strategies which are widely used by many developing countries in order to help them attain the benefits of destination promotions.



### 3.1. High Performing Destination Marketing Plan

Destination marketing plans intend to attract more visitors in a way that the country in question can obtain its desired benefits and profitability through specific touristic promotions. Fesenmaier(2010), underlined that a powerfully performing destination marketing plan combines both, what a potential tourist is looking for and how capable the destination, for which the marketing plan has been designed, is to meet that aspiration. Hassan and Burns (2014) stated that a high performing plan should involve a regional tourism plan, running in parallel with a regional tourism product development plan and adjoining with the special group of interests, in a way that the accomplishment of the destination marketing plan will attain the desired objectives.

### 3.2. Destination Branding Strategy

According to Fesenmaier (2011), the destination promotion activities should include the destination branding strategy too, while creating brand awareness among the target tourists. Destination branding helps to enhance awareness among tourists in a way that will lead to the linkage of some desirable and important associations too in both local and world level. Mak (2011) argued that destination branding management provides benefits to the visitors by creating the country's brand, visitors' retention, visitors' psychological and emotional rewards and benefits in terms of several destination features. The following figure shows the 5 levels of benefits of destination branding strategy:



Figure 2: Destination Brand Benefit Pyramid. Source: (Wang and Pizam, 2011)

### 3.3. Raising Destination Profile

Core objective of destination promotion is to raise the destination profile among the target tourists, while, as stated by Sigala (2014), raising destination profile helps to attain some benefits which are otherwise difficult to be obtained. According to Greaves and Skinner (2010), effective destination promotional activities can help the destination country in terms of creating a positive feeling among potential tourists in terms of inspiring them to visit the place in question, something which encourages tourism promoters to deploy resources on raising country's destination profile while promoting it at the same time.

Bonham and Mak (2012), agreed with this and added that raising destination profile includes destination promotional activities in order to enhance awareness about the destination among the tourists, as well as the development of specific strategies which can be very useful in improving the overall tourists' experience.

Goodall and Ashworth (2013), indicated that raising the destination profile helps to enhance tourists' trafficking, something which is of paramount importance in terms of assisting the destination marketing which was deployed by the specific country's authorities that are responsible for its promotion.

### 3.4. Developing Tourism Products and Experience

According to Dillimono and Dickinson (2014), touristic products and experience need to be concentrated more while attaining desired destination promotion activities. Avci, et al. (2011), stated that, as a part of the



destination promotion strategies, promoters usually develop touristic products and experience, something which also facilitates their long term sustainability of tourism benefits.

#### **4. BENEFITS OF INNOVATIVE DESTINATION PROMOTION**

Wu, et al. (2014), argued that the benefits of the implementation of the right destination promotion strategies can be financial in addition to the peace promotion that they serve in both developing and developed countries. Islam and Carlsen (2012), stated that although innovative destination promotion requires incremental costs while promoting destination to the intended tourists, it generates incremental benefits too which transcends the costs incurred during the implementation of the innovative destination promotional strategies in question. In order to be able to attain desired objectives through destination promotion strategies, the promoters in question should be able to design and implement an intuitive and effective plan.

Timothy (2010), stated that the benefits that can be obtained by the implementation of the suitable innovative destination promotion strategies, are:

- Destination is promoted with its distinctive competencies
- Overcoming the inaccurate destination image and profile that might exists
- Community development through infrastructure development, revitalization or redefine the destination which accordingly improves the economic activities and the life standard of the local community.
- Appropriate use of the available resources
- Provide higher return on investment for the promoters

Fesenmaier (2010), suggested that destination promotion facilitates and provides benefits, like promoting the destination, tourist attraction and improvement of their experience, something which means that it contributes to the development of the local community, helps promoters and benefits tourists as well.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

Tourism has become an important emerging economic sector that shows remarkable growth in the last few years despite the overall financial climate. On the other hand, developing countries nowadays face a series of important socio- economical problems which stall their development and growth. In order to find a way to overcome their vital problems, such countries need to get help from everywhere they can. Tourism can be the vehicle towards such direction. In that terms, this paper underlines the importance of innovative destination promotion strategies as the springboard towards development not only in terms of tourism but for the society in general too.

The innovative destination promotion strategies aim in developing strategies that can result in creating awareness between tourists while giving them a unique experience and attract new ones, something which will also create value for the hosting countries. The benefits of innovative destination promotion are so important that can be the cornerstone towards the path which lead to growth and development. Their paramount contribution to the well- being of the developing countries is of major importance and need to be taken seriously under consideration in order to become the yardstick towards developing countries' economy growth, social well fare, peace and prosperity.

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