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The role of branding in destination marketing strategies

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A chi ha creduto, crede e

crederà in me, sempre.

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Introduction

The present study analyses and studies the economic reality of the tourist destination. Given the complex nature of the theme, this research aims to examine it in depth, by dividing the work into four sections.

The first section will focus on understanding what a tourist destination is, its life cycle, types and the most relevant actors involved. It will then discuss issues strictly related to management; specifically what Destination Management Organizations are.

A short mention will also be made of the service dominant logic approach in the tourism sector.

In the second section, on the other hand, there will be a discussion of the strategic processes of destination marketing, segmentation, targeting and positioning. It will focus on the influence of the destination experience and tourist behaviour. And finally, it will point out the role of social media marketing and the importance of monitoring action for a tourist destination.

With the third section, we will enter the heart of the elaboration, which is Destination Branding.

There will be an outline of the literature defining brand identity, brand architecture and brand strategies applied, however, to destinations.

This will be followed by an overview of some of the most recent and authoritative destination brand equity theories. It ends by monitoring some of the currently important elements for a destination, such as image, awareness, and online engagement.

The fourth and final section examines a practical case of a tourist destination: the Amalfi Coast.

The Authentic Amalfi Coast brand will be introduced with its history and analysis of the elements of brand identity.

After this, the focus will shift to a qualitative survey, conducted through an interview with the manager Andrea Ferraioli of the Authentic Amalfi Coast destination brand and divided into five different sections. Such as destination brand motivation, internal and external branding analysis, marketing and communication and finally, brand monitoring.

In the final conclusions we will understand how important the brand is for the definition of marketing strategies of the Amalfi Coast tourist destination.

Section I: Destination Management

1.1   The concept of Tourist Destination

Tourism is one of the most important growing economic sectors in the world in terms of both monetary return and employment.

By its very nature, tourism has a systemic impact, as it involves the economy of the area concerned in a cross-cutting way, with repercussions that are also social, cultural and environmental. It is precisely for this reason that tourism development plays a very important role in a systemic territorial strategy. If, however, on the one hand it can have a positive effect[1] as a generator of wealth for residents, on the other it can have a negative effect, since, compared to a condition of "normality", it consumes resources, creates waste, requires continuous structuring and generates greater consumption needs (utilities, transport).

From the structural and organizational point of view, the tourism phenomenon, according to Leiper (1995), is identified as the result of the interaction of three different subsystems:

- *the tourist*, represents the main engine. and it is therefore, necessary to observe and study his behaviours, motivations and needs, as well as their evolution in time and space;

- *the tourism sector*, is the set of all activities, economic and otherwise, created to provide tourists with goods and services in response to their needs;

- *the physical-geographical area*, is the area in which the movement of tourists takes place in space, that is, the *Traveller Generating Regions*, the *Transit Routes* and the *Tourist Destination*.

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[1] The positive effects of tourism include:
- increase the local public budget, through consumption and tourism taxes and duties that generate wealth and benefits, in terms of investment, which also fall on the local population;
- stimulating the creation of new businesses in interconnected services, such as the restaurant, hospitality, commerce and entertainment industries;
- increase in the employment rate in the sectors concerned;
- increase in income from other economic activities, especially trade and agriculture;
- ability to attract capital and investment from abroad;
- increased asset value of land and buildings.

Over the years, there has been a growing increase in the diversification of tourist demand in the tourism sector, undoubtedly caused by the corresponding variability and articulation of the needs of the tourist population. This is all due to changes in social and economic life and rapid technological development. The phenomenon of *Globalization* of international markets has also contributed, strengthening the network of relationships between businesses, and encouraging the spread of increasingly complex forms of tourism supply.

All these events led to the need to create a *management* exclusively dedicated to tourism supply systems by public and private actors. Therefore, in order to be able to analyse the system as a whole, the concept of *tourist destination* has gradually been established in the literature.

Indeed, several researchers in the tourism sector from all over the world have explored the concept of tourist destinations. Many of these have been collected in Table n1 below.

Researcher	*Definition*
Hu and Ritchie (1993)	A package of tourism facilities and services, which, like any other consumer product, is composed of several multidimensional attributes.
Pearce (1992)	An amalgam of products and services available in one location that can draw visitors from beyond its spatial confines.
Bieger (1998)	The tourist product that in certain markets competes with other products.
Buhalis (2000)	Amalgam of tourism products offering an integrated experience to consumers.
Ziltener (1999)	A performance package for specific user segments.
Laws (1995)	Group of actors linked by relationships with specific rules, in

	which the adoption of each actor influences that of the others, so that common objectives must be defined and achieved in a coordinated way.
Leper (1995), Peechlaner (2000), Martini (2001)	A set of products, services, natural and artificial attractions able to draw tourists to a specific place and thereby affirm that geographical position does not coincide with destination.
Tamma (2001), Brunetti (1999)	Supply system linked to a specific area.
Mathieson, Wall	A place that has characteristics that are known to enough potential visitors to consider it as an entity that attracts travel to it, regardless of the attractiveness of other locations.
Davidson, Maitland (2004)	Corresponds to a single district, a large or small town, or a clearly circumscribed rural, coastal, or mountainous area with homogeneous characteristics.
Costa, Manente, Furlan (2000/2001)	All the attractions, services, and facilities that tourists use during their stay / the place where organised supply meets and interacts with tourist demand.
Sainaghi (2005)	A limited geographical area with a population of SMEs capable of serving a sufficiently stable set of customer segments that have chosen the location as their travel destination, irrespective of their motivation.

Table n.1 - Definitions of tourist destination[2]

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[2] Source: Own processing.

When analysing all these definitions proposed over time, some common factors emerged for the definition of a tourist destination:

- the well-defined geographical space;

- the supply (or product) resulting from the combination of resources, facilities and activities of public and private actors operating in the destination area;

- the demand (or market) and, consequently, the management of tourist flows.

In some ways, the concept of tourism product coincides with that of tourism destination. In fact, both are the final output of the tourism production process consisting of a complex structure and network of relationships within it. Therefore, the tourist destination measures its own efficiency and effectiveness and its competitiveness against a hypothetical competitor, in the form of demand satisfaction or, in terms of so-called market share.

1.1.1   The life cycle

A whole series of factors contribute to the success of a tourist destination, primarily economic factors, but also factors related to the local context.

However, an important aspect to be analysed of the tourist destination, from a critical point of view, is its life cycle. The life cycle of a tourist destination is understood as a succession of stages from the introduction of the destination to its launch on the market, until it reaches a well-established position and finally maturity. Throughout this period, various elements of the destination evolve within the area affected by tourist flows:

- the offer, from a structural, infrastructural and operational point of view;

- its reputation and position in the target markets;

- land use, i.e., literally the space dedicated to tourist activity;

- the impact of tourist flows on local culture, in terms of cultural comparisons, induced customs and economic activities undertaken.

In this respect, it will be appropriate to analyse Butler's (1980) model, which analyses and puts different aspects of the tourist destination life cycle in the brave, medium and long term (Graph n.1).

The two variables underlying the model are time and the number of tourists choosing the destination.
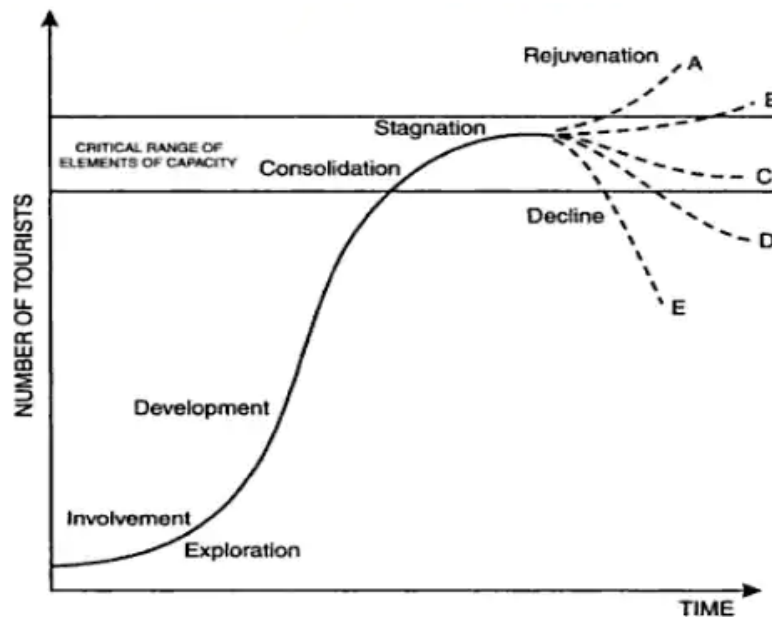
Graph n.1 - Stages of the tourist destination life cycle[3]

The first phase, the initial one, corresponds to the *Exploration* of the tourist destination and is characterised by the absence of real systems for organising the use of resources, causing a certain static nature of demand. In this phase there are few tourists, there is a scarcity of services and infrastructures, the environment remains intact, so guests integrate with the resources and activities present.

The second phase is that of *Involvement*, characterised by the presence of the first public and private investments and the distribution of tourist presences, according to seasonality. The impact on the environment begins to grow.

The third phase is *Development*, characterised by a strong increase in the number of tourists, whose daily number exceeds the number of residents. This expansion of activities brings more investments from outside. Therefore, the target group of tourists approaches mass tourism.

In the fourth phase, *Consolidation*, tourism becomes essential to the entire local economic system. In the environment, the first problems related to deterioration and pollution arise.

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[3] Source: Richard W. Butler, *The Tourism Area Life Cycle*.

In the fifth phase, *Stagnation* or Maturity, the maximum exploitation of the area has been reached, the destination is now well known and, consequently, mass tourism exceeds the tolerance thresholds of the tourist area. As a result, the whole system loses effectiveness, but also competitiveness as a destination as a whole and begins to be considered "out of fashion".

The sixth and final stage represents a novelty compared to Butler's model which envisages only five. Thanks to Martini's (2010) more recent studies, the *Post-Maturity* phase is introduced, whereby there are some alternative possibilities that imply the definitive *Decline* or the *Rejuvenation* of the tourist destination. The outcome depends on the decisions taken, in terms of repositioning on the market, at the level of destination management itself.

Several authors have analysed the destination life cycle and made other changes.

For example, according to Haywood (1986) and Johnson&Snepenger (1993), not all tourists impact on the carrying capacity of the destination in the same way; because each one of them has a different time of permanence in the destination, or because they come at different times of the year, etc.

1.1.2   Types of tourist destination

In the literature, different types of tourist destinations have been identified over time.

Ejarque (2003) proposes 3 types of destination:

a) *diffuse*, there is no integration between products and tourism activities, as there is no coordination nor collaboration between the producers of services;

b) *dependent*, the destination is mature and there are external operators (such as tour operators) who deal with the creation and promotion of the resources of the territory through tourist packages;

c) *integrated*, there are local actors linked by relationships based on rules and specific organization, in order to achieve a common and shared goal.

Martini, on the other hand, makes another kind of differentiation of the tourist destination into two types: corporate destination and community destination[4].

The *corporate* ones are destinations where the tourism offer is designed, managed, and marketed by a company that, the destination's attractive services, either owns them directly or controls them through contractual agreements. some examples such as amusement parks, resorts, multi-service resorts, international outgoing organizations, third-generation ski resorts, etc.

This type of destination presents some characteristics that compare it to a real enterprise and, more precisely, to a holding company (Bieger, 2000). And these characteristics can be:

- existence of control and command units for all services for tourism purposes for which the company is responsible. For this reason, the coordination model is linked to the hierarchy and direct control is exercised by the owner, with the ability to change the quality of the services offered over time, based on trends and preferences expressed by consumers.

- management of the activities offered through the logic of business units, i.e., through strategic and financial plans to create multiple sources of profit.

- all-inclusive packages that aim to reach specific targets through brand loyalty.

- analysis of locational factors to evaluate the potential of the place as destination.

Let's talk about the other type of destinations, the *community* destinations, where the tourism offer is proposed on the market through a single and specific brand, thanks to the interaction of the activities of the different local economic actors.

The most important aspects of this type of destination are:

(a) it is the whole territory that proposes itself on the tourist market, offering, depending on the type of holiday, both natural and man-made attractiveness;

b) resources and activities are widespread, i.e., they are owned by often local entrepreneurs who pursue their own specific purpose;

c) the territorial public authority plays a decisive role in the destination's tourist activity, as it controls the natural resources, public assets, provides funding or makes specific infrastructure available.

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[4] The differentiation between corporate and community tourism destinations was originally proposed in reference to the analysis of ski resorts by Bieger (1996). And later generalized by Martini for the destination as a whole.

There are different types of actors involved in the tourist destination, depending on the type of relationship established between them (exchange, competition or association); and depending on their needs and interests.

Therefore, the actors most involved in the network of this process are:

- the most involved tourism companies, i.e., all those companies involved in the production and delivery of the main services and not purchased by the customer. Such as, for example, restaurateurs, hoteliers, managers of attractions, etc.

- the local administrators, who are essential pillars for the development of the territory;

- entrepreneurs, especially of small and medium-sized enterprises;

- the local population, which is less and less willing to sacrifice quality of life for the increase in tourist flows;

- tourists, who have an important role in influencing the management of the destination's supply system;

- other players, to support the tourism sector, even if not directly related. such as banks and financial institutions.

In the study of tourism stakeholders, Presenza (2005) proposes the following definition: "organizations that can influence or be influenced by tourism within a particular market or community and that have some interest in participating in the planning, management, and production/delivery of products/services of the specific location in which they develop their organizational action[5]".

And it is precisely because of the different interests and perspectives involved that the tourism destination manager must create a list of potential stakeholders and analyse the main relationships between them. This is because the past, present and future actions taken by one stakeholder can affect all others as well. And therefore, having all this information available in advance allows managers to make more informed strategic decisions.

In this regard, Sautter and Leisen (1999) have formulated the so-called *stakeholder orientation matrix* that serves as a guide for stakeholder analysis (Graph.2).

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[5] Presenza A., *Destination Management Organization. Ruolo, organizzazione ed indicatori di performance*, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2007.

Relationship Orientation

I   II

Relationship Orientation

Transaction Orientation

III   IV

Transaction Orientation
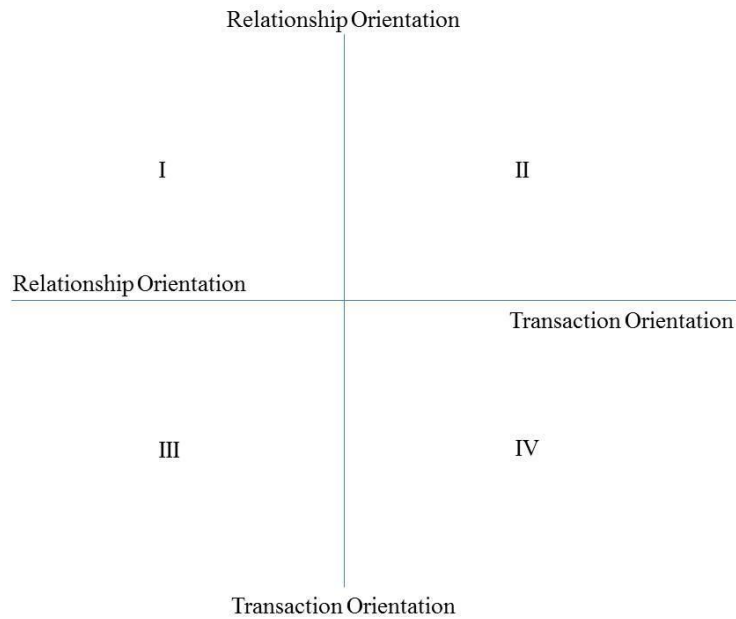
Graph n.2 – Stakeholder orientation matrix[6]

These researchers state that the task of destination managers, in this perspective, is to adopt strategies that focus on maximising the number of interactions because of the stakeholders in quadrants I or III. Quadrants II and IV represent the most difficult scenarios for engaging in cooperative relationships. In these cases, that is, the perspectives of the different stakeholders are in direct contrast and therefore, there is little probability of establishing collaborations or compromises.

Another contribution provided by Presenza concerns the classification, shown in Table n.2, of the main stakeholders of the tourist destination, distinguishing them according to:

- their location in space, into *internal* and *external* stakeholders;

- their degree of impact on the competitiveness of the tourist destination, into *primary* and *secondary* stakeholders.

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[6] Source: Sautter e Leisen (1999)

	internal		external
	direct	indirect	
primary	• hotel operators • non-hotel operators • entertainment operators (restaurateurs, event organisers, tourist attraction managers, rentals, etc.)	• local trade associations • local tourism department • territorial pacts/programme agreements	• tourists • tour operators • promotion bodies (different territorial/administrative levels) • tourist/cultural associations (CRAL)
secondary	• departments (other sectors) • chambers of commerce • allied industries/related sectors • universities and research institutes • local environmental associations • public finance management companies • banks/financial institutions • parks and nature reserves • residents • certification companies • police operators		• public administrations in general (including EU) • environmental associations • related industries/sectors • opinion leaders • public companies • certification companies

Table n.2 – Stakeholder of tourist destination[7]

The first distinction (internal and external stakeholders) according to the Presenza classification, further divides internal stakeholders into *direct* and *indirect*. The most important *internal* and *direct* stakeholders in a destination are the tour operators because the fate of the entire local system depends on them. A very relevant example of internal stakeholders are the residents, who, according to their degree of inclination towards hospitality, affect the perception and quality of the destination as a whole.

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[7] Source: Presenza A., *Destination Management Organization. Ruolo, organizzazione ed indicatori di performance*, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2007, p34.

On the other hand, the most important *internal* and *indirect* stakeholders are trade associations and tourism departments, because they can be fundamental to local development, depending on their ability to influence the destination's economy.

In the second column of the Presenza classification we find the *external* stakeholders. And here the fundamental role is played by the tourist who with his purchasing behaviour influences the tourist offer of the destination.

Regarding the second distinction, *primary* stakeholders are all those actors who have a direct interest and without whom the tourist destination cannot survive. *Secondary* stakeholders, on the other hand, exert an influence on the destination manager's decisions, but since they are not directly related to the destination, they are not essential to its survival.

A further contribution is made by Della Corte who introduces another category of stakeholders, the adversaries. These are all those actors who are against systemic collaborative initiatives. They may hold oligopolistic positions in the local tourism market and, due to an individualistic vision, interpret the very concept of a tourist destination and the development of the local system as a threat.

1.2   Destination Management or Destination Marketing?

The interest in destination management studies dates to the early 2000s, based on a series of relevant changes in the tourism sector. For example, globalisation, which has increased the competitive dynamics by giving rise to new emerging locations or low-cost airlines. Or changes on the part of consumers, who have new and more complex needs. Or the importance of ICT also in the tourism sector. And so on.

From a conceptual point of view, destination management deals with the integration, at a strategic level, of essential actions aimed at managing the products and services of the tourist destination in order to attract market demand and position itself competitively against destinations with similar territorial characteristics.

For Della Corte (2000), instead, destination management is defined as "a type of strategic management of tourist locations, through an appropriate system of planning and control of the activities to be developed to boost the flow of tourists in the area".

From a strategic-operational point of view, destination management necessarily involves identifying and understanding the relationships and interactions between the

actors operating within the destination, as well as the effects that the competitive environment has on the system that makes up the destination[8].

Taking up the studies of Sicca (2000), destination management is identified as a process of strategic management of the territory, i.e., in the set of activities necessary to create a shared vision. Thus, overcoming individualism and competitiveness and bringing together the wealth of resources and skills that each actor (public or private) has available.

It is therefore essential in an increasingly global market that destination management has a clear mission: to create value for the tourist. According to Ejarque (2003), in fact, the tourist's objective "is not to have services, but to acquire benefits that are not tangible, that meet their expectations, that represent the values they refer to".

But what is the difference between destination marketing and destination management? First, we can certainly say that the concept of Destination Management is much broader than the concept of Destination Marketing. There are many different interpretations in the literature; but the purpose of destination marketing remains that of implementing the right marketing policies that contribute to increasing the level of attractiveness and competitiveness of the destination.

Therefore, it is possible to say that destination marketing is a crucial and specific part of destination management. The issues that concern destination marketing in more detail will be discussed in Section II.

It is now more important to focus first on the purposes of destination management. And, in particular, on the crucial role of *Destination Management Organisations* in the effective positioning of local businesses to create, reinforce and make sustainable the competitiveness of the destination[9].

1.3   Destination Management Organization: a conceptual framework

Many authors saw the need for an entity with metamanagement functions in the governance of tourist destinations.

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[8] Tamma (1999); Manente, Cerato (2000).
[9] Sainaghi (2005)

In this regard, according to Majewski (2007) these are "(...) organizations which are responsible for the coordination and supporting of the activities of all the entities involved in the marketing of destinations".

Martini defines DMO "in order for a tourist resort to be able to tackle a Destination Management project, an organisational structure must be set up within it, thanks to which coordination between (and within) its subsystems can be optimised"[10]. This structure is specifically the Destination Management Organisation (DMO).

In the same direction is the thinking of Buhalis, who believes that destinations should be governed by a Destination Management Organisation, which is responsible for the design and management of the destination and having the power and resources to undertake actions to improve the strategic objectives. According to the author, Destination Management Organisations tend to be part of the local, regional, or national government and have political and legislative power, as well as the financial instruments to manage resources rationally and ensure that all stakeholders benefit in the long term.

In this sense, according to the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) the Destination Management Organisation is "the organisation that is responsible for the management and marketing of the destination, whose task is to promote and organise the integration of the aggregate of elements of a territory that converge to form a tourist offer, so that it increases its performance and its ability to compete"[11].

DMOs must:

- be able to connect demand with supply;

- understand and interpret tourist needs by giving simple and immediate answers;

- coordinate the destination's range of activities and offers on an ongoing basis, providing efficient distribution of products in markets with high development potential;

- be able to take strategic decisions in relation to marketing levers: product, branding, price, market segmentation, promotion, and distribution.

Basically, DMOs can function at any of the following levels:

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[10] Martini U., *Da luoghi a destinazioni turistiche*, p. 100.
[11] World Tourism Organization, *Survey of Destination Management Organisations*, 2004, in www.unwto.org.

➢ at *national* level, as NTAs (National Tourism Authorities) or as NTOs (National Tourism Organizations), having responsibilities related to the management and promotion of national tourism; in fact, such structures can even develop at transnational level/beyond national borders (for example, the European Travel Commission is a non-profit organization that cooperates with 32 European NTAs and NTOs for the development and promotion of European tourist destinations);

➢ at *regional*/*provincial* level, as DMOs or RTOs, being in charge of the management and marketing of tourism in specific geographic areas, defined for that purpose;

➢ at *local* level, contributing to the development and promotion of tourism in areas limited to a smaller geographic area or city.

1.3.1 *Mission and Goals*

The mission of DMOs is articulated in the following points:
- organization/management/updating of information on the local tourism offer;
- qualification of local services and products;
- integration of the offer in packages and services with high added value;
- promotion/marketing/sales of the integrated tourist offer through: innovative digital channels, monitoring of supply and demand, creation of a relational network, implementation of a total quality system, development and promotion of forms of sustainable tourism;
- market segmentation, promotion and distribution.

Morrison, Bruen, and Anderson, (1998) single out five primary functions of a DMO:
- an *economic driver* generating new income and employment, contributing to the development of a more diversified local economy;
- a *community marketer* communicating the most appropriate destination image, attractions, and facilities of the most significant destinations to selected visitor markets;

- an *industry coordinator* providing a clear strategy for local tourism development and encourages systemic relationships between businesses, so that the growing benefits of tourism can be shared;

- a *quasi-public representative* acting as an intermediary between the interests of the tourism industry, the needs of residents, policy choices and the needs of individual and group guests;

- a *builder of community pride* by enhancing quality of life by acting as the main support for residents and visitors.

Presenza proposes a schematization of the different types of functions in the organizational action of DMOs, shown in Table n.3.[12]

Stakeholder coordination				Crisis management
Reception and tourist information	Research/surveys	Conservation of natural resources		
Quality of the local tourist offer	Development of human resources	Support for new investments		
Destination Management System				
Publications	Educational tour and/or Familiarization Trips	Information/ training workshops	Road shows	
Direct sale	Direct mail	Cooperation programmes	Conferences, events, festivals	
Advertisement				

Table n.3. - Core activities of DMO

According to this model it is possible to group these functions into two macro-groups:

- activities related to the marketing of the tourist destination[13]

- activities related to tourism destination management.

Nothing new with respect to what has been said previously.

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[12] Source: Presenza A., *Destination Management Organization. Ruolo, organizzazione ed indicatori di performance*, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2007, p 61.
[13] Everything related to destination marketing will be covered in Section II.

Fall within the function of management of the DMO activities of:

- *reception and tourist information* for tourist reception;

- *researches/surveys* to better understand market needs and expectations;

- *conservation of natural resources* for the sustainable management of the destination, through the study of the carrying capacities of the area and the development of a long-term program to understand the potential impacts of tourism;

- regular evaluation of the local tourist offer to increase the perceived *quality of the services* provided;

- *development of human resources*, contributing, in an indirect way, to the education and training of professionals working in the field. This is done in collaboration with universities and training institutions, through suggestions on the skills to be strengthened;

- finance and venture capital to *support new investments*.

There are then other two functions that are treated with particular regard and are:

- *stakeholder coordination*, is of significant importance because the competitiveness of the destination itself depends on the effectiveness of the network of relationships that the DMO has with stakeholders;

- *crisis management*, to anticipate and respond promptly to emergency situations (natural disasters, attacks, political hostilities, etc.) that would otherwise weaken the reputation and image of the tourist destination.

1.3.2   Strategy

An effective destination management strategy must be able to analyse, manage and organise both the factors of attractiveness of the destination and the different entrepreneurial actors in that system. All this in order to propose an offer able to satisfy market demand.

Nowadays, identifying universal methods and models of managerial strategies that can be applicable to all DMOs is a very difficult challenge. This is because, clearly, we are dealing with a multitude of actors operating in a situation of strong economic and decision-making interdependence.

For example, the first problem encountered in Italy derives from the ability to transfer to DMOs a more managerial culture, which aims at reasoning for well-defined and constant objectives over time, rather than single and occasional initiatives.

To develop managerial competences, it is necessary to act gradually through progressive and continuous steps, i.e., to adopt *a strategy-based* method.

This will allow to gain trust and participation especially from stakeholders.

According to Kotler (1982), there are many benefits to be gained from an effective strategic planning system that has clear short- and long-term objectives, adequate budgets and useful tools for measuring and monitoring performance. This last point is an important step to ensure that the manager who has defined these strategies can check if the planned actions and their effects are actually occurring or if they are negative effects, intervene immediately.

According to Grant's approach (1994), strategy can be considered "the way in which the company deploys its resources and capabilities within the business sector to achieve its goals".

According to Presenza, on the other way, strategy is "a set of decisions that combine the capabilities and resources of a company with the opportunities of the environment; among the goals is to add value not only for the internal stakeholders of the destination, but also for all the actors that have an interest in the destination".

The purpose of strategic analysis is not only to generate solutions to problems, but also to help understand the problems. And for this, the manager must design the strategy with a dynamic, flexible and innovative approach.

This is why it is important for DMOs to develop forms of strategic planning which, according to Caroli, aims to[14]:

- codify the strategic choices in order to make them implementable in each aspect;

- sub-dividing the strategic orientation into sub-strategies and ad hoc programmes referring to each of the territorial components involved in that orientation;

- define the coordination measures between the different territorial actors, necessary to make the strategies pursued workable and, consequently, to catalyse the choices of these actors towards a common direction;

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[14] Caroli M. G., (1999), *Il marketing territoriale*, Franco Angeli, Milano.

- make it possible to communicate strategic choices externally and internally, thus becoming a tool that is both competitive and integrating;

- translate in quantitative terms the effects of strategic choices on resource needs and suggest ways of covering these needs.

According to Harrison (2003), a strategic management process should be divided into five phases:

a) analysis of the organisation and the external environment;

b) definition of the strategic direction to be followed;

c) formulation of strategies;

d) implementation of strategies;

e) monitoring and control of strategies.

Indeed, it is not recommended to only trust in economic-financial measures as they encourage short-term strategic measures, sacrificing the creation of greater value through long-term strategic measures.

1.3.3 The Relationship between DMO and the stakeholder

Regardless of the strategic approach chosen by tourism destination management, there is always a problem of co-ordination of decisions.

It is therefore necessary for management to identify mechanisms to facilitate shared decision-making among DMO players.

In fact, every operator involved will have to maintain its own interest in the development of the tourist destination, but will also have to accept that its strategic choices are, in some way, linked to the strategic choices of the other operators.

By acting in this way, a real form of *network* in the destination is developed, in which the success of the individual actors will depend on the success of the whole DMO system.

Rispoli and Tamma (1995) identify the network as one of the three configurations of the tourist destination offer. According to the researchers: "the tourist product is identified with the location, in the way that the tourist benefits from a system of services that are assembled directly in the area in an interactive form, according to the

needs of demand and within a framework of rules and standards recognised and accepted by individual local operators".[15]

The relationship linking each actor in the DMO network will be based on *co-opetition*, a mix of cooperation and competition[16]. The object of the exchange will be knowledge, skills, production techniques, raw materials, facilities, information, common brands and denominations, production, logistical and commercial processes.

This system of co-opetition will be influenced by the different degrees of effectiveness of the relationships established between the actors, and the competitiveness of the destination itself will depend on it. And therefore, the DMO's task will be to effectively manage these relationships and strategically design the offer, taking into account the changing markets and competitive framework.

From an operational point of view, Martini identifies the most important functions that the DMO has to adopt in order to guarantee stakeholder coordination[17]:

- stimulating and supporting the participation of local actors in the collective strategy, credibly highlighting its advantages and overcoming the resistance that individual entrepreneurs may have to a collective design[18];

- the formalisation of relationship mechanisms between the central authority and individual partners, as well as between partners;

- the selection of new group members and the possible exit of others;

- the definition of control mechanisms and the identification of sanctions against possible opportunistic or free-riding behaviour;

- the identification of transparent and shared mechanisms for contributing to the organisation and sharing the results achieved among the actors.

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[15] The other two configurations of the offer of a tourist destination are:
- point-to-point configuration, the tourist product is defined by the tourist through individual relationships with local actors;
- package configuration, the tourism product is designed and assembled by a specialised company and is sold as a "complete package" to the tourist. (Tour operators and travel agencies).
Source: Rispoli M., Tamma M. (1995), *Le risposte strategiche alla complessità: le forme di offerta dei prodotti alberghieri*, Giappichelli, Torino.
[16] According to some reports, 50% of new alliances within a network in recent years are between competitors.
Gnyawali D. R. and Madhavan R., (2001), *Cooperative Networks and Competitive Dynamics: A Structural Embeddedness Perspective*, Academy of Management.
[17] Martini U., (2005), *Management dei sistemi territoriali*, p. 12, Giappichelli, Torino.
[18] For example, some actors may fear losing specific competences as a result of networking, or having to give up some specific competences as a result of forms of division of labour between the combined units.

Several authors, such as Kotler, Haider and Rein, have stressed the importance of setting up a strategic planning group made up of representatives of the destination's most relevant stakeholders[19].

This group will have three main functions:

1) analysing the characteristics of the area in order to highlight the main problems, highlighting the reasons that cause them and the opportunities that can be taken;

2) define a long-term strategic plan to overcome the area's problems and is realistically possible in view of the existing resources and opportunities in the area;

3) develop a long-term action plan, divided into intermediate stages, in which the area's development goals and the investments needed to achieve them are identified.

According to Pinto, trust is a key issue in networks, since relations between organizations may be based on non-formal agreements, being trust between the actors the basis for their interaction. Building trust is a gradual process, and is highly influenced by the individuals who are interacting. One of the risks present in a relation is opportunism. That is, one part may take advantage of the relation for its own and single profit.

In a certain way, we can say that opportunism is exactly the opposite of trust. As opportunism aims to reap an advantage in the short term, trust is fundamental for long term advantage.

If all these prerequisites mentioned above were not in place, a configuration of the tourist destination's offer without the DMO coordinating actions between stakeholders, would have many limitations. These include the problem of bringing out the potential and specific features of the area. Or, guaranteeing quality levels that are uniform among stakeholders. Or again, difficulty in implementing long-term economic development projects for the destination.

From all these negative aspects, we would like once again to stress the importance of stakeholders, not only as actors, but also of their effective coordination for the entire strategic set-up of the destination.

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[19] Kotler P., Haider D.H. E Rein I., (1993), *Marketing place. Attracting investment, industry and tourism to the cities, states and nations*, The Free Press, New York.

1.4   Service Dominant Logic

Since the beginning of the last century, the logic of trade has always been oriented towards the material product, according to the so-called *goods-dominant-logic*.

Goods-dominant logic says that value is created by the company and then distributed to the consumer in exchange for goods or money, the exchange value.

Subsequently, this vision gave way to a more modern one, focused on intangible products, the so-called *service-dominant logic* (SDL), thus focusing on services.

Service-dominant logic considers the roles of the supplier and the

consumer, i.e., that value is co-created through interactions between the two, where integration of resources and utilisation of competencies takes place, the value-in-use[20].

This new logic, unlike the previous one, requires continuous learning, since providing a service does not imply creating a standardised activity.

According to Ballantyne & Aitken (2007), the service-dominant logic states that the customer is the judge of value in service exchanges.

The experts Vargo and Lusch (2004), instead, define service-dominant logic as "a mindset for a unified understanding of the purpose and nature of organisations, markets and society"[21].

They also identify the main aspects of this new logic:

- the identification and development of core competencies, that represent a possible competitive advantage for the company.

- the identification of other subjects as "potential consumers" who can benefit from these competences.

- the development of relationships involving the consumers in the creation of value propositions that satisfy their specific needs.

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[20] Source: Vargo, S. L., Maglio, P. P., & Akaka, M. A. (2008). *On value and value co-creation: A service systems and service logic perspective*, European Management Journal, 26, 145-152.
[21] Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004). Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing. Journal of Marketing, 68, 1-17.
Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2008). Service-dominant logic: continuing the evolution. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 36, 1-10.

Table n.4 provides an overview of the major differences between goods-dominant logic and service-dominant logic related to value and value creation.

	G-D logic	S-D logic
Value driver	Value-in-exchange	Value-in-use or value-in-context
Creator of value	Firm, often with input from firms in a supply chain	Firm, network partners, and customers
Process of value creation	Firms embed value in ''goods'' or ''services'', value is 'added' by enhancing or increasing attributes	Firms propose value through market offerings, customers continue value-creation process through use
Purpose of value	Increase wealth for the firm	Increase adaptability, survivability, and system wellbeing through service (applied knowledge and skills) of others
Measurement of value	The amount of nominal value, price received in exchange	The adaptability and survivability of the beneficiary system
Resources used	Primarily operand resources	Primarily operant resources, sometimes transferred by embedding them in operand resources-goods
Role of firm	Produce and distribute value	Propose and co-create value, provide service
Role of goods	Units of output, operand resources that are embedded with value	Vehicle for operant resources, enables access to benefits of firm competences
Role of customers	To 'use up' or 'destroy' value created by the firm	Co-create value through the integration of firm-provided resources with other private and public resources

Table n.4 – Goods-dominant logic vs. Service-dominant logic[22]

Looking at the schematization we can say that the crux of the contrast between service-dominant and goods-dominant logic is found in the basis of exchange.

Service-dominant logic focuses on the action of operant resources: those that act upon other resources, such as knowledge and skills. Whereas, goods-dominant logic focuses on the exchange of operand resources: those that an act or operation is performed on, such as goods[23].

1.4.1 Service Dominant Logic in Tourism

There has been a growing awareness of the potential for value creation that can be reached by the application of service-dominant logic to the management of many different services, including tourism. The notion of co-creation of value in service-dominant logic suggests that "there is no value until an offer is used. Experience and perception are essential for the determination of value".[24] That is, offers must be

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[22] Source: Vargo, S. L., Maglio, P. P., & Akaka, M. A. (2008). *On value and value co-creation: A service systems and service logic perspective*, European Management Journal, 26, 145-152.
[23] Constantin and Lusch, 1994; Vargo and Lusch, 2004.

[24] Vargo and Lusch, 2006.

integrated with other market-oriented offers, i.e., from other companies, and non-market-oriented, such as personal/private and public resources, to create value.

This is the example of tourist destinations, where value is co-created, thanks to the DMO, both by a multitude of stakeholders and by the consumer, by the tourist.

In the case of DMOs the creation of value is seen from a systemic perspective and therefore, the producer-consumer distinction disappears and all actors contribute to the creation of value for themselves and for others. In fact, in service-dominant logic all economic and social actors are resource integrators.

Li and Petrick (2008) studied service-dominant logic applied to the tourism sector and the potential influence it could provide to open up destination managers to new ideas and ways of thinking.

This is done through the conceptual development of ten fundamental premises (FP), in Table n.5, that can be applied to tourism, with a qualitative approach for tourism managers.

FP1	Service is the fundamental basis of exchange.
FP2	Indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange.
FP3	Goods are a distribution mechanism for service provision.
FP4	Operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage.
FP5	All economies are service economies.
FP6	The customer is always a co-creator of value.
FP7	The enterprise cannot deliver value but only offer value propositions.
FP8	A service-centred view is inherently customer oriented and relational.
FP9	All social and economic actors are resource integrators.
FP10	Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary.

Table n.5 – Fundamental premises in service-dominant logic of tourism[25]

The first 5 FPs take up general notions and concepts already analysed above.

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[25] Source: own processing based on Li & Petrick (2008) and Vargo & Lusch (2008) studies.

In the following sub-section, we will discuss the most significant points that refer directly to value creation.

1.4.2 *Value co-creation and Collaboration Process*

In Table n.5 the FP6 says that " The customer is always a co-creator of value "

It could be said that the service in general implies interaction, but in tourism the engagement between supplier and consumer is much more interactive, due to the importance of relationships and the nature of proximity and contact with human resources.

FP9 supports another very important idea "All social and economic actors are resource integrators".

In the example of the DMO, all members of the organisation can benefit from the network and create value more effectively through collaboration.

Very relevant aspects of the DMO collaborative process have been identified in literature. In Figure n.1 Jamal and Getz suggest the three-stage model of the collaboration process:
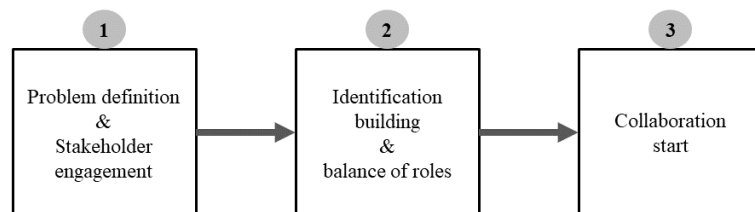
Figure n.1 – Model of the collaboration process of a DMO[26]

1) in the first phase, there is the problem definition and the stakeholder involvement;

2) the second phase focuses on building identification with the network through shared values and balancing roles and power structure among partners in order to a common sense of collaboration;

3) the third phase, finally, corresponds to the implementation phase of the collaboration.

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[26] Source: own processing based on Jamal e Getz model (1995).

Wang and Fesenmaier (2007) introduce another model for the creation of a collaborative process within the destination. The model, as shown in Table n.6, has five stages:

Precondition	Motivation	Stages					Outcomes
Crisis Competition Economic condition Organization support Technology	Strategy oriented Transaction cost oriented Learning oriented Cluster competitiveness Community responsibility	**Assembling** Issue identification Partner selection	**Ordering** Establish goals Develop programs	**Implementation** Assign roles Execute programs	**Evaluation** Asses predefined goals Check against expectations	**Transformation** Evolve stronger Other projects Continue the same Continue dif. form Finish	Strategy oriented Organization learning oriented Social capital oriented

Table n.6 – Framework for destination alliance formation[27]

1) the first phase concerns the identification of problems and the partners selection;

2) in the second phase, the purpose is to obtain a shared vision on the purposes of the partnership and to plan actions to be put into practice;

3) the third phase refers to the implementation of previously developed ideas and programmes;

4) the fourth phase is evaluation to monitor results against expectations;

5) the final phase refers to the future development of the partnership.

This proposal also reinforces the importance of stakeholder motivation for collaboration.

Among the outcomes, in the final section, are strategy-oriented, knowledge organisation-oriented and social capital-oriented, which reveal the impact that this type of project can have on the development of a DMO's network.

This view of the collaboration process can be associated with the commitment that the different members of the tourism network make to its development. The higher the investment of the companies in the relationships, the richer the relationship and the more opportunities will be generated for the tourist destination over time. (Hakansson and Ford, 2002).

This concept of progressive commitment makes one think about one of the possible limits of the network: a higher level of dependency, making it more difficult for an organisation to act independently.

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[27] Source: Adapted from Wang and Fesenmaier (2007)

Collaboration in a destination, according to Pinto and Kastenholz (2011) as reported in Figure n.2, is a dynamic process. this process takes place considering that collaborative initiatives must have a purpose for their development, which can be seen as the input for the execution of activities by network actors and the common exploitation of resources (including relationships), finally producing different types of outputs.
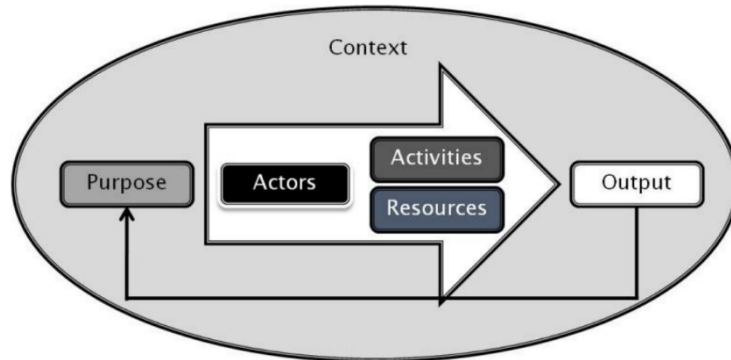
Figure n.2 - Collaborative tourist destination as a dynamic process[28]

The activities performed and resources exchanged depend on the evolving phase of the collaboration. The results may lead to a change in the purpose of the collaboration or to its evolution, thus continuously influencing the process and its results; and may create a favourable or unfavourable condition for collaboration within the DMO.

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[28] Source: Pinto and Kastenholz (2011)

Section II: Destination Marketing

2.1   Destination Marketing: goal and key processes

In any type of business, marketing plays a fundamental role.

Marketing is a set of coordinated strategic processes and is aimed at managing relations between people and organizations, based on the exchange of supply systems.

The meta-process of marketing has a double purpose:

- creation of economic value for the company (income, turnover, profits, etc.)

- creation of customer value proposition (functional, experiential, etc.).[29]

An efficient marketing strategy results in the development of a competitive benefit and the determination of the company's positioning relative to its competitors.

To realize marketing objectives, according to Franch (1992), two different approaches must be used:

- an analytical approach based on the search for information, through market research, competitive analysis, segmentation, positioning;

- a strategic approach on the target market, through operational programs, marketing mix, performance measurement, etc.

According to Martini, it is necessary to firstly conduct an internal and external analysis of the organization in order to identify the positioning and the market segment the organization would like to serve. Then, plan a series of marketing mix activities, i.e. implement the 4p's: product policies, price policies, distribution policies and promotional policies.

Feedback should be obtained from all these activities in order to verify the quality of the service provided.

In the Figure n.3 we find the model suggested by Martini.

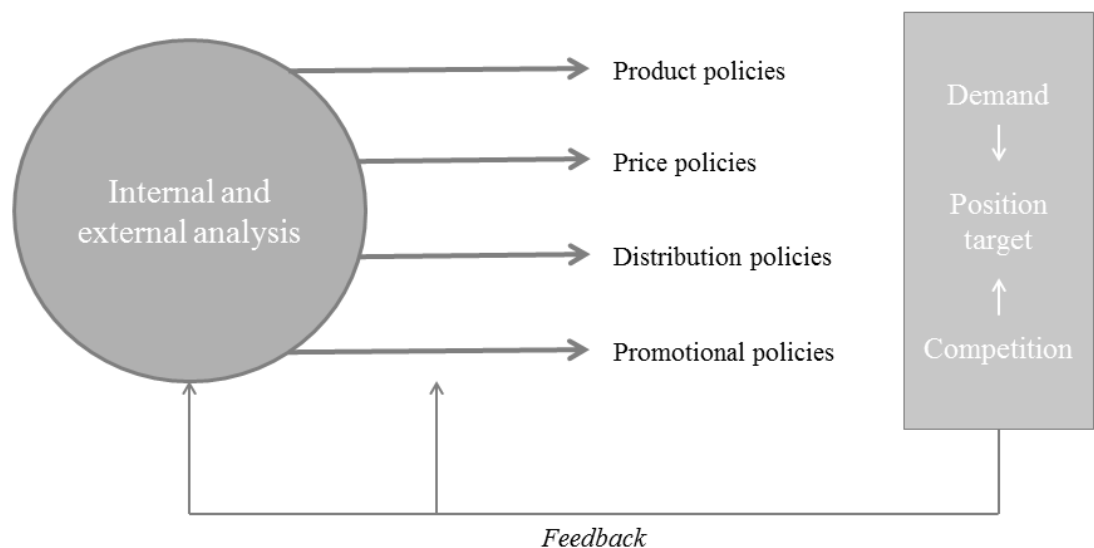[29] Adapted by M.Risitano from a definition by M. Costabile (2000).

Figure n.3 - The strategic dimension of marketing[30]

In highly competitive contexts, competencies in strategic marketing activities take on a very important role, becoming true core competencies of the organization. This is why a well-structured organizational structure is a necessary requirement for the success of marketing actions.

Marketing skills represent, therefore, according to Lanza (1999), a wealth of intangible resources that help the company to differentiate the offer from its competitors and capture the attention of the consumer over the long term.

All these general marketing concepts also apply to a Destination Management Organization.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, in Table n.3, Presenza explains the core activities of a DMO, making a distinction between management activities, which we have just mentioned, and marketing activities, which we will now discuss.

The marketing activities identified by Presenza (2005) are: publications, direct sales, direct mail, educational tours and/or familiarization trips, information/training workshops, cooperation programs, road shows, conferences, events, and festivals.

All these activities necessitate conformity with the organization's vision, mission, and core competencies.

Even if the sale of a destination's tourism services is first made individually by single local businesses. in these cases, the small dimension of the company and the heavy expense of marketing policies, amplify the central role that the DMO plays also

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[30] U.Martini, (2005), *Management dei sistemi territoriali*, Giappichelli, Torino, p168.

in these processes. In actual terms, organizational forms such as the DMO, based on horizontal and/or vertical cooperation, expand the dimension of the company and generate an increase in specific marketing skills that then become widespread within each local company.

It can be firmly sustained, however, that the DMO also plays an increasingly important role in the operation of marketing policies, by managing and, above all, promoting the tourist destination as a single package.

Let´s now look at the specific marketing activities identified by Presenza:

a) *Familiarization trips and educational tour*

Are used to capture the interest of operators along the trade chain linking the DMO to the market. E.g., tour operators, travel agencies, journalists, cultural tourism associations, opinion leaders, etc.

These players will be offered tourist packages free of charge in order to publicize the local tourist offer and promote the development of business opportunities. Frequently, this type of activity is set up by a DMO to invite film producers so that the destination can be used as a possible film set.

This situation gives an opportunity to the location, in terms of creating or consolidating the positioning of the destination, its notoriety and the emotions associated with it, thus positively influencing its perception by potential tourists.

b) *Roadshow and information/training workshop*

These activities help to connect the destination's tourist offer with an expert audience.

c) *Publications*

They are used to inform current and potential tourists about the attractions and activities in the destination. E.g., tourist guides, hotel directories, promotional brochures, etc.

d) *Advertising*

This is a core element of a DMO and one of the most expensive. It makes use of many different tools, the most important of which include magazines, tourism media, promotional videos, radio, social media, website, etc.

e) *Conferences, events, festivals*

This is also a way of attracting current and potential customers and learning about trends in the business area.

f) Co-promotion

It is about cooperation actions, even between several sectors, at regional, national and international level.

It is useful to increase the effectiveness of market penetration and reduce the cost by sharing the experience but also the risk of the investment with the partner.

g) Destination Management System

Martini describes it as "an integrated information system that makes it possible to collect in a centralized way all the information about tourist attractivities and services offered, making them available for promotion and marketing through a website".

This is a whole series of tools, then, created to facilitate the distribution of information about the DMO's tourism products and to simplify purchasing and booking process.

h) Brand Management

The use of a brand strategy for a DMO is a key driver for positioning itself uniquely and distinctively in the tourist's mind compared to competitors[31].

The goal of destination marketing is to select, reach and satisfy specific demand segments, from the domestic or international market, through strategic collaborations with DMO actors and the media.

Compared to a classic organization, the marketing action of a DMO has several relevant aspects. First, in a DMO there is the inability to exercise full control over some variables of the marketing mix, such as product, price, and distribution. This is because the relative decisions taken regarding these three variables are, as a rule, taken directly by the individual local player.

In this perspective, it is clear that there is a separation between the marketing action carried out on a macro level by the DMO and the marketing action on a micro level carried out by the individual local actors.

Contrary to what happens in a real company, i.e. a corporate destination, in a community destination the marketing action requires direct control of only some tools, especially those connected with promotion, while for all the others it will have to take decisions regarding resources that are under the control of the local players.

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[31] In more details, DMO branding issues will be discussed in Section III.

For this reason, it is very important that a DMO, in order to follow an effective destination marketing strategy, exercises an efficient coordination action on the territory.

2.1.1   Strategy

Destination Marketing is defined by Kotler (1999) as "a place planning procedure concerning the satisfaction of the needs of target markets. It could be successful when it satisfies two main parameters: a) the enterprises and the residents' satisfaction from the purchase of goods and services that the place provides, b) the satisfaction of the expectations of potential target markets (enterprises and visitors), as long as the goods and the services that the place provides to them are those that they wish to get". According to the model proposed by Kotler, in the Figure n.4, six are the strategies of destination marketing:
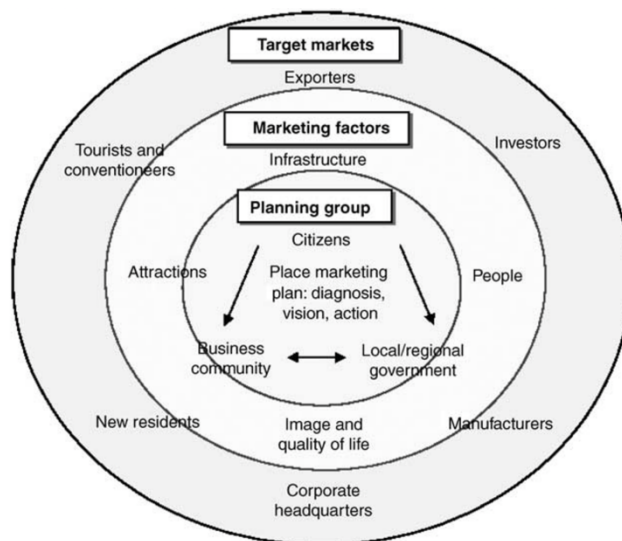

Figure n.4 – Levels of destination marketing[32]

- Attracting tourist and business visitors
- Attracting businesses from elsewhere
- Retaining and expanding existing businesses
- Promoting small business expansion and fostering new business start-ups

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[32] Source: Kotler P., Hamlin, M. A., Rein, I. and Haider, D. H.
(2002), *Marketing Asian Places*, John Wiley & Sons, Singapore.

- Expanding exports and outside investments
- Expanding the population or changing the mix of residents.

Clearly, the marketing of a DMO is not only limited to increasing tourist arrivals, but also plays an important role in regional/urban development, country positioning in international relations and economic development (Deffner and Metaxas, 2005; Papadopoulos, 2004).

Buhalis, on the other hand, proposes that destination marketing should be used as a strategic mechanism in coordination with planning and management to provide adequate gains to all stakeholders, and not simply as a promotional tool.

Buhalis also suggests that to achieve this, the most successful and competitive destinations will be those that impose effective training of human resources, cooperate with competing and complementary destinations to learn from them, undertake innovative and research-based marketing, using new technologies and achieve the four key generic strategic objectives. Which are:

1) Enhance the long-term prosperity of local people
2) Delight visitors by maximizing their satisfaction
3) Maximize profitability of local enterprises and maximize multiplier effects
4) Optimize tourism impacts by ensuring a sustainable balance between economic benefits and socio-cultural and environmental costs.

Deffner and Metaxas (2005) discuss the strategic planning process that implies the analysis of the internal and external environment of a destination and in particular is based on: identification of the destination's vision; identification of development objectives; market research and market segmentation processes in order to evaluate the potential target markets, to investigate the global tendencies and to change experiences; planning the appropriate strategies, tactics and alternative scenarios; and planning the feedback procedure.

2.1.2   *Segmentation, targeting and positioning*

From the tourist's point of view, it is appropriate to sustain that they are different from each other and have different characteristics and needs that make them choose to visit a specific tourist destination.

For these reasons it is very important for a DMO to make an optimal market segmentation. "Each destination, precisely, can satisfy a specific group of tourists.

Understanding which is the demand segment it wants to target is essential for the definition of its marketing strategies" (Tardivo, 2014).

Kotler and Keller (2010) identify four types of segmentation:

- *geographical*, which assumes that the market is divided into different geographical units (states, regions, districts, cities, etc.). The DMO must decide in which of these areas to operate and for this reason, data such as demographic information, urban density, climate, etc. are also important.

- *demographic*, where the market is divided according to age demographic or gender, income, social class, etc.

- *behavioral*, which clusters consumers on the based on their attitudes to consuming the tourism service, based for example on the occasions of purchase (holiday travel, business travel, etc.), desired benefits, frequency of use, status, level of loyalty, etc.

- *psychographic*, which is the most frequently used approach and is based on categorizing consumers according to their value system and lifestyle. It is often used in a complementary way with other typologies.

In addition, criteria for the identification of segments must be observed. I.e., they must be measurable, relevant, accessible, differentiable and managerially applicable.

It is very important that the DMO has a market orientation for the development of the marketing strategy, which means anticipating consumer needs in order to develop products and services that satisfy them. So, use customer satisfaction measurement techniques, making a pre and post comparison between expectations and perceptions.

However, it is only logical that the DMOs involve the interests of several different companies and that market priorities are established.

The main options, according to Kotler and Keller, are four:

- selective specialization, identifying several profitable and appropriate targets in terms of the destination's goals;

- product specialization, in which the destination takes a single type of offer for the entire market;

- market specialization, in which the destination focuses on one target but offers a multitude of products;

- market coverage, satisfying all targets with all possible products.

The role of the DMO will then be to capture changes in the preferences of the target consumers over time and adapt consequently.

After defining the target market, the DMO must decide which positioning to assume.

For Kotler (2010) "positioning is the way in which the product is defined by consumers by its most important attributes, in other words, the place it has in the consumers' minds".

A key role here is played by the *destination brand*, which will be discussed in detail in Section III.

2.2   Tourist Destination Experience

The concept of the tourist experience has been studied in literature from a variety of different perspectives. Some studies have explored into the theory of structured experience, others have studied it as a marginal phenomenon, and still others have specifically studied it from a sensory point of view.

Certainly, existing studies have shown that the tourist experience can be used by DMOs as a marketing tool.

Due to the situational and environmental nature of the phenomenon, there is no single definition of experience in the literature.

Generally, however, it can be defined as "a business approach that consists of attaching memorable events to economic offers in order to engage the consumer in a personal way" (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

Memorable events and memories must therefore be derived from the tourist experience. And can be created by DMOs by stimulating and engaging the emotions of the consumer.

The final purpose is to increase, as a consequence, the perceived value of the tourist destination's offer, but also to obtain their intention to revisit that particular destination. Therefore, entire tourist destinations are positioning themselves in the market as "experiences".

Experience in the tourism context is considered a multidimensional factor that goes beyond entertainment. A tourist will expect to have a different kind of experience in the tourist destination than in everyday life.

The customer, therefore, is involved in the creation of this experience, the so-called co-creation, the creation of an economy of experience.

However, there is a very important relationship that has become increasingly significant in the last few years, that is the relationship between the experience and the perception of a sustainable destination.

I.e. a destination that is attentive to the care and beauty of the surrounding natural environment, but also to the preservation of local cultural and historical resources. Because, when a consumer decides to travel to a sustainable destination, he will certainly feel positive emotions, such as a sense of pride and happiness.

And this will result in an overall better perception of the experience itself.

The tourist, however, has not always been focused on the fun dimension of the tourist destination.

The old tourist had different needs, he had to be guided, step by step. This is because there was not the diffusion and pervasiveness of today's internet.

Before, in fact, tour operators and travel agencies became very important, but nowadays they have lost a large part of their influence.

This is due to the spread of digital technologies, which intensify a process of disintermediation in tourism.

Today the tourist is looking for an experience, an experience that is unique and distinctive, for example in an exclusive place such as an holiday in a lighthouse.

The tourist experience is the result of all the interactions a customer has with the environment, i.e. in responding to different physical and process inputs, or resulting from interaction with human resources.

2.3 Tourist behaviour

An important part of implementing effective marketing strategies for a DMO is to understand how potential customers make decisions about which locations to visit.

And to answer questions such as: what do tourists look for in a destination? Why do they prefer one destination over another? What do they expect from the

destination? Etc. Many researchers have investigated these questions and tried to find out the criteria behind the tourist's decision-making process.

And this process is certainly complex and lengthy, since it often takes a long time from when people hear about a destination before they actually visit it.

Over the years, many experts have worked on models of consumer behaviour. Kotler and Armstrong (1989) have profiled one that can be adapted to a destination tourist's decision-making process.

This model has five stages:

1) acquiring the existence of the destination

2) accumulating information about the destination

3) to preference that particular destination to others

4) to choose to go in that destination

5) to arrive in the destination and to consume the offered services.

Another more recent model has been formulated by environmental psychologists, in an attempt to explain the effects of the environment in which the tourism service is provided on consumer behaviour.

This is the so-called *SOR stimulus-organization-response model*[33].

It consists of three elements:

1) marketing *stimuli* through which a specific destination penetrates the sphere of knowledge of the tourist;

2) *organization* represents the target of these stimuli, which is the tourist, who processes the new information together with other previous information and together with his or her personal preferences;

3) buyer *response* that translates into three emotional states: pleasure/dissatisfaction, excitement/non-excitement and domination/submission[34].

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[33] Hoffman K. D., Bateson J.E.G., Iasevoli G., (2007), Marketing dei servizi, Apogeo, Milano, 215-216.

[34] Pleasure/satisfaction reflects the level of customer satisfaction with the service experience.
Excitement/non-excitement reflects the measure to which the consumer feels excited or stimulated.
Dominance/submission indicates the consumer's feeling of control and ability to act freely within the service provision environment.
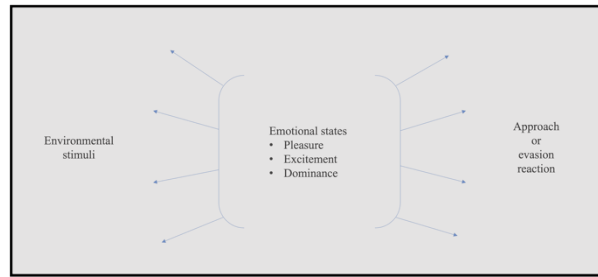
Figure n.5 – The three elements of the SOR model[35]

In the Figure n.5 consumers' reactions or responses to these stimuli, which are approach or escape, have been reported.

These behaviours can be combined in 4 different ways:

1) desire to approach or move away from the destination

2) desire for deeper and more interaction or escape from the destination

3) desire to communicate with others or ignore the destination's communication

4) feelings of satisfaction or disappointment about the destination experience.

In any case, to realize the marketing objectives, the DMO must be aware of all these steps and follow the potential consumer through each of them.

In order to maximize the marketing strategy, the DMO must therefore constantly identify the step in which the target audience is at and act on it consequently.

2.4   The Role of Social Media Marketing in DMO

The first step of the consumer's decision-making process requires a search for information.

Therefore, in order to take part in this process, DMOs need to provide fast, reliable, appealing and updated information.

In the era of global competence, competition for consumers' attention is becoming more and more pronounced, forcing increasingly complex and quick strategic marketing operations.

Already in 2004 Holloway proclaimed that "information and communication technology, as it is now known, has come to play a key role in all elements of the

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[35] Source: adopted from Donovan R. J., Rossiter J. R., (1982), Store atmosphere: an environmental psychology approach, Journal of Retailing, 58.

marketing mix, and the new term recognizes the importance of communication in the interface between a business and its customers".

To be sure, tourist behavior has been transformed by the introduction and extensive use of information and communication tools such as Internet, mobile devices, social network, and online booking engines, all of which have a major impact on a destination's consumer decision-making process.

In particular, the emerging use of social media and smartphone has radically changed human communication and interaction of human beings (Shu-Chuan & Yoojung 2011, Ngai, Tao & Moon, 2015) and how humans disseminate information (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

Social media represent more than a technological development, a real social innovation, as they enable users to express their thoughts, opinions and ideas through content that is visible to many other users.

Social media is more than just social networking and content sharing sites; it also includes blogs, business networking sites, collaborative sites, commerce communities, podcasts, educational material sharing, as well as open-source software (Anderson, 2007).

In a business and organizational context, above all, the use of social media changes the way in which goods and services are marketed.

Barker (2012) defines social media marketing as follows: "Social media marketing (SMM) uses social media portals to positively influence consumers toward a website, company, brand, product, service, or a person. Typically, the end goal of social media marketing is a "conversion," such as the purchase of a product, subscription to a newsletter, registration in an online community, or some other desirable consumer action."[36]

Social media marketing improves the traditional communication strategies of classical marketing. This tool, thus, offers several advantages to companies and organizations as its applications emerge as an influential and low-cost marketing tool with a global reach (Usakli et al., 2017). Furthermore, through social media, the scope of marketing activities is no longer limited to the geographical location of the organization (Lange-Faria, 2012).

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[36] Barker M et al. (2012), *Social Media Marketing: A Strategic Approach*, South-Western, Masun.

For all these reasons, the tourism sector is particularly involved in these digital changes because social media not only influence the customer's choice of travel, but also the way the tourism service itself is sold on the market.

By its very identity, the tourism product is information-intensive and highly engaging. And for this reason, potential customers are searching for the most reliable information possible on potential destinations and activities to be carried out within, before and during their visit. Therefore, user-generated content on social media is a relevant source of information, which influences the whole customer journey.

According to Minazzi (2014), the customer journey of a tourist to a destination is divided into three phases[37]:

- pre-trip phase

- consumption phase

- post-trip phase.

During the pre-travel phase, potential travelers use social media for inspiration.

Applications such as Pinterest, YouTube and Blogs are used to generate an image of the future destination and to communicate potential consumers.

Potential travelers use this app to get specific information about activities, restaurants, and tourist attractions to plan their future journey. Especially looking for reviews and ratings on platforms like TripAdvisor, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.

Also, during the consumption phase, travelers actively use the social media platforms mentioned for decision-making, for sharing their own experience within the destination.

During the post-travel phase, social media enables virtual storytelling for the consumers and also provides a sense of belonging to virtual travel communities.

Through sharing personal experiences and recommendations during and after their journey on social networks, costumers generate *electronic word-of-mouth* (eWOM), which is spread virally to a bigger and more global audience (Phelps 2004; Thorson & Rodgers 2006; Dwyer 2007; Hung & Li 2007; Shu-Chuan & Yoojung, 2011).

Due to the fast way in which this information is shared, destination management organizations need to carefully observe customers, listen to them, and promptly respond to problems in order to prevent negative eWOW.

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[37] Minazzi R., (2014), *Social Media Marketing in Tourism and Hospitality*, Springer, Cham.

2.4.1   Social Media Marketing strategy

Definitely, the study of strategic and operational marketing is of great interest, as DMOs seek to market and promote the intangible and intangible package of products of a destination. (Munar, 2012; Bieger, 2004).

If the destination wants to enforce on the highly competitive global tourism market, it must be distinguishable from the competition trough a social marketing strategy.

Culnan, McHugh & Zubillaga (2010) point out the importance of implementing a strategy of social media into their marketing mix[38]. Companies need to develop a social media strategy, which aligns with the corporate marketing strategy, and includes goal setting, defining the target audience, analyzing competitors, and setting activities.

Another challenge arises from the cooperation with stakeholders within the destination. The goal is to develop a common and coordinated social media strategy.

Today, as social media are over-saturated with information, attracting attention has become increasingly difficult. The most used methods in the tourism sector are: novelty, chance to win, celebrity involvement, uniqueness, unexpectedness, competition, consonance or interesting graphical design.

To provide quality communication, the goal for a DMO is to resolve ambiguities and reduce uncertainty. For this reason, it is very important to pay attention to the type of content to be posted on social media, which is considered a key factor for consumer interaction through a "like" or a "comment" or a "share".

In addition, regarding the type of content provided in a DMO's social media posts, visual content such as photos and videos are very effective to attract the interest of potential guests.

The time of publication of content is also an important factor to consider. From the analysis conducted by Mariani (2016), for DMOs a higher number of interactions on social media was achieved by posts published at the weekend and during the evening.[39]

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[38] Culnan MJ, McHugh PJ, Zubillaga JI., (2010), *How Large U.S. Companies Can Use Twitter and Other Social Media to Gain Business Value*, MIS Quaterly Executive, 9(4) 243-259.
[39] Mariani, M. M., Di Felice, M., & Mura, M. (2016), *Facebook as a destination marketing tool: Evidence from Italian regional Destination Management Organizations,* Tourism Management, 54, 321–343.

According to Hays (2013) even though tourism mangers are aware of the importance of social media, they are still new to promoting destinations by providing an appropriate type of information through social media.

This consideration means that DMOs should rethink the attention and resources currently being paid to online platforms and consider the need to invest in training and recruiting qualified staff to help acquire new clients.

However, the use of social media by DMOs is still largely experimental and this will be their challenge for the future.

2.4.2 The 3 C Model: Content – Commerce – Community

Marketing in the tourism sector, as seen above, is changing through the use of new digital technologies.

This concept is well explained in the so-called 3Cs mix model, content, commerce, community (Figure n.6).

INFORMATION
MANAGEMENT

CONTENT

COMMERCE

MANAGEMENT
OF BUSINESS
TRANSACTION
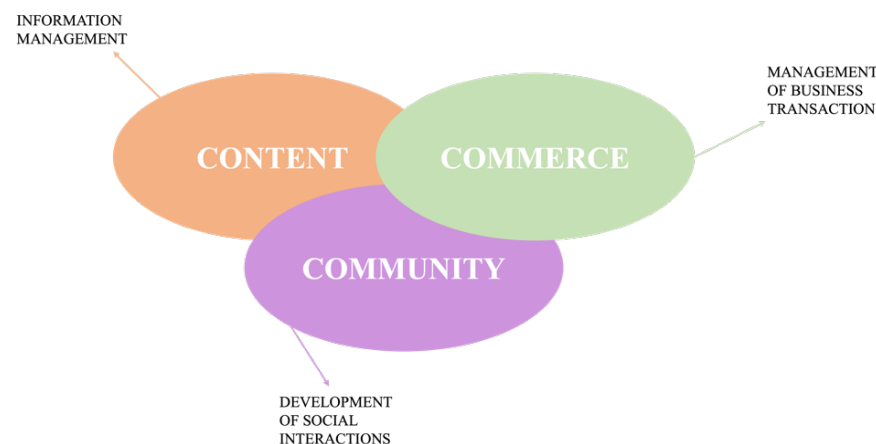
COMMUNITY

DEVELOPMENT
OF SOCIAL
INTERACTIONS

Figure n.6 – The 3C Model[40]

1) Content

The way of managing information changes, therefore, in fact, the contents of the offer change and become available at different times and on different platforms. Such as websites or apps.

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[40] Source: Risitano M., Focus on tourism industry and Destination branding.

So, information must support the offering system. And the offer system is nothing more than a set of attributes which can have positive or negative connotations and which, in fact, can become costs or benefits.

The goal for the DMO will be to create value for potential digital customers through digital positioning that touches the cognitive system of customers.

In terms of benefits:

- Functional benefits, i.e. achievable performance;

- Symbolic benefits, i.e. psycho-social values and status;

- Affective benefits, i.e. feelings and emotions.

In terms of costs, on the other hand, there can be information costs, access costs, usage costs, etc.

2) Commerce

The way of managing business transactions also changes. We can, in fact, also have transactions that are completely closed in a digital environment.

Another theme is customer relationship management and, in particular, the ability to communicate information.
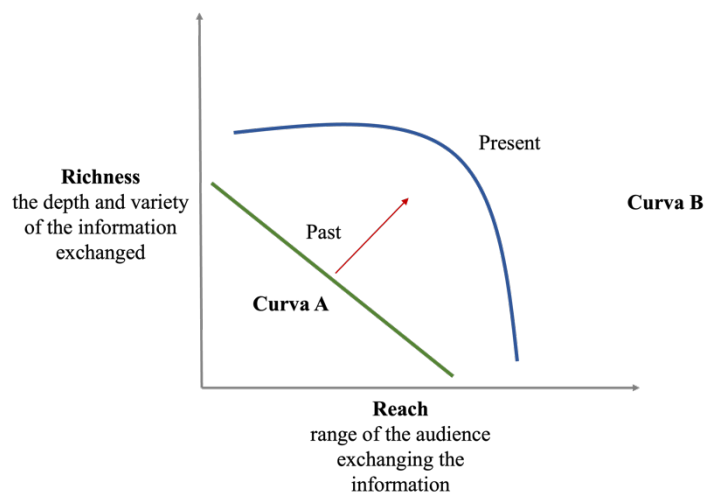
Graph n.3 – Reach and Richness Trade-off[41]

In Graph n.3 two variables of the ability to communicate information are represented:

- Reach, i.e. the range of the audience exchanging the information;

- Richness, i.e. the depth and variety of the information exchanged.

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[41] Source: Risitano M., Focus on tourism industry and Destination branding.

In the pre-digital world, companies have often cared about telling a lot to a few or a little to many.

Looking at the graph, curve A, referring to the past, is a flat line that demonstrates just that, the two extremes being high richness and low reach or low richness and high reach.

Curve B, referring to today, on the other hand, is a curve which shows that as reach increases richness goes down.

It has been shown, therefore, that this trade-off of choice can be overcome with new digital technologies, because they allow much more information to be given to a much wider audience. On the contrary, information overlapping must be avoided today.

3) Community

Development of relationships between consumers, of social interactions in community like Trivago, TripAdvisor, Expedia, Booking, Airbnb, etc.

Before, it was only between companies and customers through call centers. Today, as seen previously, it takes place on social media and it happens both between company and customer, but also, and above all, between consumers themselves.

Create, therefore, a community that encourages the exchange of content, information, and products between customers, under the management of the entity holding the offer, in this case the DMO.

Thereby, social media applications act as an agent of change by enabling co-creation of content between the supply and demand side (Usakli et al., 2017)

Tourists themselves now constitute a major source of information, and their opinions are considered essential, providing unbiased and reliable information for planning trips and vacations (Kang & Schuett, 2013). In consequence, tourism markets increasingly co-create value with their visitors.

2.4.3   *The Digital Era*

As seen so far since the last century the influence of digital technologies has changed the way of making tourism.

It is possible to divide this evolution into several eras:

- *GDS Era* (1960-1995), where the world of agents and intermediaries had played a dominant role, because the customer did not have easy access to tour operators.

- *Internet Era* (1995-2000), tourism market players started to make direct sales on platforms, completely changing the market, because the customer no longer recognized the role of the intermediary.

- *SoLoMo Era* (2000-2012), stands for social-local-mobile era, i.e. the era of social media, local destination development and mobile devices (smartphones, tablets).

- *Hybrid Era* (2012-now) is the current era, where there is so-called augmented reality, virtual reality, voice assistants, clouding, artificial intelligence, etc.
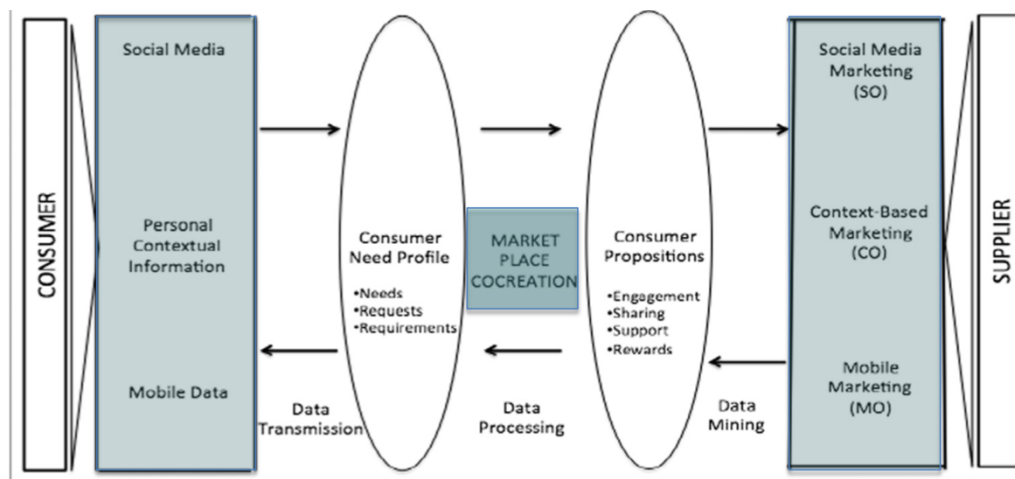
Figure n.7 – SoCoMo Model[42]

In Figure n.7, there is the consumer on one side and the supplier, the DMO, on the other.

The destination manages, as we have already seen, the "so" part, social media marketing; then, the "co" part, context-based marketing, constitutes the entire system of supply, that is, all the content posted online; finally, the "mo", mobile marketing, making all the information available on the main mobile devices in every part of the world.

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[42] Source: Buhalis, Foerste, 2015.

Therefore, the consumer, having specific needs, moves towards the flow of information, towards the supply, crossing the customer value proposition, which the DMO wants to be sustained in terms of engagement, sharing, support and rewards.

At this point, the two main subjects, consumer and supplier meet their needs in the creation of a marketplace where value is created, the marketplace cocreation.

Not only, therefore, a value created by the suppliers, who include a multitude of players in the DMO, but also by the willingness of tourists to stay on the platform.

2.5   Performance measurement and tracking

In the light of the considerations made throughout this section, the DMO's approach to a destination marketing strategy must be dynamic, flexible, and innovative.

Relying only on economic and financial measures can be misleading, as this is ex-post information relating to actions that have already been carried out and leads to short-term measures, sacrificing the creation of value that could be determined in the long term.

For this reason, a strong connection between strategic and operational management is needed to create value on a continuing scale. This is done by systematically and constantly measuring performance against the targets set by the DMO. In a tourism market with increasing national and international competition, it becomes extremely important for the success of the destination that a DMO monitors performance levels.

This analysis will help to take timely action in the event of any changes or updates to be made to the marketing actions implemented.

This analysis will help to take timely action in case of changes or updates to be made to the marketing actions implemented.

This is what market research is for: collecting data and/or information and processing it in order to translate it into useful information for decision-making.

The first step in the research process is to recognize the problem and identify the objectives. then data will be collected by:
- *Explorative marketing research*, used to identify solutions, ideas, and insights to define more specific opportunities for future research. It is often based on

secondary sources of information. This means already published information such as magazines, newspapers, already available research, databases, government statistics, etc.

This kind of sources are usually chosen because they are less expensive and faster, especially in a first phase of research.

- *Descriptive marketing research*, allows to analyze in deeper a marketing problem, making it possible to measure the frequency of the analyzed marketing variables.

  This type of research makes it possible to fill gaps in secondary data, by approaching those individuals involved to obtain the missing information.

- *Causal marketing research*, measure marketing problems using more detailed and structured explicative variables, analyzing cause-effect relationships.

There can be three methods of investigation for collecting primary data:

1) *Observation*

First market researchers used this system because they believed that the best way to understand what people thought was to observe their movements and habits.

Actually, this method can give an idea of what happened, but not of people's motivations and opinions.

2) *Experimentation*

Is a typically scientific method of investigation that includes the simulation of a particular situation by introducing specific controlled variables. This will produce an evaluation by the marketers in regard to the change of these same chosen variables. For example, experimenting a new marketing policy on a small sample of the market.

In general, experimentation is the most suitable technique for causal research, as it allows precisely the verification of cause-effect relationships between variables.

3) *Survey*

It involves interviewing a sample of subjects and is the most frequently used method in quantitative techniques. It is a fast and versatile method, less expensive than the previous ones. The only limitation is the interviewee: his desire to provide the required data, his ability to answer the questions and the tendency to be influenced in his answers by stereotypes.

Two macro-categories of techniques are used for all these purposes: qualitative and quantitative techniques.

2.5.1   *The qualitative methods*

Commonly, qualitative research supports decision-making processes in situations of high uncertainty or concerning marketing elements that are qualitative by definition.

It is directed to define customers' opinions and perceptions of a product or service.

Being a very in-depth form of investigation, it is very busy and therefore it needs a smaller sample size than the quantitative one.

In addition, the results are not statistically representative, but allow researchers to understand the motivation behind certain consumer behaviours and personal opinions that are difficult to quantify.

Some of the most frequently used qualitative methods include[43]:

- *Focus groups*, are group interviews where six to eight people are invited. This method generates a huge variety of opinions and in order not to enforce those of the more verbally aggressive participants, a moderator is essential.

- *Exploratory groups*, is a form of focus group used especially in the first stages to understand the dimensions of the problem and related interests. Usually, these groups are composed by a representative sample of potential consumers.

- *Clinical focus groups*, take place in an environment as detached as possible in order to judge if people truly express what they are feeling. For this reason, interviews are videotaped to analyze facial expressions and body language.

- *Focus groups with customers*, allow you to assess the impressions of an actual group of customers, interacting with the product itself in order to understand how they react.

- *Teleconferencing*, is a group discussion made on call. It helps to keep more people in the same place and therefore can facilitate the free expression of the respondents.

- *Videoconferencing*, same as above with the addition of the video image. This gives the opportunity to observe body language.

- *In-depth interviews*, are carried out by professional interviewers or psychologists who ask specific questions to go in depth and bring to light the most hidden feelings and attitudes.

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[43] Blythe J., Cerola E., (2013), *Fondamenti di Marketing*, Pearson Italia, Milano.

- *Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique* (ZMET)*, is a technique for sequentially evoking interconnected constructs that influence thought and behaviour (1995).

Respondents are asked to think about the research topic in advance and collect a set of information (photos, magazines, etc.) that represent their thoughts and feelings about the research topic. The interview is then started and is divided into five steps:

- *Storytelling*, to talk about individual visual metaphors, such as the experience of using a product;

- *Frame expansion*, to extend the metaphorical meaning of the images;

- *Sensory metaphor*, to make metaphors about the research topic;

- *Vignette*, to create a story about the research topic;

- *Digital image*, to create a visual summary of the research topic.

Once the interviews have been completed, the marketers will create a map with the most important result constructs.

- *Neuromarketing*, is the study of the emotional response of consumers to marketing stimuli. Neurological research has shown that people activate specific cerebral regions when they are judging a product.

- *Free association*, sample subjects are asked what comes to their mind when they think of a particular product, brand or service and marketers use this data to create a mind map of the brand.

By coding the answers according to the order of the associations recalled, a measure of the strength of the association and the liking index can be obtained.

In order not to influence the final results it is useful to start from the most general considerations and then move on to the more specific ones. The questionnaires can be divided into different levels and categories of consumers.

- *Projective techniques*, in which subjects are exposed to ambiguous and unstructured situations and asked to react. By using their imagination, respondents will bring out their true emotional states.

Three are the main projective techniques:

- *Complementation and interpretation exercises*, through incomplete or misleading stimuli the consumers' thoughts and feelings are triggered;

- *Comparison exercises*, consumers are asked to communicate their impressions by comparing the product or service with people, animals, activities, vegetables, etc.;

- *Archetypes*, projecting and stimulating deep-seated consumer attitudes and feelings. The role of the researcher is to understand the information indirectly without touching the customer.

It is not completely unusual for qualitative research to be carried out before quantitative research. The first priority will be to understand the scale of the problem and then create a survey to find out how many people are in agreement with the conclusions made in the qualitative study.

2.5.2   The quantitative methods

Quantitative research is applied in decision-making processes that can be expressed in numbers. This produces quantitative data that are collected through surveys that are submitted to representative samples of the universe under consideration.

The creation of a survey includes three stages:

1) definition of the sampling, choosing:

- the unit of the sample, who is to be interviewed;

- the sample size, how many people are to be interviewed;

- the sampling procedure, how the respondents are to be chosen.

2) choice of the interview method (in person, by phone, by post, online etc.)

3) drafting the survey

The marketer should write questions into the survey which are clear, short, concise, and easy for the respondent to understand. He/she should choose the right order of questions, from the specific to the general. And he/she should facilitate the compilation and data entry.

There are usually two types of closed questions:

- *Dichotomous*, which offers two answer alternatives (yes/no);

- *Multiple-choice*, which offers three or more answer alternatives.

For this type there are several techniques:

- Likert scale, on which the respondent indicates the intensity of his/her agreement or disagreement with a specific question.
- Semantic differential scale, the respondent chooses the point between two opposing words (or adjectives) that represents the direction and intensity of his or her opinion.
- Importance scale, classifies selected attributes according to importance by assigning a fixed numerical value (0=not important at all, 5=extremely important).
- Multidimensional scaling (MDS), i.e., perception maps. It is used to determine the images related to products, services or brands, as perceived by consumers.
- Rating scale, classifies some attributes according to a specific numerical order (0=bad, 5=excellent).

In order to analyse the quantitative data obtained, the researcher can make use of some measurement indices and represent the data in the form of matrices, diagrams and explanatory tables.

At this stage, statistical studies assume great importance, especially for large-scale surveys that are difficult to analyse.

The final stage of quantitative research concerns the interpretation of results into forms that can be used by managers. They use measurement scales that allow a numerical representation and summary of the results.

It is often the most widely used technique to measure consumers' cognitive structures over time.

For performance measurement in quantitative research, one of the most important tools is the *Balance Scorecard model*, which connects short-term operational results with long-term strategic results.

The Balance Scorecard (BSC) originated in 1992 with an article "The Balanced Scorecard. The measures that drive performance' published by Robert Kaplan and David Norton in the Harvard Business Review. In this article, the authors explain that the Balance Scorecard starts with the definition of a strategy and process improvement actions; then follows a phase of data collection and analysis that are compared with those of the previous phase. All in a single view of the whole business situation that generates value.

Performance measurement can have different quantitative or percentage indicators. The choice of the most suitable measures must meet several requirements that must always coexist in order to be accepted by the DMO.

These requirements are:

- clarity and simplicity, to facilitate the measurement process, but also its comparability over time;

- dynamism, meaning the ability to adapt to possible changes in strategy by the DMO itself.

Pike (2004) in his studies has grouped performance indicators for judging DMO validity into two main categories:

- *Market performance indicators*, such as statistical analysis of tourist flows, analysis of marketing actions and analysis of brand awareness;

- *Organizational performance indicators*, such as the degree of effectiveness of the activities taken by the DMO, the achievement of goals and operating efficiency.

Another contribution comes from De Carlo and Parolini (2004) who distinguish the performance indicators of a DMO into:

- *Lagging indicators* are the result indicators and derive from statistical analyses conducted on tourism flows. they express in summary the consequences of the actions adopted by the DMO.

- *Leading indicators*, on the other hand, make it possible to measure the results of individual actions and then derive the causes that led to certain results.

For example, indicators on the hospitality supply, the cultural supply, the investments made, the level of awareness of the destination, etc.

There are other methods to evaluate the brand performance of a DMO, one brand-based and one marketing-based.

The *brand-based approach* keeps the marketing programme fixed and studies consumer responses as the brand changes. An example is blind testing, in which the opinions, expressed by a group of unaware consumers and a group of consumers aware of the brand that identifies the product or service to be analysed, are compared.

This method is useful to understand the real value of the brand.

The *marketing-based approach*, on the other hand, keeps the brand fixed and analyses consumer responses as the marketing programme changes. This is done using comparative techniques, confronting consumers with different marketing strategies and evaluating the most effective.

Section III: Destination Branding

3.1   Introduction to Destination Brand processes

In the marketing literature, branding has started as one of its levers, together with product, price, placement, and promotion. This is not the situation today. Today, branding is a real strategic and operational resource within companies. If managed in the right way, from a strategic point of view, brand is one of the few assets available to a company that can provide a lasting competitive advantage in the market. To obtain a competitive advantage it is necessary a well thought-out, efficient branding strategy and substantial assets.

In the second half of the 18th century, early 19th the first national brands emerged, mostly in the USA. Brands such as Procter & Gamble, National Biscuits, Heinz, and Coca-Cola.

Keller and Aaker are the pioneers of brand management discussed from a strategic perspective over the past 30 years.

Primarily the fertile branding environment was attributable to factors such as: improved distribution channels; large scale production opportunities; improvements in possibilities for differentiating products by means of packaging; better opportunities for protecting brands; more advertising opportunities; rise of departments stores and national mail order houses; higher population, industrialisation, and urbanisation levels; increases in standards of living; and uneven quality of many contemporary products (Keller 2003).

Many studies have been written about branding and equally many are the definitions of brand in the literature.

Researcher/Association	Definition
Aaker (1991)	A set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or substact from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers
Hall (2002)	Brands include: • a clear and distinct image that differentiates them from their competitors; • an association with quality and a distinctive way of customer relations; • the ability to provide a long-term competitive advantage; • something greater than a simple physical attribute.
Keller (2003)	Brand is product, but one that adds other dimensions that differentiate it in some way from other products designed to satisfy the same need.
Kapferer (2004)	Brand is a shared desirable and exclusive idea embodied in products, services, places and / or experiences
Kotler and Gertner (2002)	Brands not only differentiate products and represent a promise of value' but also incite beliefs, evoke emotions and prompt behaviours.
American Marketing Association (AMA)	A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of these elements that seek to identify goods and services or a seller or group of sellers in order to differentiate it from its competitors.

Table n.7 – Brand Definitions[44]

The Table n.7 shows some of the most important brand definitions.

In common management practice, a brand is the level of effective awareness, reputation and prominence that distinguishes a product or service.

The place where a brand is born and grows is in the mind of the consumer. Building a brand means creating mental structures and helping consumers to organize

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[44] Source: Own processing.

their knowledge about products and services in order to make clear purchasing decisions.

Branding assumes that consumers perceive the differences between brands within a given product category. Consequently, marketing can get advantages by managing the brand properly.

The brand can be attributed to:

- *physical goods*, which include many consumer goods traditionally associated with well-known and valued brands, such as Coca Cola, Nescafè, etc.

- *business-to-business products*, where it is necessary for successful transactions to have a strong brand that conveys competence, reliability, and experience, such as Siemens.

- *services* (online and offline), where the challenge of intangibility finds a strong ally in branding, such as Google, Facebook, etc.

- *individuals*, with well-defined images, such as Chiara Ferragni, Fiorello, etc.

- *geographical places*, tourist destinations where the power of the brand consists in creating awareness around the place and making it desirable.

And it is precisely on tourist destinations and branding of DMOs that this discussion is oriented.

A conceptual framework that more directly relates to destination branding has been enunciated by Hankinson (2004).

His proposed framework is built around the concept of brand networks in which destination branding performs four main functions.

These are:

1) *brands as communicators*, where brands "represent a mark of ownership, and a means of product differentiation manifested in legally protected names, logos, and trademarks";

2) *brands as perceptual entities*, "which appeal to the consumer senses, reasons, and emotions;

3) *brands as value enhancers*, which has led to the concept of brand equity;

4) *brands as relationships*, where the brand is construed as having a personality which enables it to form a relationship with the consumer [45].

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[45] Hankinson, Graham (2004), *Relational Network Brands: Towards a Conceptual Model of Place Brands*, Journal of Vacation Marketing, 10, p 109–121.

In Figure n.8, Hankinson's model of destination branding configures place as "relational brand networks". In which the place brand is represented by a core brand and four categories of brand relationships (consumer relationships, primary service relationships, brand infrastructure relationships, and media relationships) that enhance the brand reality and the brand experience.
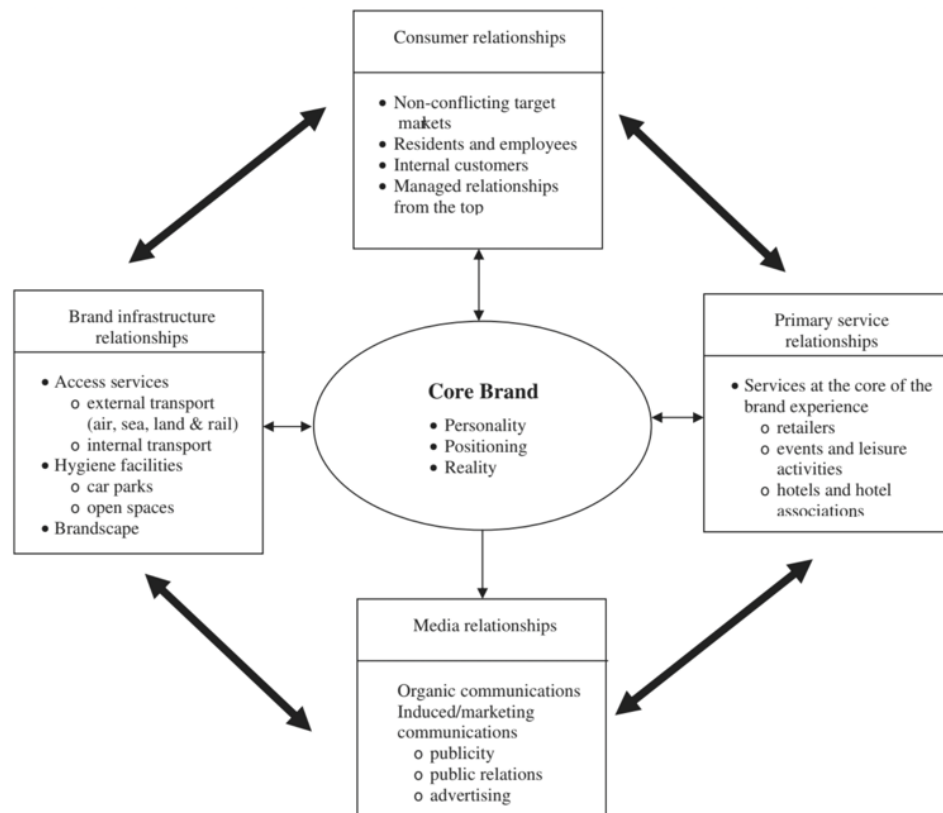
Figure n.8 - Destinations as relational brand networks[46]

Berthon, Hulbert and Pitt (1999) propose other brand functions for both buyers and sellers. For the three experts, the brand constitutes "the symbol around which relationships are built".

Ritchie and Ritchie (1998) have defined "a destination brand as a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely

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[46] Source: Hankinson (2004).

associated with the destination; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience".

Branding is just as important, if not more important, for tourist destinations than it is for other service organizations, because it gives visitors a greater level of comfort.

Chernatony and Riley, on the other hand, contend that differences between brand of goods and services exist at the operation level due to the unique characteristics of service brands, namely inseparability of production and consumption, intangibility, perishability, and heterogeneity. To reduce the impact of these challenges, the two experts suggest a "consumer culture" supported by internal communication and training.

Based on the previously discussed, there are also several definitions of destination brand (Table n.8).

Researcher/Association	*Definition*
Buhalis (2000)	A destination brand is a brand relating to a defined geographical region which is understood by its tourists as a unique entity, with a political and legislative framework for tourism marketing and planning.
Cai (2002)	A destination brand is a package of products and services, by selecting a consistent element mix to identify and distinguish it through positive image building.
Williams, Gill and Chura (2004)	Destination brand is purported to be the manifest of a memorable bond or an emotional link between the target markets and the destination. It is claimed to involve capturing a market position that appeals to visitors by identifying, simplifying, distilling, and focusing on the core values and assets that are unique, appealing, distinct, and non-substitutable

	at the destination, 'while respecting the broader values and goals of the community', that is keeping the "sense of the place".
Morgan, Pritchard, and Piggott (2002)	A strong destination brands have rich emotional meaning, great conversation value and provide high anticipation for their potential tourists.

Table n.8 – Destination Brand Definitions[47]

Gnoth's model of tourism branding defines different types of branding in tourism destinations:

1) functional, emphasizing the destination's problem-solving capabilities such as accessibility and reliability;

2) symbolic, the destination's ego enhancing attributes such as family, and affiliations emphasizing with celebrities;

3) experiential, emphasizing the destination's cognitive or affective attributes such as relaxation and learning.

The destination brand should be a combination of the infrastructure of the place, the people, the companies, and the quality of life. It should also be broadly supported by stakeholders.

3.1.1   Destination Brand Identity

Destination brand management is now more difficult than ever.

Consumers and businesses have become more knowledgeable and better prepared about marketing and how it works.

Consumers increasingly inform themselves on the web through social media in particular. As a result, competition is more complex.

A first starting point for managers of a DMO is to design the destination brand identity.

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[47] Souce: Own processing.

According to Mayes (2008) destination brand identity refers to the idea that "there is a single core identity that can be identified, portrayed, supported, reflected, and [...] this identity pre-exists the place branding of a given place". This is achieved through an audit of both its tangible and intangible aspects, its strengths, and weaknesses.

The brand identity of a destination represents what the DMO manages to communicate to the target customer. There can be different identities depending on the offering systems.

The elements of the destination brand identity can be chosen by distinguishing six different criteria:

1) *Memorability*

Makes it possible to work on the cognitive response.

The elements of the brand are chosen to facilitate memory or recognition in different purchase or consumption situations.

A recall test can be one in which the product category is mentioned, e.g. "luxury destination" and the respondent answers with "Caribbean, Maldives, Bahamas", etc.

A recognition test is one in which the interviewer from induced elements (e.g. mountain, sea, excursions, etc.) associates a certain brand.

2) *Significance*

Elements can take on defined brand associations, persuasive or descriptive (e.g. Paris romantic destination for couples).

3) *Likeability*

Refers to the aesthetic validity of the elements. One can choose elements that are ichnographically rich and inherently fun and interesting.

According to a personal view, in the case of the branding of a tourist destination, this element refers very much to the logo.

These first three criteria are of a constructive nature and are therefore fundamental for building brand equity. The other three are constructive in nature as they enhance the value of the brand elements against possible obstacles.

4) *Transferability*

Extendibility of the elements at product, category, and geographical level. On this last point, a company should always consider the cultural significance of all brand elements before introducing them to a new market.

5) *Adaptability*

Temporal renewability of elements due to changing consumer ideas and values, so brand elements often need to be refreshed.

6) *Protectability*

Is the legal defence of the brand to protect the brand elements in legal and competitive terms.

From a legal point of view, it is important that the brand elements: can be protected internationally; must be officially registered with the competent authorities; must be defended against potential counterfeiting by competitors.

Figure n.9 shows the elements of the destination brand identity.
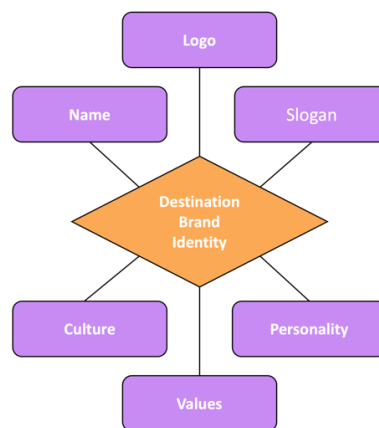
Figure n.9 – Destination Brand Identity[48]

>   I.   *Name*

The name of the destination brand is apparently a not too difficult choice to make, but it is not really, because it can often coincide with the governance or company name.

For example OGD Terme e Colli Euganei, Distretto Turistico Costa d'Amalfi, Distretto Turistico dei Laghi etc.

>   II.   *Logo and symbols*

The logo selection is probably the most strategically relevant for a tourist destination.

Logos are considered graphic designs used by DMOs to identify the tourist area of interest. They should reflect the brand identity and the desired image to the potential visitor.

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[48] Source: Own elaboration based on different models in the literature.

The logo can be an effective communication tool to increase awareness and recognition because it can be noticed and memorized in a very short time.

Furthermore, the logo of a DMO can be used to develop an internal culture and identity of the destination, in the relationship with local stakeholders and residents.

The selection of colour and fonts used should be appealing to tourists and stimulate positive feelings.

III. Slogan

In the world there are many destination brand slogans, successful examples are I♥ New York or Amazing Thailand. The production of slogans has in fact increased significantly in the last few years.

An effective slogan consists of "short phrases that, in a memorable way, describe or hint at core benefits of the destination brand" (Supphellen & Nygaardsvik, 2002).

They are therefore closely connected to the value of the destination brand and often create a positioning opportunity in the customer's perception map.

According to Pike (2004) the slogan should be short (maximum seven words), simple and focused on a value proposition of interest to the target group.

Figure n.10 shows some logos of world-famous destination brands.

Figure n.10 – World-famous destination brands[49]

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[49] Source: www.google.com

IV.   Culture

The culture of a brand is based on a set of values that provide the brand inspiration.

This element of brand identity plays a key role in differentiating destination brands from their competitors.

In addition, a successful destination brand will need to have a strong culture to create a powerful and lasting self-image.

V.   Values

The values of destination brand often emerge in the mission and vision of the DMO.

The *vision* is the "what", that is how the DMO sees itself in the future, what the long-term goal is.

The *mission*, on the other hand, is the "how", that is how the underlying strategic objectives are achieved.

These two strategic dimensions make it possible to configure the visual destination brand identity, namely the destination brand identity as perceived by the customer. So, two perspectives are combined: an internal one from the DMO's side and an external one from the customer's side.

VI.   Personality

Brand personality is defined by Aaker (1997) as: "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand".

These attributes can therefore contribute to differentiation from other destinations by highlighting characteristics of both logical and emotional importance to the visitor.

According to Ekinci and Hokany (2005) the personality of a tourist destination brand can be described along three dimensions: sincerity, excitement, and conviviality.

Sincerity indicates the optimal relationship between visitors and hosts. It is very important for potential tourists because it allows them to perceive the new environment as trustworthy and reliable, thereby reducing the risk of negative perceptions.

The second dimension is the perception of destinations as exciting, unique and lively. And for this reason, such a destination has a high capacity for attraction and curiosity.

The last and third element is conviviality, because a tourist destination must be a welcoming, friendly, almost familiar place.

In conclusion, these last three elements of the destination brand identity (culture, values, personality) should also, differently from the first three, be consistent and not be substantially changed. Rather, they should be added over time with new and fresh elements based on the starting resources to consolidate the brand and extend the market.

3.1.2   Destination Brand Architecture

Brand architecture is the way in which companies organise, manage, and go to market with their brands. In other words, it is a system developed by organisations to effectively manage their entire brand portfolio, ensuring the success of individual brands and of the overall business (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000; Petromilli, 2002).

Destination brand architecture is an external representation of the DMO's brand management strategy and must align with and support its purposes.

As well as, according to Sanchez (2004), can also define how resources are allocated and to which and how brands relate in the organization. It also focuses on the process of designing, managing brand portfolios and creating a common communication strategy. These brands can be claimed by local authorities, tourists, organizations, and community services.

Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) propose the brand relationship spectrum as a tool for managing architecture, consisting of four strategies:

a) House-of-brands

Figure n.11 – House of Brands of Italy[50]

Includes a portfolio of destination brands that are independent of each other within a more extensive geographical context, generally identified with a national brand.

In the example shown (Figure n.11) there is the Master Brand *Italy*, the regional brands of Latium, Lombardy, and Campania and finally the local brands of Rome, Lake Garda and the Amalfi Coast.

b) Endorsed brands

Figure n.12 – Endorsed Brand of USA[51]

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[50] Source: own elaboration from www.italia.it/it.

[51] Source: own elaboration from www.thebrandusa.com/.

In this situation there is a macro-territorial level destination brand, such as the USA (Figure n.12), which is linked to the other territorial brands in the area.

These destination brands, e.g., from the states of Florida, California, Massachusetts, and Illinois, share with the master brand (USA) the same main values which are then expressed to potential markets in order to achieve a coherent value proposition between the different players.

c) Sub-brand

In this case the connection between the master brand of the destination and the sub-brands linked to it is even more explicit and direct.

The essential difference is that each sub-brand communicates a distinctive feature compared to the master brand, in order to be able to appeal to much more specific and dedicated markets.

d) Branded-house

In the latter case, the master brand holds a dominant role over sub-brands, which are not exclusively tourism brands, but are nevertheless related to the sector. Often destination sub-brands refer to events, cultural attractions, landscapes etc. of the master destination.

3.2 Destination Brand Strategy

The destination brand supports a collaborative marketing approach in the management of the DMO.

A destination branding strategy, according to Lodge (2006), encompasses everything a destination would like to offer to the market, creating the ideal image that is in accordance with the experience promised to the potential visitor.

The strategic process of destination branding consists of several stages.

In the first phase the characteristic and distinctive elements of brand identity are defined.

In the second phase the marketing and communication strategy is designed. The value proposition is then positioned, making potential visitors interact with the destination brand. Knowledge and awareness of the brand is created.

It is in the third phase then, that it is managed the value of the destination brand as perceived by customers.

And in the last phase the DMO will start the activity of monitoring cognitive feedback and brand value gaps.

In his studies Keller (2000) identified ten characteristics that lead to a successful branding strategy:

- The brand excels at delivering the benefits customers truly desire;
- The brand stays relevant;
- The pricing strategy is based on consumers 'perceptions of value;
- The brand is properly positioned;
- The brand is consistent;
- The brand portfolio and hierarchy make sense;
- The brand makes use of and coordinates a full repertoire of marketing activities to build brand equity;
- The brand' s managers understand what the brand means to customers;
- The brand is given proper support and that support is sustained over the long run;
- And the company monitors sources of brand equity.

Buhalis, on the other hand, considers destination branding to be a very complex activity for the managers of a DMO; because it implies the identification of tangible and intangible attributes of the destination, but preserving the values of the different stakeholders involved.

However, Buhalis identified four basic guidelines for a successful destination branding strategy:

1) Coopetition with stakeholders i.e. competition and collaboration of stakeholders for the development of the destination brand.
2) Alignment of values, culture and carrying capacity of the destination.
3) Orientation of the brand strategy towards a predefined market.
4) Support of the destination for its future development.

3.2.1   Strategic Place Brand Management Model

Based on the previous models, the so-called SPBM (strategic place brand management) was developed. This strategic destination brand model proposed by Hannah and Rowley (2011) is based on ten components that are interconnected.

These components include brand evaluation, brand leadership, stakeholder engagement (management), infrastructure (regeneration), brand identity, brand architecture, brand articulation, brand communications, word of mouth, and brand experience (Figure n.13).
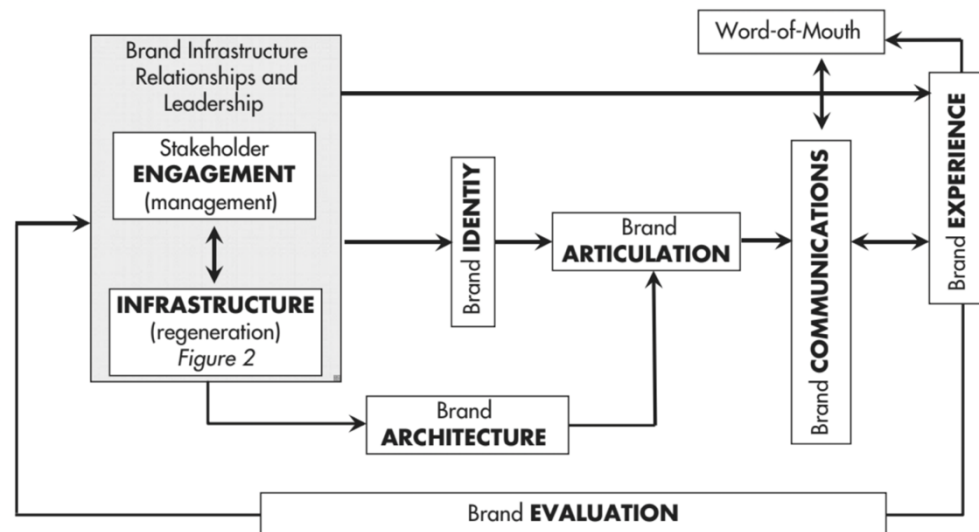

Figure n.13 - Strategic Place Brand Management model[52]

Because they are interconnected, the arrows on the model indicate the relationships of influence between the different elements. For example, the component brand communications influences and is influenced by brand experience and word-of-mouth.

All the different elements of the SPBM model will now be discussed in more detail below.

Brand evaluation

This element refers to the methods used to collect feedback on destination brand experience. It is an ongoing process to verify and evaluate the current situation of the DMO's brand.

The assessment in a DMO's strategic process is therefore not limited to consumers, but also to the destination brand.

Brand evaluation influences not only brand infrastructure relationships and leadership, but also the brand experience.

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[52] Source: Hannah S., Rowley J., (2011), *Towards a strategi place brand-management model*, Journal of Marketing Management, 27, 458-476.

Brand Infrastructure (regeneration)

Brand infrastructure (regeneration) refers to the existence, accessibility, and sufficiency of the brands functional and experiential attributes.

According to the model authors, the destination product is made up of infrastructure that consists of the existence, accessibility, and sufficiency of the functional (tangible) and experiential (intangible) place attributes and the possible need for their regeneration.

Brand infrastructure influences brand identity and brand architecture and is influenced by brand engagement.

Brand Engagement

According to the authors, this element refers to the methods used to identify stakeholders, their interests, and the management of their interactions.

Marzano and Scott (2009) observe that, by using their powers of persuasion and authority, stakeholders can have a positive outcome on the branding process irrespective of a lack of collaboration.

Brand engagement influences brand identity, brand architecture and brand experience.

Brand Leadership

Brand leadership refers to the commitment to stakeholder management.

Leadership, in particular, is about influencing the activities of an organized group towards goal setting and achievement through leading and keeping the brand-management process "alive" despite resistance and hardship (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009).

For tourist destinations, leadership is mostly in the hands of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) that manage both public and private sector relations. And it is from this activity and its effectiveness that the success of the destination brand depends.

This is often done with the collaboration of highly experienced and qualified representatives of the destination industry, organized in executive and consultative groups.

Developing the brand identity is dependent on the effectiveness of brand leadership in engaging and aligning stakeholders around shared objectives.

Brand Identity

Brand identity, as seen in the previous section, is the core dimension of the destination branding process.

This, as shown in Figure n.13, is influenced by stakeholder relationships, stakeholder engagement and brand infrastructure.

Brand Architecture

According to the authors, brand architecture refers to the process of designing and managing portfolios of the brands owned by the communities associated with the place.

Having already discussed this extensively above, it can be seen from the model that architecture is therefore influenced by brand infrastructure relationship and leadership and in turn affects brand articulation.

Brand Communications

Refers to the promotional marketing mix used to communicate the destination brand.

Brand communications builds on and is tightly coupled with brand articulation and has direct influence on perceptions and the reality of the brand experience.

Word-of-Mouth

Word of mouth (WOM) refers to the informal communication between consumers of the destination brand experience. WOM is presented in this model as interacting with brand communication and brand experience. Differently from brand communication, WOM cannot be directly controlled by leadership, but it can triple the effectiveness of communication. This relationship can be used to monitoring the quality of communication and establish if brand experience is aligned with what the brand intends to communicate.

In a very relevant way, therefore, this element influences the brand experience.

According to Kavaratzis (2004) the goal of the branding process is to evoke and reinforce WOM, especially about residents as they are the most important advocates of the branding process.

Brand Experience

Brand experience refers to the way that consumer translates their own idea of destination brand.

Often this own idea is created through previous experiences of friends or family and by promotional marketing.

According to O'Leary & Deegan, (2005) a negative image can be countered through a positive experience, but the reverse is not always possible suggesting that brand experience is more powerful than image.

Baker (2007) asserts that monitoring consumer expectations of and satisfaction with the place experience and close collaboration with stakeholders to meet and exceed those expectations is critical for successful experience management.

This holistic model proposed by Hannah and Rowley acts not only as a basic framework for destination brand research, but also to inform and support mangers in managing the destination brand.

The model has four key constructs.

The first is that the SPBM model represents the destination brand process and all its elements.

The second is that the destination brand is an interactive and evolutionary process. especially considering the feedback cycle to measure and control the current brand situation.

Thirdly, the engagement of the brand infrastructure and stakeholders is essential for the destination and for the continuous regeneration of the brand.

Finally, the fourth construct of the model is that the entire result of the destination brand process is the tourist experience. The whole SPBM model teaches DMO management that leadership should develop a strategic plan that focuses on the destination brand experience and its alignment with stakeholder expectations.

3.3 **Building Destination Brand Equity**

Author	*Definition of Brand Equity*
Keller	Brand equity is the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing activities of the brand.
Aaker	As a combination of reliability, brand equity associated with the symbol, and brand name which is added to a product or service, brand equity adds to or subtracts from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and to that firm's customers.
MacLachlan and Mulhern	The increase in cash flows derived from using a brand (company perspective). Utility or value that cannot be explained by the properties of a particular product, the source of brand loyalty (customer perspective).
Baldinger	From the perspective of consumers, distribution channels, participants, and enterprises, brand equity, compared to non-branded products, ensures higher revenues and margins and is an aggregate that provides more sustainable and differentiated advantages compared to competitors.
Farguhar	Brand equity is the added value of a product endowed by the brand name it carries when consumers have a good impression of that specific brand.
Simon and Sullivan	Brand equity is the increased cash flows on branded products due to investment in the brand as compared to non-branded products.
Kang	Brand equity ensures higher revenues and margins compared to non-branded products, and are an aggregate that provides stronger, sustainable, and differentiated advantages compared to competitors.

Yoo, Donthu and Lee	Brand equity is the differences in the consumers' choices which is claimed to be the difference between branded and non-branded products.

Table n.9 – Classic studies on the definition of brand equity[53]

Table n.9 presents a summary of studies of the definition of brand equity to understanding of the trends over time in the concept of brand equity among academics.

Aaker describes brand equity as "a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name, and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers".

Researchers over time began to apply brand equity constructs to tourism destination assessment and analysis. This is how the concept of "*destination brand equity*" was born in the literature.

Due to the special nature of services, of the five components of Aaker's model (1991,1996), brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality, brand loyalty and other property assets, only four can be adapted to the context of destinations.

According to Bigné, Sánchez, & Sanz, 2005, in the context of tourism destinations, brand awareness can be considered as the presence of a destination in people's minds when considering a given travel context; brand image represents the set of associations or impressions related to the destination, composed of a variety of individual perceptions related to different attributes of the destination; brand quality concerns the perception of the way in which the destination seeks to satisfy the functional needs of tourists, a holistic judgement made on the basis of the excellence or general superiority of the service; and brand loyalty, which represents the main source of customer-based brand equity (Keller, 2003). This is usually measured by the tourist's intention to return to the destination and willingness to recommend it to others (Chen & Myagmarsuren, 2010; Pike, 2007; Prayag, 2012).

Also the concepts of *customer based brand equity* (CBBE) can be applied to the destination. Keller defines brand equity as "the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of a brand and is a process that occurs when

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[53] Source: Elaboration from Kim H., Lee T.J., (2018), *Bran equity of a tourist destination*, Sustainability, 10, 431.

the consumer is familiar with the brand and holds some favorable, strong, and unique brand associations in memory'".

In general, the model is discussed from the consumer's point of view.

Keller's model has the structure of a pyramid, at the base of which is brand identity, then going upwards brand performance and brand image, then consumer judgments and feelings and finally brand relationship.

Kim (2013) observes that "a product with higher brand equity can off-set the first mover advantage enjoyed by a competing product in the case of a new market because of the brand trust and brand reputation enjoyed by it".

Some of the most recent models proposed in destination brand equity research will then follow.

3.3.1 *Destination Brand Equity Conceptual Model*

In literature, some authors have identified elements that can measure destination brand equity: brand image (with positive or negative effects), perceived quality and loyalty to the destination, but other dimensions are also needed to truly measure CBBE (Boo et al., 2009; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007).

Table n.10 shows the different dimensions of the destination brand identified in the creation of destination brand equity.

Brand dimensions identified	Description	Research study
Brand equity	It is the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of a brand	Kayaman and Arasli (2007); Konecnik and Gartner (2007); Sabir et al. (2013); Dhillon (2013)
Brand awareness	It refers to a particular tourist destination or its brand name in the mind of the tourist.	
Brand image	It represents the opinions of the tourists towards a particular destination brand. It is influenced by the marketing activities of the tourist	

	destination, based on experience & word of mouth from other people.	
Percevied service quality	It is the level of service as perceived by the consumer.	
Brand loyalty	It is the repeat visits to tourist destination.	
Brand satisfaction	It arises out of brand experience. The positive experience with the tourist destination/brand will generate feelings of satisfaction and delight in the tourist.	Ahmad & Hashim (2010)
Brand personality	It is a set of human characteristics that are attributed to a brand name.	Kaplan et al. (2010)
Brand novelty	The uniqueness offered by the tourist destination in relation to other competing destination is known as 'brand novelty'. It can be tangible or intangible.	Gartner and Ruzzier (2011)
Brand association	It consists of all the feelings, perceptions, beliefs and images held by the customer/tourist towards a particular brand/ destination brand.	Pike et al. (2010)
Brand resonance	It represents the consumer feeling towards a brand that how much they are alike with the brand.	
Brand identity	The image of the brand, which the destination marketer tries to project and create in the mind of the tourist.	Simon Anholt (1996), Yee (2009)
Brand positioning	It is the way in which the brand is placed in consumer's mind compared to competitors.	Yee (2009)

Brand value	Can be represented by increase of tourists' earnings, tourists' arrivals, increase in market share of tourist arrivals etc...	Kotler, Keller, Koshy & Jha (2013)
Brand leadership	It reflects the leaders, the managers of the brand.	Graham Hankinson (2009)
Brand/ Destination experience	It refers to tourist's experience with the brand. It may be positive or negative.	
Brand promise	It is the commitment of the brand what it is supposed to do for customers.	Cristea (2012)
Risk perception	It is the factors that can create uncertainty, such as terrorism, natural disasters, political and economic instability, etc.	Venkatachalam and Venkateswaran (2010)

Table n.10 – Variable identification table[54]

Based on all these variables, Dahiya and Batra (2017) propose a model of destination brand equity (Figure n.14).

This model is divided into three phases:

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[54] Source: Own elaboration from Dahiya K. S., Batra D. K., (2017), *Destination Brand Equity-A Conceptual Model*, Journal of Business and Managemen*t*, 19, pp 20-28.
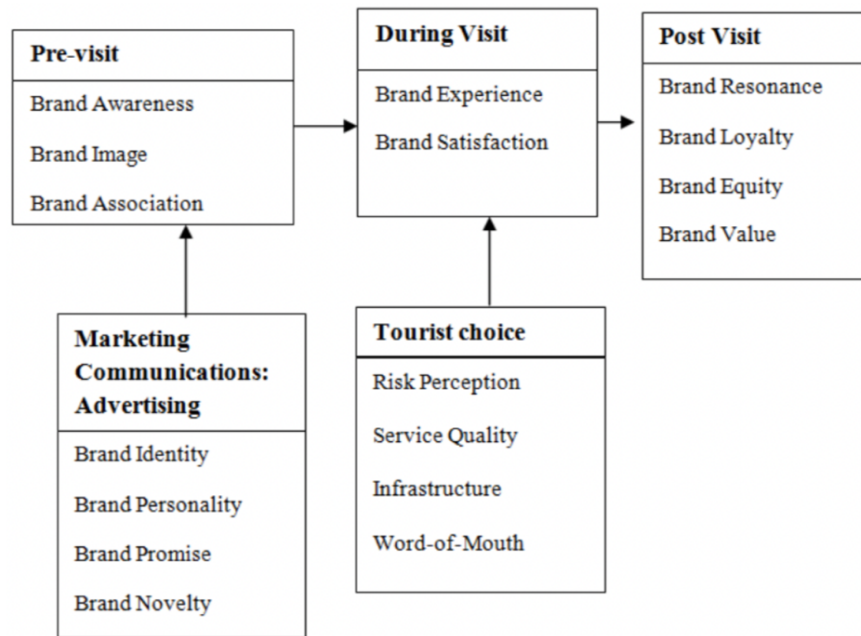
Figure n.14 - Destination Brand Equity Conceptual Model[55]

1) pre-visit, in which the potential tourist learns about the destination brand. And the DMO focuses on the creation of brand awareness and brand image to generate brand association. The tools used by marketing experts for communication reinforce brand identity, brand personality, brand promise and brand novelty.

2) during the visit, where the consumer lives and builds on the brand experience, in a positive or negative way, and the level of brand satisfaction is formed in comparison to the expectations induced by the previous phase. This is the phase of the tourist's choices and the variables that play a role are risk perception, service quality, infrastructure, and word-of-mouth.

3) post visit, is the last phase in which the "fruits" of the previous phases are "harvested". It is to understand if everything that has been put in place by the DMO in the first phase has contributed to the generation of brand equity and consequently brand resonance, brand loyalty and brand value.
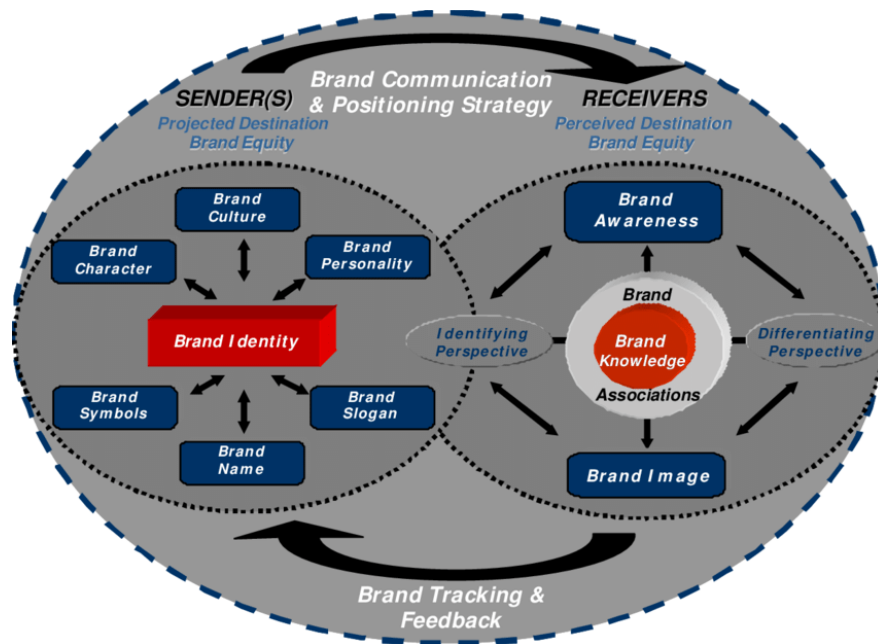
3.3.2 Destination Branding Model

Figure n.15 – Destination Branding Model[56]

This model of destination brand proposed by Risitano must be read starting from the left area of Figure n.15.

In other words, from the creation of a destination brand identity with the elements seen previously.

The more strictly operative ones at the bottom (logo, name, and slogan) and the more strategic ones at the top (vision, culture, and personality).

The up arrow indicates what the sender builds, i.e., the DMO that develops the brand architecture of the tourist destination. And so, the DMO also develops the positioning and communication strategy of the brand by focusing on the receivers, the tourists, creating the destination brand value. This brand value is based on knowledge of the destination brand which is based on free associations. This creates brand awareness and brand image, thereby increasing the potential brand value, both in terms of destination identification and differentiation from competitors.

The arrow at the bottom of the model, on the other hand, indicates that the DMO, through brand tracking and feedback from present and potential tourists, must verify that the positioning planned in the first phase has produced the expected results.

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[56] Source: Risitano M., (2008), *Il ruolo della marca nella gestione delle destinazioni turistiche*, Liguori editore, Napoli, pp. 93-142.
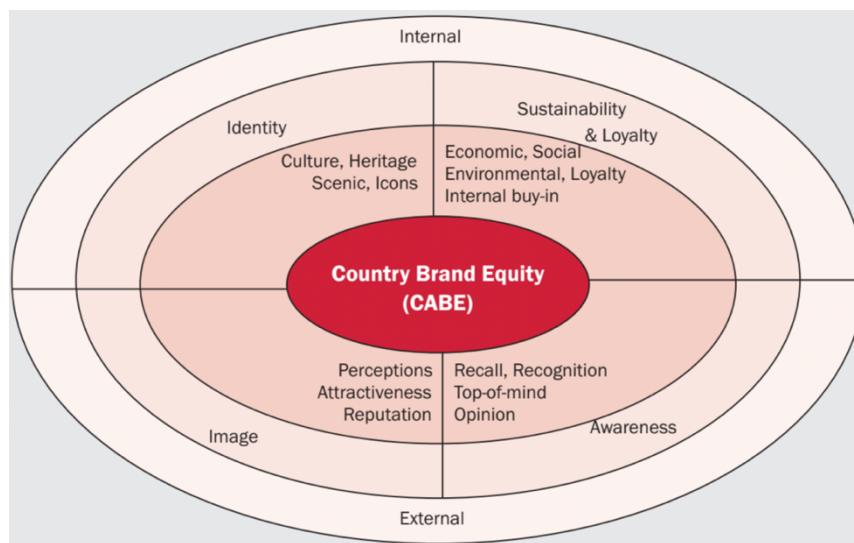
3.3.3 Country Brand Equity Model

Figure n.16 – Country Brand Equity Model[57]

The country brand equity model (CABE) (Figure n.16) is based on both consumer and financial perspectives.

The destination considered is the country, which as a brand shows the ability to:

a) create value for customers

b) provide a process for value consumption

c) stimulate visitors to return and repeat the experience.

The CABE model is presented as a multidimensional model describing the process of building the relationship between visitors and the country brand.

According to this model, the resources of country brand equity for the promise of the brand come from internal assets (upper part of the figure) and external assets (lower part of the figure).

Internal assets include country identity, environmental, social, and economic sustainability, and loyalty.

While external assets include brand awareness, brand recall/recognition, brand image and perceptions.

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[57] Source: Teodorovic M., Popesku J., (2016), *Country Brand Equity Model: Sustainability Perspective*, Marketing, 47, 111-128.

The country brand is represented by national assets (cultural, social and natural resources), which are unique and authentic. Therefore, national brands are representative of functional, symbolic, and emotional values for visitors.

Unique traditions, landscapes, images, and visual symbols serve as strong sources of differentiation of the country brand from others.

3.3.4   Tourist Based Brand Equity Pyramid

Yousaf, Amin, and Gupta (2017) applied Keller's brand equity pyramid to the context of tourism destinations. this is to make it easier for the DMO manager to recognise the crucial factors that contribute to the creation of a destination brand equity.

The Tourist Based Brand-Equity Pyramid (TBBEP) proposed by the authors (Figure n.17) is divided into six blocks, with different stages interconnected with each other.
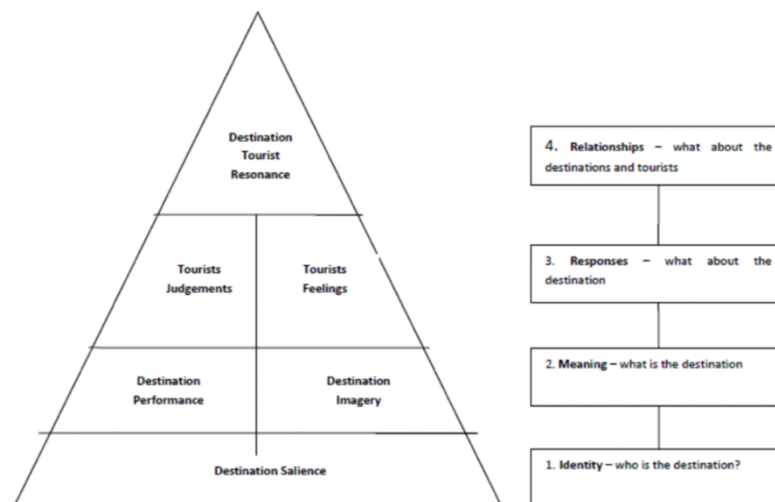
Figure n.17 – Conceptualizing Tourist Based Brand Equity Pyramid (TBBEP)[58]

The first block responds to the question *Who is the destinations?*, it is therefore about brand identity using destination salience as a brand measure.

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[58] Source: Yousaf A., Amin I., Gupta A., (2017), *Conceptualizing tourist-based brand-Equity pyramid: an application of Keller Brand pyramid model to destinations*, Tourism and Hospitality Management, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 119-137.

The second and third blocks are interconnected and answer the question *What is the destination?*. this is the phase in which the meaning of the brand is understood through the creation of a destination image and the related measurement of destination performance.

Going further up the pyramid, the fourth and fifth blocks are also interconnected and answer the question *What about the destination?*. In this case, the managers of a DMO try to get feedback from the consumers, in particular the tourists' judgements and feelings about the destination brand.

The sixth and last block, the top of the pyramid, answers the question *What about the destinations and tourists?*, focusing on the relationship between the tourist and the destination itself. This is where the monitoring phase, destination tourist resonance, takes place.

3.3.5 Customer-Based Destination Brand Equity Model
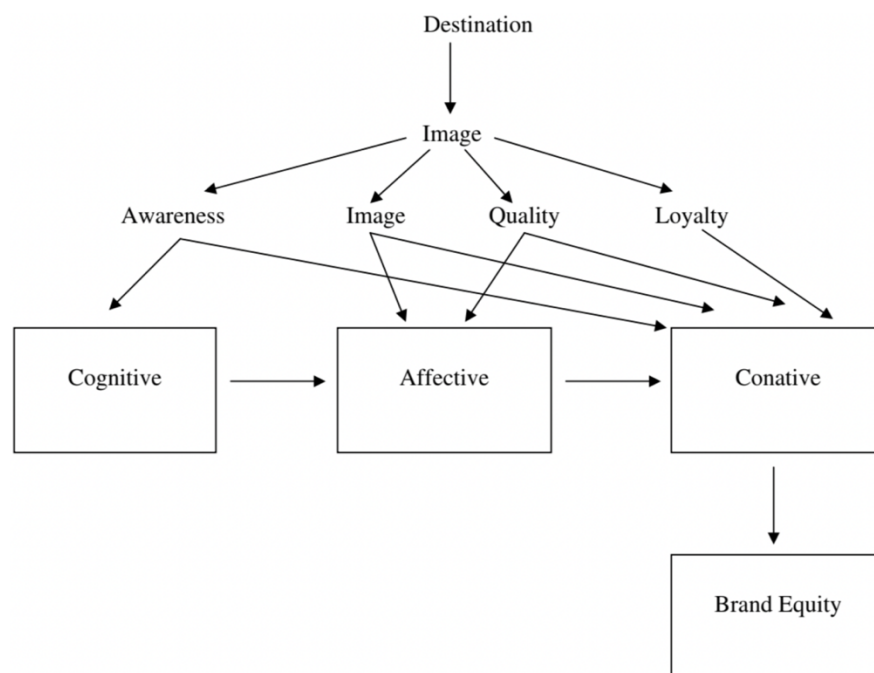

Figure n.18 – Customer-based destination brand equity model[59]

In the case of consumer products, most have tangible attributes, so brand equity can be based on factual and measurable information. The same cannot be said for

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[59] Konecnik M., Gartner W. C., (2007), *Customer-based brand equity for a destination*, Annals of Tourism Research, Vol. 34, No. 2, pp. 400–421.

experiential products, such as a tourist destination, as they are produced and consumed at the same time.

It is for this reason that tourist destinations are often assessed not only according to real or imagined characteristics but based on the brand.

According to the Customer-based destination brand equity model shown in Figure n.18 the brand equity of a tourist destination is based on three main components: cognitive, affective, and conative (Gartner, 1993).

The cognitive component constitutes awareness, i.e. what consumers think about a destination.

The affective component is based on how consumers feel about the brand.

Finally, the conative component is the action phase, how consumers act towards the destination.

The dimensions of brand awareness, brand image, brand quality and brand loyalty are based on these three components.

Figure n.18 shows that many dimensions of the model influence other components. For example, awareness influences the cognitive component; image and quality influence the affective component; behavioural and attitudinal loyalty influences the conative component.

The interrelationships, plus the cumulative value of brand dimensions, are what gives rise to the creation of brand equity.

3.4 Destination Brand Monitoring

It is important for a company to monitor brand value because in this way the consumer is better understood.

The issue of destination brand monitoring for DMO managers is of central importance both in managing stakeholder relations and in assessing management effectiveness.

The CBBE model provides guidance for measuring brand value through two fundamental approaches:

  - indirect, which observes and assesses consumers' cognitive structures;

  - direct, which estimates the actual impact of brand knowledge on consumers' reactions to marketing stimuli.

With the digital revolution and the advent of social media, it is important to recognise that unofficial information sources, such as online sources, are increasingly popular and this implies the necessity for a DMO to manage the destination reputation from a holistic perspective (Inversini and Cantoni, 2011).

Monitoring tools should be integrated with corporate data, such as web statistics and customer satisfaction data. It is therefore necessary to monitor online word of mouth.

Additionally, Dickinger, Költringer, and Körbitz (2011) propose a method to automatically collect thousands of posts from international travel communities and travel guides. There are not many studies to date that examine the problem of how a DMO can do collection, analysis, and brand monitoring. Therefore, studies conducted on product brands and adapted to a DMO will be taken as examples.

For a destination in a particular way, based on the literature reported until now, it is very important to monitor especially destination brand image, awareness, and online engagement.

3.4.1 Image

The image of a destination is a central concept as it has a significant direct effect on the actions and choices of potential tourists. Hunt (1975) was the first to demonstrate the importance of a destination image in increasing the number of tourists visiting destinations as much or more than tangible resources. Specifically, effective destination branding provides visitors with an assurance of quality experiences, reduces visitor search costs, and offers a way for destinations to establish a unique selling proposition.

Marketing campaigns contribute to creating the image of the destination, but also to transforming and improving it if necessary.

In any case, decisions related to the choice of a slogan, advertising format, channels to be used and communication strategies influence the current image of the destination.

Researchers from different disciplines have tried to identify the concept of a destination image.

According to Kotler (1993) the image of a place is "the sum of beliefs, ideals, and impressions people have toward a certain place". Kotler also distinguishes the destination image into:

- positive and attractive;

- negative and weak (such as unknown peripheral locations);

- mixed (when the image includes both positive and negative elements);

contradictory (when the image is positive for one population and negative for another).

Boulding (1956) similarly argues that the image of a destination is the sum of the cognitive, affective, and evaluative characteristics of the place or an inherent perspective of itself. It also distinguishes the image perceived by residents from that of non-residents in the destination.

Boulding divides the destination image into four aspects:

- Cognitive, i.e. what is known about a place;

- Affective, i.e. how one feels about a place;

- Evaluative, i.e. how one evaluates the place;

- Behavioral, i.e. what one wants to do there.

All these four aspects are closely related and interconnected, influencing each other.

Pipe and Wickens (2004) define the image of a destination as a visual, oral or written representation, which is recorded and can be transmitted to others.

Another researcher Elizur (1987) argues that the image of a place is the sum of all the characteristics that come to mind when thinking about that specific destination.

If a destination has a recognizable and positive image for tourists, it is much more likely to be chosen. In a later post-consumer phase, this also influences the tourist's intention to return and share the experience on social media, activating the eWOW. Therefore, the DMO must do a credibility work on its image and meet the expectations caused by it.

Baloglu and McCleary (1999) suggest the idea of a "relative image" of the destination that can be determined by comparing it with competitor destinations, identifying strengths and weaknesses, determining competitive advantages and distinctive competencies that can be used to elevate its image over competitors[60].

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[60] Baloglu, S. and K.W. McCleary (1999a), *A model of destination image*

Elizur (1987) divides the image of destinations into two categories, "rich" and "poor", proposing a star-shaped graphic model to explain them (Figure 8):
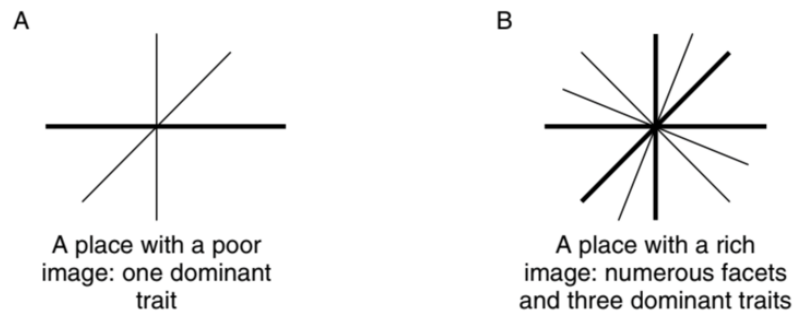

Figure n.19 – The star model[61]

- *Rich image* means that there is a lot of information about the destination, coming from different sources or from real/personal experiences.

- *Poor image* means that there is very limited information about the destination, or it comes from only one source of information.

According to Elizur's star model, each cognitive trait forms a straight line that intersects with all the other traits of the destination image. The sum of all these traits creates the shape of a star: the more lines the star has, the richer the destination image is (illustration B); a star with only two or three traits is a poor destination image (illustration A).

The DMO must also take into consideration all internal and external factors that may influence the image of the destination.

For this reason, it is important to make a distinction between:
- a priori perception (mental construction made by an individual in a place without having a physical connection);
- in situ perception (confronts the perception of tourists from one place to the reality of that place);
- a posteriori perception (shows that the experience of tourists does not end up with the trip, but they consume certain elements in their daily lives).

The internal and external factors influencing the development of a destination's image are shown in Table n.11.

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formation, Annals of tourism research, 26, 868-897.
[61] Source: Eilzur J. (1987).

External Factors	Internal Factors
- The natural and cultural attractions of the destination - The political, economic, and technological environment - The quality of products and services - Satisfaction during the travel experience - Intermediates information on the tourism destination - The social (word-of-mouth, phone calls) - The Weather forecast - The presence of a brand - Media and Internet - The marketing and publicity activities - Postcards and brochures - Films - Events	- Geographical origin - Social and cultural environment - Character - The motivations and expectations - The personal feeling (favorable vs. unfavorable) - Familiarity with a destination - Experience in the destination - The report on previous travel experiences in other destinations - Lack of information

Table n.11 – Factor influencing the formation of the image[62]

An important external factor is that the image of tourist destinations is strongly influenced by the media, both positively and negatively. Positively, e.g. due to cultural events (Olympics, World Cup, etc.), tourist activities or investments (films, TV series, documentaries). Negatively, e.g. because of crimes, social problems, natural disasters (earthquakes, eruptions, floods, etc.).

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[62] Source: Di Marino, E. (2008), *The Strategic Dimension of Destination Image. An Analysis of the French Riviera Image from the Italian Tourists Perceptions*, Tourism Management, University of Naples "Federico II", Faculty of Economics, Naples.

The issue of disaster tourism linked to the negative perception of a destination's image is one that researchers have been examining recently, especially after the events connected to the propagation of the Covid-19 virus.

In conclusion, all these points inevitably link the concept of destination image with that of destination brand.

This is because, if the brand of a destination is strong, so will its image be, both in terms of positive and negative perception.

3.4.2 Awareness

The number of tourism products and services as tourist destinations over the years have increased their branding activities to differentiate their products and services from the competitors.

Consequently, it is necessary for a DMO to focus on brand awareness, which is defined as "the ability of a potential buyer to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category" (Aaker, 1991). Brand awareness increases not only a destination's potential of being preferred more often compared with other unknown destinations (Kladou and Kehagias, 2014) but also the potential of being chosen among all rival destination brands (Hoyer and Brown, 1990).

Furthermore, brand awareness is very important for the perception of the quality of the destination for tourists.

It is necessary for a DMO to monitor the communication channels that determine the development of brand awareness by customers. In addition, brand awareness in online social networks is distinguished in terms of intensity and extent. Intensity of brand awareness shows how consumers effortlessly remember a particular brand through social media.

Online content can be generated by both companies and tourists.

Firm-generated content (FGC) provides information and guidance about the tourist destination directly to consumers.

On the contrary, consumer-generated content (CGC) is created by tourists for different purposes, such as self-expression, socialization, prestige, and status. CGC can indirectly influence the tourism destination brand-related opinions of other tourists. Although FGC has a direct influence on consumers, CGC is a better

determinant of brand-related attitudes and behaviours of consumers, as individuals perceive it to be sincerer and more reliable (Brown and Hayes, 2008; Chen, 2013).

CGC for tourist destinations can impact on brand awareness in two different ways.

First, by generating and sharing content within showcases in which brands are directly or indirectly involved, such as the destination's Facebook or Instagram page (direct) or a page not managed by the DMO but by an external party (indirect).

Second, creating content within processes in which target brands are not included. For example, within personal Facebook or Instagram accounts. These two types of CGC clearly cause different effects and it is crucial for DMO mangers to understand the different influences on the destination brand, on brand awareness, in order to channel this information to influence current and potential tourists in a positive way.

From branding studies, monitoring brand awareness means measuring the strength of the brand in the consumer's memory or the ease with which brand recall occurs under different stimuli (logo, symbol, slogan).

For this reason, there are essentially two measurement parameters:

- brand recognition, for decisions based mainly on visible elements;

- brand recall, for decisions based on visible or intangible elements. Often the context of the purchase decision or the consumption situation is examined. For example, purchase decision at the destination or online. Or the consumption situation may be a couple's trip or a business trip.

3.4.3   Online Engagement

Customer brand engagement deals with the relationship between the customer and the brand.

In the tourism sector this translates into trust and loyalty towards the brand, generating positive evaluations. This clearly happens online, where tourists to the destination can share knowledge, write reviews anywhere and at any time.

The degree of engagement with the destination brand in the literature is measured in terms of:

- *Behavioural loyalty*, measured by the percentage of purchase for that tourist destination, both past and future.

- *Attitudinal attachment*, measures the love for the brand, in terms of brand connection and brand prominence.

- *Sense of community*, measures how much information customers share about the brand on a daily basis;

- *Active engagement*, measures the extent to which consumers are inclined to invest their personal resources (time, knowledge, money, etc.) in the brand. This is measured through online word-of-mouth, i.e. the amount of customers who teach other customers, the analysis of interactions between the company and customers, the degree of reaction in terms of likes and shares on social media.

For Villamediana (2018), a relevant aspect in monitoring studies for destination brand engagement is time frame and seasonality.

- Time frame is defined as the moment in which the DMO publishes a post on social media. And can be distinguished in:

  - posting time, "the time of day in which the publication is made (Harada, Darmon, Girvan & Rand,2015). It is operationalized according to the 12-hour time format".

  - posting day, "the moment of the week in which publication is made (Araujo, Neijens & Vliegenthart, 2015). It is operationalized according to the seven days".

- The seasonality is defined as "the time of the year in which the publication I s made, categorized according to the seasonal profile (low season, medium season, high season) (Landaluce, 2017)"

Villamediana and Pedrosa (2018) conceptualised and distinguished the concept of positive and negative brand engagement:

- Positive engagement is considered "a multidimensional construct that reveals a positive valence brand's valuation, and that is observable through virality, commitment and popularity that tourists manifest in brand communities on social networks". And can be distinguished in:

  - Positive popularity, defined as "the average for thousands of fans of positive reactions to social media posts".

  - Positive commitment, defined as "the average for thousand fans of positive comments in social media posts".

- Positive virality, defined as "the average for thousand fans of the number of times a post has been shared. It is adjusted according to the average values of positive popularity and commitment".

- Negative engagement is a "multidimensional construct that reveals a negative valence brand's valuation, and which is observable through the virality, commitment and popularity that tourists manifest in brand communities on social networks". And can be distinguished in:
  - Negative popularity
  - Negative commitment
  - Negative virality.

These three elements are conceptually identical to the positive ones seen above, but from a negative perspective.

Section VI: The case study Authentic Amalfi Coast

4.1 Authentic Amalfi Coast profile

In the previous section an overview was provided of literature studies on the theme of branding a tourist destination.

Thanks to the illustrated framework it is possible to track the current situation of the Authentic Amalfi Coast destination brand.

This destination brand was chosen because it was recently launched, but also because the Amalfi Coast's reputation as a tourist destination in Italy and worldwide is well recognized. The Amalfi Coast has always been one of the most loved places in the world by tourists, sought after above all at an international level, which recognises its supremacy as a unique destination, which is able to offer memorable experiences.
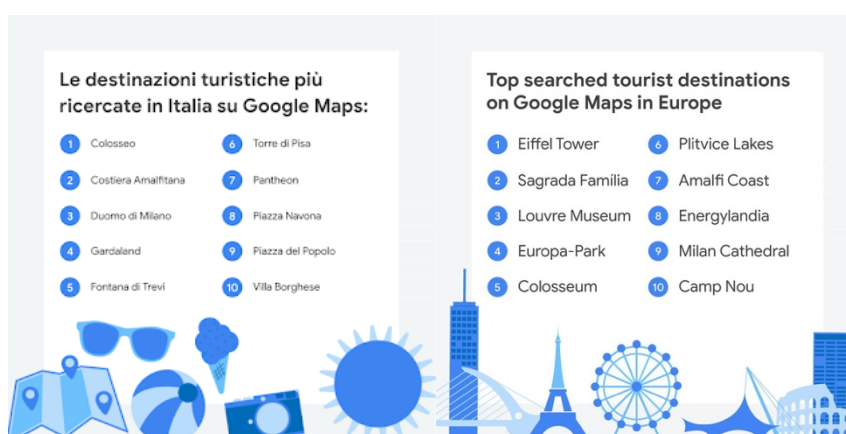
Figure n.20 – Top searched destinations in Italy and Europe[63]

In 2021, on World Tourism Day, Google published research on the trends of the main tourist destinations searched on Google Maps in Italy and Europe. As a result, the Amalfi Coast was second in Italy and seventh among the ten most searched in Europe (Figure n.20).

Although the Covid-19 pandemic affected the tourism sector very negatively, there are signals of slow business recovery. According to research conducted by

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[63] Source: Google research on https://blog.google/.

Forward Keys, international flights to Europe have reached pre-pandemic levels again by July/August 2021.

4.1.1 Introduction to the territory and District

The Amalfi Coast was recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site (WHS) in 1997. It covers an area of 11,231 hectares and includes 15 cities in the Province of Salerno in the Campania Region. These cities are (Figure n.21) Amalfi, Atrani, Cetara, Conca dei Marini, Corbara, Furore, Maiori, Minori, Positano, Praiano, Ravello, Sant'Egidio del Monte Albino, Scala, Tramonti, Vietri sul Mare.

Figure n.21 – Amalfi Coast Map[64]

Over time, the necessity emerged for private individuals to request the municipalities in the area to define the territory as a real tourist area. With executive decree N. 43 of 28 June 2013, the territorial delimitation was defined by the Campania Region.

On 13 May 2013, was founded the Association Distretto Turistico Costa d'Amalfi (DTCA) and was recognised by the "Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali del turismo" (MiBACT) on 17 January 2014.

According to the manager Andrea Ferraioli, the district was born out of the real need of local actors who realised that, in a very complex territory with a significant tourism maturity like the Amalfi Coast, there was no type of governance system. That is, where public and private actors decide the tourism strategies of the local area.

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[64] Source: *Authentic Amalfi Coast - Change 2.0* (2021) from https://distrettocostadamalfi.it/

The actors in the field were very different players with very different functions. among them, the Campania Region, the 14 municipalities, the provincial tourist board and the tourist companies (later suppressed over the years), etc.

So there was a very fragmented situation with a series of different actors that did not allow for a very rational tourism development, but only sporadic initiatives, often disconnected from each other or even often in different directions.

There have also been opportunities from a legislative point of view, with the Law on tourist districts providing a whole series of fiscal and economic benefits (d.l. 13 May 2011, n.70 amended by Law N. 106 of 12 July 2011), such as:

- facilitate access to regional, national and EU contributions for participating companies by submitting a single collective procedure;

- tax benefits for the companies;

- zero bureaucracy zones.

The real motivation, however, according to Ferraioli, was to create an association, a "place" where they could begin to develop an idea, a long-term vision for the future of tourism of the Amalfi Coast.

Over the years, Ferraioli says that there have been many difficulties to overcome, considering the multitude of actors involved and to be called in for any kind of activity. Despite this, many initiatives and projects have been carried out consistently that have proved to be very successful for the destination's brand reputation and image.

With time, it was then realised that the financial leverage had to be internal. The association, in fact, only made use of the minimum membership contributions, receiving no resources neither from the Ministry, nor from the Campania Region, nor from the municipalities. And the result was not enough to do this type of activity. Therefore, the DTCA decided to set up a network of companies within it, an operational wing that would facilitate the creation of strong and important projects.

This wing is Rete Sviluppo Turistico Costa d'Amalfi (RSTCA).

The actors that are part of the RSTCA are approximately 55, between private and public subjects, such as hoteliers, restaurateurs, rental services, tourist guides, artisans, travel agencies and tour operators, transport and mobility services operating on the entire area.

RTSCA to define its activities is based on the contents of the governmental Tourism Strategic Plan 2017 - 2022 STP. The different projects that are outlined and implemented, in fact, are based on three key concepts:

- sustainability

- accessibility

- innovation.

Guided by these three concepts, one of the purposes of this network of actors is to promote and enhance the Amalfi Coast as a tourist destination, thanks to the brand Authentic Amalfi Coast (AAC).

Between the Distretto Turistico Costa d'Amalfi and INVITALIA (Agenzia nazionale per l'attrazione degli investimenti e lo sviluppo d'impresa SpA) a cooperation agreement was signed in February 2020.

The main objective is to activate a series of actions to guide entrepreneurs from the Amalfi Coast among the different opportunities offered by INVITALIA, informing them about all the measures and incentives available for the realisation, strengthening and development of innovative ideas, especially those coming from young people and women, promoting self-entrepreneurship.

The DTCA, in fact, became an accredited institution for the Resto al Sud measure of INVITALIA in December 2020. An orientation desk has also been set up in Maiori to guide and support those with an entrepreneurial idea in the area.

4.1.2   Brand Logo and symbols

Figure n.22 - Logo of the Amalfi Coast Tourism District[65]

The logo that was chosen to represent the district is a compass with blue shades that clearly recall the sea of the Amalfi Coast (Figure n.22). the compass is a clear reference to the necessity of acting as a guide. The district wants to be a reference guide for all the tourist stakeholders of the Amalfi Coast destination.

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[65] Source: https://distrettocostadamalfi.it/

Figure n.23 – Logo of Authentic Amalfi Coast[66]

While, in Figure n.23 there is the logo of the destination brand Authentic Amalfi Coast.

The design of the logo is nothing more than a small, stylized sun, since the Amalfi Coast is very characteristic at sunrise and sunset.

Inside there is a small coastline on the sea and a tower.

The tower clearly recalls the numerous Saracen and Ottoman towers found all along the Amalfi Coast, between Sorrento and Vietri sul Mare. They were built as watchtowers or defence towers against the Turks and pirates.

Many of them are now used for tourist activities such as restaurants and hotels.

The colours chosen for this logo are yellow, blue, and green, which also recall the colours of vietresi ceramics. A world-famous industry with a thousand-year-old tradition.

4.2 Methodological background

The case study on Authentic Amalfi Coast was conducted through empirical research to find answers to the main purpose, which is to understand how brand choices can have an impact on a destination's marketing strategies.

The survey was addressed to the manager of the destination brand operating in the area, adopting a qualitative approach that could analyse the key aspects of the brand's value.

Between the qualitative methods existing in the literature and illustrated in the previous section, the in-depth face-to-face interview was chosen on the basis of the research purposes.

This made it possible to investigate specific topics in depth through targeted questions that bring out the motivations and opinions of the respondent.

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[66] Source: https://authenticamalficoast.it/

The respondent selected was the manager of the destination brand Authentic Amalfi Coast.

The analysis investigates, in more detail, five macro-aspects:

Brand Motivation

The first reports the motivations that have pushed public and private actors to the foundation of a destination brand dedicated to the Amalfi Coast.

Internal Branding Analysis

The second section focuses on analysing the brand from an internal point of view.

The specific topics are destination brand architecture and destination brand identity.

It will be understood which economic actors are currently operating in the area. And what are their main functions in directing, coordinating, and supporting the destination brand.

Specifically, the interview asked about the vision and mission, the governance, the level of stakeholder integration and the approach to sustainability.

External Branding Analysis

The third section is connected to the previous one because it concerns the analysis of the brand from an external point of view. In this case, it is the perspective of the tourists, the visitors to the area. And their main functions of identification, evaluation and recognition of the destination brand.

All from a strategic and managerial perspective to examine the issues of destination brand equity and destination brand knowledge.

In particular, the manager was specifically asked about: the main target audience, the brand positioning strategy, points of differentiation and break-even points, the free associations, the opportunities, and the threats.

Communication

The fourth section focuses on brand communication. And more specifically, on what are the present and future purposes, actions and tools adopted by the destination brand.

Monitoring

The fifth and final section refers to the way brand destination is monitored.

4.3 Interview with the manager

The interview was conducted with Andrea Ferraioli, president of Rete Sviluppo Turistico Costa d'Amalfi. He is also a hotelier and a restaurateur at the Hotel Margherita and the M'Ama restaurant in Praiano (SA).

The interview was structured in 18 questions, which the respondent was answered in approximately 60 minutes.

Brand Motivation	
1.	When was the Authentic Amalfi Coast destination brand founded?
2.	What are the main motivations?
Internal Branding Analysis	
3.	How can the organization's **vision** be defined? What are the **mission** of the organization?
4.	**How many economic actors** are currently involved within the organization? What is the **level of integration between the different stakeholders in the area** (companies, associations, public institutions, etc.) for the promotion of the destination?
5.	How is the **use of the AAC brand** by the area's internal stakeholders regulated?
6.	What is the district's approach to the **issue of sustainability**? Main projects... (Zero Waste Amalfi Coast Project)
Eternal Branding Analysis	
7.	What is **the main target group(s) of the AAC brand**? What is the average age of the travelers? What is the typical profile (ref. personas)?
8.	Is there a **positioning strategy for the AAC brand** with respect to other competing destinations? What are the **main tourist destinations competing** with the Amalfi Coast?
9.	What are the **main POPs and PODs (break-even points and points of differentiation) of the AAC brand**?

10.	What are the **main reasons** why visitors choose the Amalfi Coast?
11.	In your experience, what do visitors associate (**free associations**) with the Amalfi Coast? And in the future what would you like visitors to associate with the destination?
12.	Why is AAC an **authentic, unique and distinctive tourist experience**?
Communication	
13.	What are **AAC's main purposes** in managing communication and defining collective branding strategies?
14.	What are the **main tools, digital and otherwise, adopted by the district** to promote the destination?
15.	How important is the adoption of **digital marketing tools** today for the destination Amalfi Coast?
16.	Which **digital communication tool** is the most effective and profitable today?
17.	What are the **future purposes of the AAC destination brand**?
Monitoring	
18.	How is the **AAC brand monitored**? And what is the **most effective analysis model** currently adopted?

Table n. 12 - The complete manager interview[67]

The Table n.12 shows the complete interview with director Andrea Ferraioli.

In the following paragraphs, the five sections of the interview are discussed along with the interviewee's answers.

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[67] Source: own elaboration.

4.3.1 Brand Motivation

1.	When was the Authentic Amalfi Coast destination brand founded?
2.	What are the main motivations?

The Authentic Amalfi Coast destination brand was born out of the necessity to bring order to tourism in the area.

Despite the fact that the Amalfi coast is a destination with a mature life cycle and also enjoys significant and, above all, constant tourist flows over time (leaving aside the Covid-19 pandemic period), it also presents very inhomogeneous situations in the area.

In fact, there are areas of the coastline that are almost in a situation of *over tourism*[68] and others that would also have the potential to develop.

Therefore, the purpose can be to make the most of these little-known areas in order to direct tourist flows to these areas as well. Spreading the tourist economy more evenly over the entire territory, not leaving out any one area. And, at the same time, "displacing" the most popular locations from the multitude of tourists, so that the tourist experience itself can be more literally livable, not only for the tourists themselves, but also for the residents.

Another motivation for the creation of Authentic Amalfi Coast, and perhaps the most important one, is the need to direct a much more conscious and responsible type of tourism to the area.

To this end, the destination brand promotes a tourist offer that is very much linked to the cultural traditions of the area.

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[68] Over tourism is a phenomenon that indicates an excessive number of tourists in a specific destination that can cause all kinds of negative impacts on the affected community. Undesirable physical changes and damage to resources (natural and cultural) and general overcrowding. These have imposed permanent changes to their lifestyle, access to services and general well-being. (Dodds r., Butler R., 2019, *The phenomena of over tourism: a review*, International Journal of Tourism Cities, Emerald Publishing Limited, vol5, n4, pp519-528)

3.	How can the organization's **vision** be defined? What are the **mission** of the organization?
4.	**How many economic actors** are currently involved within the organization? What is the **level of integration between the different stakeholders in the area** (companies, associations, public institutions, etc.) for the promotion of the destination?
5.	How is the **use of the AAC brand** by the area's internal stakeholders regulated?
6.	What is the district's approach to the **issue of sustainability**? Main projects... (Zero Waste Amalfi Coast Project)

The *vision* of Authentic Amalfi coast, according to Ferraioli, is to provide tourists with good information about the coast.

It's a very difficult challenge, because anyone searching for the Amalfi coast online will be overwhelmed by a multitude of different resources to choose from. And the destination brand's vision is precisely to inform tourists well, to make them understand how the authentic identity of the Amalfi Coast is to be experienced.

Authentic Amalfi Coast's vision is also to foster the development of a sustainable and responsible tourism economy, and to make the Destination a hub of tourism innovation, where businesses can grow and be supported.

The main areas of operation are:

- Local development

- Support for self-entrepreneurship: birth, growth and strengthening

- Enhancement of tangible and intangible heritage:

- Research & Development

- Digital divide

- Infrastructure for sustainable micro-mobility

- Distribution of the tourism product

- Training

- Designing

- Experimentation

- Dissemination

- Exploitation

Instead, as far as the *mission* is concerned, the DTCA is working on a series of initiatives. Such as, forming the operators in the area or repositioning the companies themselves along the lines of the destination brand identity. Or again, connecting the companies in the area with the producers, with the artisans. And creating the right information systems for the tourist.

For all these purposes, a website/magazine was created in 2020, www.authenticamalficoast.it, homonymous with the destination brand, highlighting all activities related to the brand (Figure n.24).
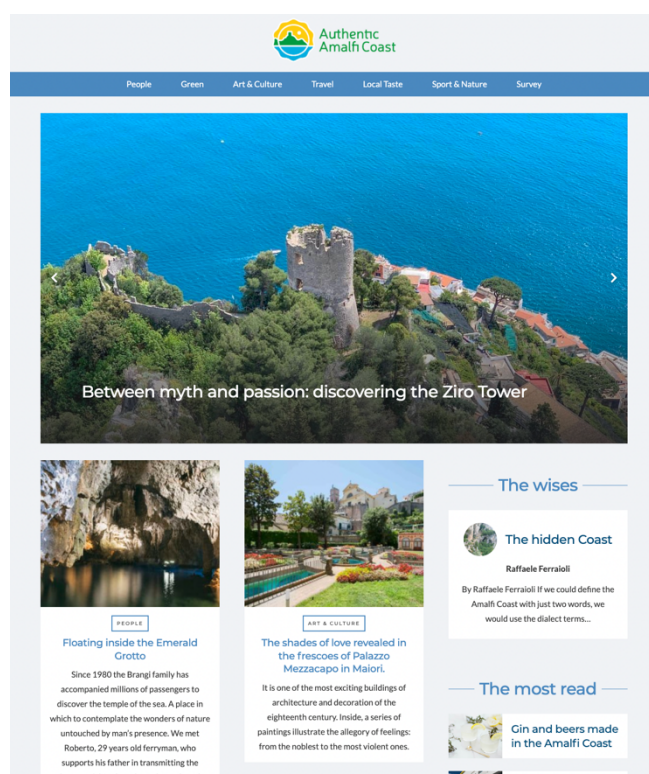

Figure n.24 – Web magazine Authentic Amalfi Coast[69]

The web magazine is always up to date with some of the most and some of the least known topics on history, traditions, green, art and culture, gastronomy, travel, sport, and nature in the Amalfi Coast area. The articles are aimed at both national and international audiences, since they are published in languages English and Italian.

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[69] Source: screenshot from https://authenticamalficoast.it/

One of the organization's most upcoming goals is to create a tourism destination website that gives people the opportunity to get to know and "sell" the area.

Concerning the actors, the association currently has 94 members with a level of integration that Ferraioli describes as "moderate", since some are participative than others.

The realization of the destination website, for example, as well as other projects, are co-financed by the partners. A large part of the financing of the website goes through a development contract signed with INVITALIA in 2019. the development contract is a financing of almost EUR 2 million for the RSTCA project and almost EUR 30 million for the network companies.

Moving on to regulation, the destination brand is not yet regulated. Only members participating economically in the project can use it at present.

Ferraioli goes on to specify that the creation of a Code of Ethics[70] is in the plans.

And related to this, another project has already been launched with the Zero Waste Amalfi Coast brand, which is an evolution of AAC on the theme of waste minimization.

And the Code of Ethics will probably be implemented for use in both projects.

Sustainability is therefore, at the base of all these activities, a recurring and important theme for the action of the AAC destination brand, from all points of view, social, environmental, and economical.

- Environmental, because projects have been implemented on the reduction and conscious use of waste. In particular, the Zero Waste Amalfi Coast project, which was carried out at the beginning of 2022 by the DTCA in collaboration with Hotel Rifiuto Zero (a company dealing with consultancy and sustainable management of hospitality activities) and the Omega Consortium (a company dealing with the recycling and disposal of solid urban and industrial waste).

The purposes of the project are the realization of:

- a good practice protocol to be shared;

- reuse of by-products or waste products;

- training for staff;

- information and communication of good practices to guests;

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[70] The *Code of Ethics* is a corporate document that includes rules of conduct of social and moral nature. It defines the ethical and social responsibilities (both internally and externally) of the company and the values it supports. They are voluntary and not legally binding.

- monitoring and reporting of results;

- sustainability certification to be proved with appropriate documentation;

- creation of an identifying brand.

In practice, the project consists of using by-products and waste materials from restaurant kitchens to produce electricity. For the time being, 12 companies have participated in this initiative promoted at the beginning of 2022.

For the preservation of the marine ecosystem, two innovative solutions have been deployed.

The first is Little Hunter, a drone-controlled marine robot that identifies and picks up floating waste along the Amalfi Coast beaches.

The second is the Sentinel "Spazzamare", a catamaran that takes waste out to sea, where staff then differentiate and dispose of it at the appropriate sites.

The initiative was an important signal to increase tourists' awareness of beach behaviours.

- Social, because all initiatives taken for tourists are also actually aimed for residents. Basically, according to Ferraioli, there is the idea that "the happy resident makes the happy tourist".

Therefore, there is the necessity to make residents aware as well, to educate them to reduce plastic or to recycle waste. So that they can then set an example to tourists.

To involve the younger generation as well, some 5,000 tritan bags have been delivered to school students on the Amalfi coast since 2019. And an app, Junker, has also been developed to help citizens to sort their waste correctly. the app works by scanning the barcode and breaking down the waste materials of the products to be recycled. Junker then also shows, using geolocalization, where to go to dispose of waste in the closest area.

Recently, an electric mobility sharing project has also started, one of the most interesting functions having precisely the pass for residents. As well as, of course, for tourists. More specifically, the RSTCA, through a contract signed with INVITALIA, has allocated a significant part of financial resources to set up a network of electric charging stations for cars, motorbikes, and bicycles throughout the Amalfi Coast.

The company chosen for the project was DriWe.

In addition, still on the topic of electric mobility, the RSTCA also concluded an agreement with the start-up Elettrify. Equipping the entire Amalfi Coast with a smart system for sharing electric scooters, the Segway ES4.

- Economical, because the district was created due to the presence of some tourism industry misbalances that brought a very strong economy to some areas, such as the hillside, which were in danger of being abandoned.

4.3.3   External Branding Analysis

7.	What is **the main target group(s) of the AAC brand**? What is the average age of the travelers? What is the typical profile (ref. personas)?
8.	Is there a **positioning strategy for the AAC brand** with respect to other competing destinations? What are the **main tourist destinations competing** with the Amalfi Coast?
9.	What are the **main POPs and PODs (break-even points and points of differentiation) of the AAC brand**?
10.	What are the **main reasons** why visitors choose the Amalfi Coast?
11.	In your experience, what do visitors associate (**free associations**) with the Amalfi Coast? And in the future what would you like visitors to associate with the destination?
12.	Why is AAC an **authentic, unique and distinctive tourist experience**?

The AAC destination brand does not target a specific tourist. In recent years, however, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic, there was already this trend that has resulted in an increasing demand for "experiences". Experiences more and more oriented towards green, open-air tourism, interaction with local people, towards a deeper knowledge of the places one visits.

In 2022, according to Ferraioli, this trend is increasingly strong.

The destination brand is therefore, oriented towards this type of tourist. It is not aimed at the mass tourist or a passing tourist.

It is necessary for the AAC manager that there is also an awareness of the fragility of the place.

Therefore, we are addressing a tourist who also has a cultural level that is adapted to this type of mentality.

It is undoubtedly then true that young tourists are increasingly interpreting travel in this way.

From a strategic point of view, Ferraioli says that there is no real strategy. The DTCA is trying to work with the regional agency and the Campania region to move in this direction.

They have also established a partnership with ENIT (National Tourism Agency), which allows the destination brand to also have a global presence.

ENIT is putting in place a robust international marketing and PR plan involving the Agency's Rome office and the agencies in its 28 foreign offices; the financial part is all their responsibility, while the partners are responsible for producing quality marketing content.

In essence, these are initiatives that, through the involvement of destination management, tell the story of destinations around the world in traditional and digital media, organizing Fam, Influencer, press trips and interviews.

Turning to the topic of competition, Ferraioli argues that it is very difficult to compete with the Amalfi Coast. It is yes, very close to the Sorrento peninsula, which is much more prone to mass tourism and is much less leisure-oriented than the Amalfi Coast.

Widening the view a little, according to Ferraioli, the Ligurian Riviera could come a little closer to the Amalfi Coast and also the Azure Coast. But it remains very difficult to compete in that sense.

The Amalfi Coast has a tourist ecosystem that has some very special characteristics. It is perhaps one of the few destinations where you can do any kind of tourism: cultural tourism, wellness, food and wine, green tourism, sports (climbing and bike tourism), school trips, and even cruise tourism.

It is difficult to reproduce this type of tourist supply in another destination. Which is why it can be described as authentic, unique and distinctive.

In terms of break-even points (POP) with the Ligurian Riviera, there is seaside, cultural, natural and sports tourism.

Regarding points of differentiation (POD), we have green tourism and food and wine. The level of food and wine on the Amalfi Coast is very high, because it is one of the most Michelin-starred areas in Italy, from Positano to Vietri sul Mare. And it also has one of the best wineries in Italy, Marisa Cuomo.

Some of the reasons why visitors come to the Amalfi Coast, in addition to the attractive location, is the ease with which it is connected to tourist cities such as Pompeii and Capri, as well as Naples and Rome.

In order to find out which free associations and characteristics visitors like most and which they attributed to the Amalfi Coast, the DTCA made use of Travel Appael.

Travel Appael is a destination dashbord that in collaboration with The Data Appael company outlined a path through the data and technologies that the District uses to grow.

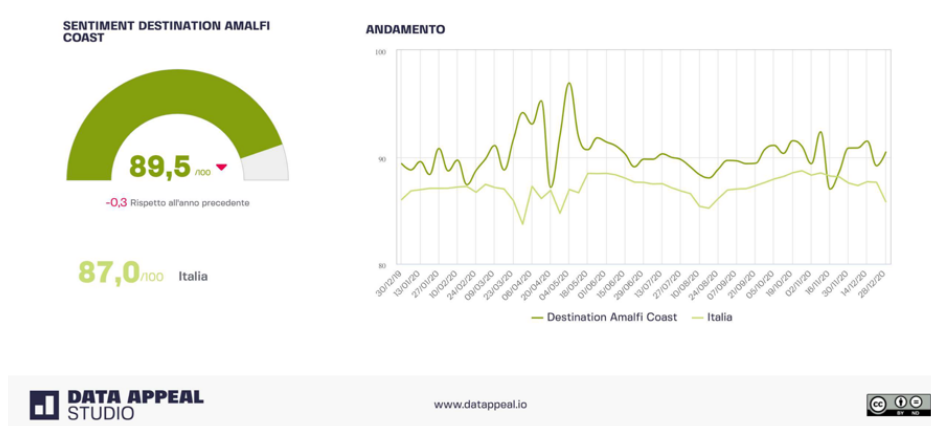The analysis focused on three indicators: satisfaction, trust and security.

Figure n.25 – Level of satisfaction[71]

Figure n.25 shows what Data Appeal calls "positive sentiment". That is, the level of perceived satisfaction expressed by users, based on semantic analysis of online content.

And it shows that in 2020 this index dropped by 0.3 compared to the previous year. But it still scores higher (89.5/100) than the Italian average (87/100). A percentage of positive sentiment that is one of the highest in Italy, meaning that tourists have a very very positive perception of their journey to the Amalfi Coast.

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[71] Source: elaboration by Mario Romanelli, sales directory italy, from The Data Appael Company, https://www.datappeal.io/it/
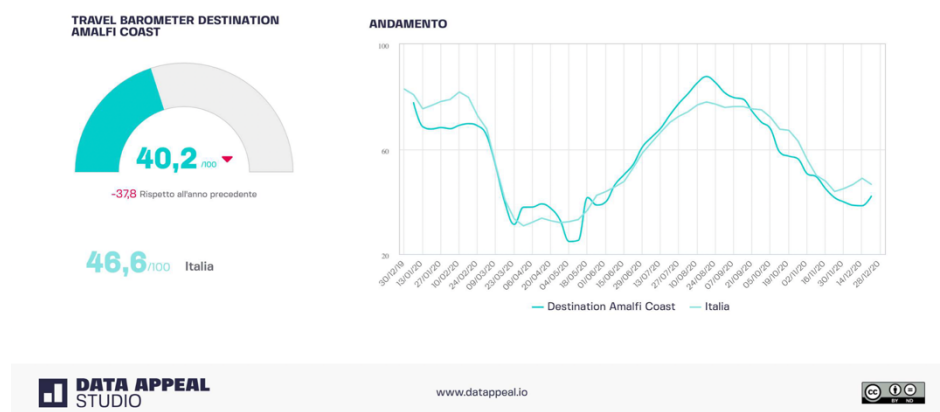
Figure n.26 – Level of trust[72]

The level of trust, on the other hand, was 40.2% in 2020, 37.8% lower than the previous year. And lower than the Italian average of 46.6% (Figure n.26).
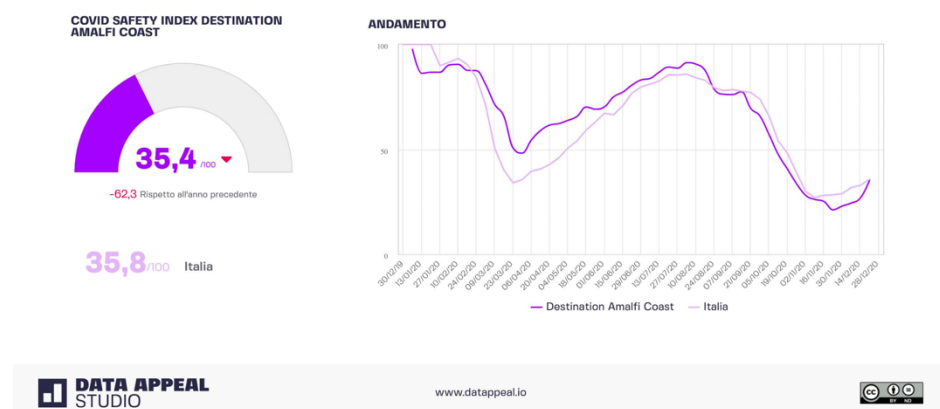

Figure n.27 – Level of security[73]

The same applies to the security index of 35.4%, with a similar Italian average of 35.8%. But, compared to the previous year, it was even 62.3% lower (Figure n.27).

Such drastically lower levels are certainly due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In first place among what visitors appreciate and what they find on the Amalfi Coast is the human relationship, because they find a welcoming capacity that is rarely found elsewhere. There is a strong openness towards the tourist who has always been

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[72] Source: elaboration by Mario Romanelli, sales directory italy, from The Data Appeal Company, https://www.datappeal.io/it/

[73] Source: elaboration by Mario Romanelli, sales directory italy, from The Data Appeal Company, https://www.datappeal.io/it/

seen as a person who should be "opened the doors of the house", to be welcomed in the best possible way, to be given a gift before departure.

Only later in the ranking are food, location, structures, and services.

Ferraioli, in the future, would like visitors to associate the Amalfi coast with the fact that it is not just a coastal zone, it is an ecosystem also made up of vineyards, grumeti, inland areas, a very deep culture, rural villages, medieval connecting paths.

"We would like the tourist not to stop at the postcard, but to read something broader". The Amalfi Coast, in fact, is one of the territories with the highest vertical mountains descending to the sea in the world, because we go from almost 1000 metres to zero.

4.3.4 Communication

13.	What are **AAC's main purposes** in managing communication and defining collective branding strategies?
14.	What are the **main tools, digital and otherwise, adopted by the district** to promote the destination?
15.	How important is the adoption of **digital marketing tools** today for the destination Amalfi Coast?
16.	Which **digital communication tool** is the most effective and profitable today?
17.	What are the **future purposes of the AAC destination brand**?

For communication, the DTCA with the AAC brand aims to inform the ecosystem about the activities taking place and to maintain relationships with the most important national and international players in the tourism sector.

Acting, therefore, as a connector, bringing what is new from above and then trying to influence the tourist offer of the Amalfi Coast.

AAC's communication also aims to influence tourists through other channels such as ENIT, using its foreign offices and their ability to disseminate information. Or through the portal that, as previously mentioned, is being set up with the aim of informing tourists of what the most authentic Amalfi Coast really is.

Among the communication and marketing tools used there is certainly the web. AAC is actively represented on all the main social media, Facebook and Instagram.

Among the physical tools, on the other hand, there are paper publications in local information offices, with the production of maps and information brochures on the Amalfi Coast.

In addition, AAC also has a press office that deals with disseminating initiatives to the national and international press. The press office also very often does educational work for foreign journalists who want to visit and get to know the coast.

Certainly, according to Ferraioli, social media presence is the most effective digital marketing tool now and one that works much faster than others.

AAC's future goals certainly include complementing ongoing projects, but also restructuring the entire organization.

For example, for the AAC magazine to become a magazine spread throughout the Amalfi Coast.

4.3.5 Brand Monitoring

18.	How is the **AAC brand monitored**? And what is the **most effective analysis model** currently adopted?

Regarding the monitoring of destination activities, AAC is currently collaborating with the Data Appeal company, mentioned above, which processes data.

With the region of Campania, on the other hand, AAC is evaluating the necessity of creating an experiment on the Amalfi Coast on the use of data in the right way.

In the sense that, in order to make any kind of strategy, tourist destinations would need more accurate information, and unfortunately AAC is currently tied to old and obsolete tools, conceptually.

The information is very often outdated and almost never processed to be then easily used and interpreted by the operators and the destination. Above all, after two years of Covid-19, this need has exploded because there is a much greater need to possess forecast data to cover oneself against crisis situations. And AAC together with the region of Campania will precisely have this objective, experimenting with innovative, digital and artificial intelligence activities that will make it possible to start working on forecast data.

With UNPLI Salerno (Salerno Provincial Committee of the National Union of Italian Pro Loco), two surveys were administered in 2021 to residents and tourists.

There are two surveys to understand how the two different subjects perceive life and the tourist offer of the Amalfi Coast.

the project was carried out to understand what are the assets of the area on which to focus for branding actions to improve the experience of tourists and residents of the Amalfi coast.

The data showed that 88.8% of visitors and 98.5% of residents consider the Amalfi coast's greatest asset to be is its natural attractions.

Among the reasons for visiting the destination are relaxation 67%, natural attractions 56%, food and wine 30%, cultural experiences 19%, hiking 10% and other reasons 4%.

53% of tourists choose the Amalfi Coast because they already know it, a sign of the high level of maturity of the destination. 15% know it through social networks and another 15% through word of mouth.

For 53% of respondents, this is not their first trip to the Amalfi Coast.

Among the most critical points on which the brand and the district must work is mobility. Residents use their own vehicles for 74%, a figure very close to that of tourists of 77%. By bus 27%, ship or ferry 19% and train 14%.

Still about mobility, traffic, parking shortages and public transport are the biggest inconveniences.

President Andrea Ferraioli says at this point, " Developing sustainability is one of the main ways to add value to our destination, and it is no coincidence that the survey shows that 78% of visitors pay attention to the sustainable policies adopted by the structure in which they are staying and prefer to choose resources in line with their choice of sustainability once they are out of the structure." And this is precisely the direction the district is taking.

4.4 Final consideration

In the research, it was analyzed the role of branding in managing destination marketing strategies.

The first objective of AAC is to define the main elements of the brand identity to communicate and position the value proposition of the destination Amalfi Coast.

Based on Keller's pyramid applied to tourist destinations, the brand identity of Authentic Amalfi Coast is centered on a precise logo, analyzed above. A brand character and a brand personality defined and focused above all on the themes of sustainability, accessibility, and innovation.

This will certainly be supported by the implementation of the Code of Ethics.

The AAC brand culture is still not very strong, however, because it needs to grow, capture, and involve even more stakeholders.

The adoption of a Costa d'Amalfi destination governance and regulation on the use of the AAC destination brand can contribute.

Certainly, the actions that will have to be put in place over the next few years, and for which the foundations are already in place, are promising in this sense.

In the same way, more targeted strategic marketing actions, together with those implemented by ENIT, can contribute to strengthening brand image and brand performance.

On the other hand, as far as hard skills and soft skills are concerned, which are based on consumer judgements and feelings, given the high maturity of the destination, these have very positive indices. Evidence is provided by Data Appeal's dashboard data for the year 2020.

Therefore, the destination needs to maintain this level and focus heavily on its strengths, human resources, food and wine, location, and services.

At the top of the pyramid, there are relationships, and this can be a big advantage, given the Amalfi Coast's strong relational component as a destination. Such a positive figure can only suggest a high level of selection, training and trust of front and back-office staff. The sense of well-being first and foremost of the individual worker then naturally also involves the tourists.

It is then necessary, given the importance of the human relationship, to also create a 'sense of community' on social media. Putting a lot of emphasis on the recurring theme of sustainability and sharing.

All this must be recognized and complemented by the Authentic Amalfi Coast destination brand itself.

All this while respecting the destination brand identity that should never be lost from view.

In conclusion, from the research conducted, it can certainly be argued that Authentic Amalfi as a recently born destination brand is in the initial phase of the branding process. And there is a need to operate on tourists, but also on residents and local actors, with strategic marketing operations a strong awareness of the Authentic Amalfi Coast brand, because it has all the potential to consolidate the brand equity of the Amalfi Coast.

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