

Tourism and Destination Branding: The Case of Greek Islands



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Abstract Tourism is undoubtedly one of the most important areas of the Greek economy as Greece as a country has the chance to have many and special beauty tourism resources. The challenge for the future of Greek tourism is to understand the needs and wants of tourists and always with respect to the natural and social environment of the place to acquire competitive advantage. The key to success is the Greek tourism to focus in developing an effective brand strategy which will make Greece an attractive destination. Marketing is what makes tourists to buy a service and branding but also it is what it connects them with the destination, which creates confidence and security for them a promise of an unforgettable experience that brings to mind memories of her experience they have experienced. The purpose of this paper is to study marketing strategies, brand, branding initiate as part of the destination marketing and branding of Greek islands. Based on the results of the literature review made for the purpose of this paper, we see that while there have been some remarkable branding initiatives in Greek islands, they have already developed as key brands where they have their own identity and value standing for the quality of the services offered to their tourists. This means that one of the

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basic principles of tourism marketing and destination branding that is the knowledge and satisfaction of tourists' needs in the case of Greek islands is overlooked. This is expected in the long run to reduce the level of experience experienced by tourists and consequently to reduce both the perceived brand quality of the tourists and their attachment to what are the elements of the value of the brand. Additionally, word-of-mouth advertising will decrease and consequently need more time to expose and promote the island in the long run. However, there is a need for more research on this field by using primary data.

Keywords Marketing · Tourism marketing · Tourist destination · Brand · Destination branding · Greek islands

1 Introduction

Tourism is an activity that has the ability to use data from other disciplines such as economics, business administration as well as marketing [1]. Especially in relation to marketing, there is a special field of practices related to tourism marketing. Since tourism refers to the provision of services, tourism marketing has a special role to play in the efficient operation of tourism organizations [2].

Tourism marketing is applied to all tourism activities, including destinations [1]. Indeed, destination marketing, also known as destination branding, is now seen as an indispensable tool for a destination to achieve its goals [3]. This means that special attention should be paid to the marketing planning of the destinations, especially if we consider that competition increases between destinations. Especially for the case of Greece, [4, 5] have argued that Greece has managed to leverage its brand and reputation. Despite of the economic crisis, Greek tourism has managed to increase its market share and to shift towards high-end markets. However, it is important to examine how this shift is reflected from the literature review as it is reflected on the current research. Since there is a lack of similar researches, the authors will make an attempt to examine how the destination branding can leverage the efforts made to leverage the Greek islands, which is the aim of this paper.

2 Methodology

The paper is a literature review which has taken information from online databases, such as EBSCO but also reports from high value organizations such as SETE, which represents the Greek tourist professionals. The outcome is to present how destination branding can support the efforts made from Greek tourism destinations to leverage their efforts to attract tourists. The selection criteria of these literature sources were based on the relevance to the topic of the paper based on specific keywords for a 5 year period and this research is not exhaustive.

3 Literature Review

3.1 *Tourist Branding*

Branding is one of the most important concepts of marketing. Branding can be a composition of elements such as name, symbolism, colors, images, and other elements that either individually or as part of a combination of elements of the brand will define its identity [6]. The use of blue and yellow in the brand is directly linked to Sweden's values (innovation, good product quality and creativity)—which is also the country where this business started—as well as its tradition of wooden furniture [7].

Branding also applies in the field of tourism. Most destinations use branding to link the features of the destination to the needs and expectations of tourists. For example, Aspen has relied on the brand image of a luxury destination that is linked to providing unique experiences to tourists, who are willing to give large amounts of money to have these services [8]. It is understandable that branding gives the tourist a clear picture of what to expect and can be used as a differentiation element [1]. An example is Mykonos, whose success is based on the creation of a destination branding based on the triptych sun-sea-sand, but accompanied by luxury hotel services as well as intense nightlife that has a special quality. In this way, Mykonos can have elements of summer tourism, but they are aimed at a privileged audience, so it differs from the usual summer destinations.

3.2 *Product Positioning*

A very important decision in tourism marketing is the strategies for how to place the organization or destination on the market [2]. An important role in the placement of the tourist brand will be the perception—image that will be created by tourists—consumers for the brand [9]. For this reason, it is up to the tourists to decide which strategy they will follow, usually the one of diversification or cost leadership. In the first case, emphasis will be placed on differentiation from competition through the image of the brand and elements such as the quality or uniqueness of the services. In the case of cost leadership, the goal of the tourism agency is to reduce operating costs so that the organization can offer the lowest possible prices [10]. The goal in this strategy is to identify some “gaps” in the market that are market segments that are unexploited to place the brand. Of course, the success of the strategy will depend on how well the management of the organization can communicate this movement with the public [1].

It should be noted that brand placement can have significant benefits for the tourist organization, as it is very important to always be considered by the management of the organization and the possibility of relocating. Piqué [11], refers to the destinations of the European South that the economic crisis has led to the

consideration of multi-destination placement. As a result, well-known destinations such as Rhodes and Kos, among others, have re-approached the brand's placement as a quality destination for affordable destinations. This placement highlighted both quality, which is something given, while at the same time adding the tolerable price as an element that encourages tourists to come to destinations at a relatively low cost.

The benefits of branding in tourism [1]: 199–200, refer to a number of advantages associated with the use of Branding in tourism. In summary, the use of branding can have the following advantages:

- **Better Crisis Management:** In many cases a brand may have to handle a crisis like a political turmoil or a new competitor. A strong tourist brand will help the organization get back faster as well as keep its existing customers closer.
- **Quality Assurance:** In a proper Brand Management strategy, the customer will know—through the brand—what to expect and reduce the uncertainty that exists due to the lack of physical evidence. For example, the use of well-known brands like Hilton serves as a guarantee for what the tourist will get.
- **Segmentation:** Through brand identity and brand image, the tourist organization can appeal to very specific tourist groups. For example, the British tour operator “18–30 club” has created a brand that has a repercussion on very specific audiences who are new tourists who want to go to a summer destination that will combine the intense nightlife with the sun and the sea, always at a low cost.
- **Internal Marketing:** Successful Branding can work well within the organization. Through branding, employees, shareholders and generally the audience of the organization can understand the subject and philosophy of the organization. Examples are luxury hotel workers such as Lagonisi Grand Resort, where the emphasis is on service quality. The employee at this hotel when he knows that customers and management have particular requirements so that the hotel can have such a good reputation, so the employee knows he has to offer his maximum abilities.
- **Long-Term Design:** Branding can be the basis of long-term planning. An example is Singapore Airlines whose strategy was based on the positioning of its brand as a global and regional airline.
- **Internet:** Branding has an important role in searching the web. The tourist will show his preference for a brand he knows and trusts. At the same time, this preference increases the “clicks” of the organization's website, which means that the site has better search engine rankings.
- **Distribution Strategy:** The ultimate advantage is that branding strengthens the negotiating power of the touring organization vis-à-vis its consumers, and especially with middlemen, and for intermediaries is a strong point. When a tourist wishes to travel to a destination he does not know, he or she will trust a tour operator or tour operator who will have a good Brand name or whose brand will be associated with the specific trips.

4 Discussion: Destination Branding and Strategies the Greek Islands Can Use

Organizations today operate in a highly volatile environment. That is why it is particularly important for organizations to constantly adapt their strategies. To do this, it is necessary to have a relevant model that will indicate what an organization's development strategies are and how to implement it, in order to model the growth strategies of Ansoff. The model is based on two parameters. The first parameter is whether the organization will be developed with new or existing products and the second parameter a will be developed in new or existing markets [12]. This model has been parameterized for the operation of tourism by [1]. More specifically, the four strategic options are the following:

- The penetration strategy for increasing the organization's share of an existing market with its existing products. For example, a hotel focused on summer tourism should strengthen its communication campaign as well as make new partnerships with tour operators to increase bookings.
- The product development strategy, which concerns the expansion into an existing market with new products. For example, a tour operator operating on the European market, decides to develop with offers for Asia, focusing on its existing customers.
- The market development strategy that a hotel can spa and operate only in the summer to expand into the health tourism market by operating its spa all year round. This is a strategy that the hotel focuses on new markets by offering a service that already exists.
- Finally, the strategy of diversification concerns the strategic expansion into new markets with new products. An example is Virgin Atlantic, which was expanded into the train industry via Virgin Rail. It is a high-risk strategy that requires significant capital and know-how.

At the same time, the brand has other roles, less important, of secondary importance. In particular:

- Sales of souvenirs or clothing with the logo or the name of the destination provide additional revenue at the site.
- Destination branding works cooperatively in all efforts to develop and promote the destination. Thus the tourism of the region is markedly improved.
- Branding the destination by promoting the site in an ever-growing competitive market attracts new investors and paves the way for the establishment of new businesses [13, 14].

According to Clarke [15] there are a total of six benefits of destination branding these are:

1. Helps to reduce the impact of the intangible nature of the tourist phenomenon.
2. It can reduce the risk factor associated with decision-making on holidays.

3. Facilitates segmentation of the market.
4. Expresses consistency between multiple outflows and time.
5. It is the core of the integration of producers' efforts, helping all those involved in tourism to work for a common goal.
6. As tourism is a phenomenon that requires high emotional involvement from tourists, branding helps to reduce choices when deciding on the destination [15].

More specifically, the benefits of branding for the destination as a whole are as follows: (1) It creates a unifying focus to help all those involved with tourism and based on the image and attractiveness of the destination (public and private bodies, non-profit organizations). (2) It brings to the destination increased respect, recognition, faith, celebrity. (3) Correct outdated or inaccurate perceptions that may exist for the destination. (4) Improves the income of the interested members, profit margins and increases the filing of tax revenues. (5) Reduces the cost of marketing and promoting the destination as a strong brand that has satisfied tourists activates the word-of-mouth advertising. (6) Enhances the pride of the inhabitants of the destination [15].

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For tourist destinations, it is important to shape a strategy which will allow the destinations to understand how they can improve their marketing performance and to improve their image and hence the performance of their destination branding. For this reason, the authors have chosen to use Ansoff's model.

At this case, it is important to stress the fact that this mode has been chosen since it allows us to understand how Greek tourism can develop upon the upcoming years. However, there is one key limitation which is that each island in Greece has a different brand and setting but also there are cultural varieties and differences. For this reason, the authors may suggest that Ansoff model is very useful indeed. However, there is a need to inform about the limitations that it has and that it cannot apply for the case of all of the islands.

Organizations today operate in a highly volatile environment. That is why it is particularly important for organizations to constantly adapt their strategies. To do this, it is necessary to have a relevant model that will indicate what an organization's development strategies are and how to implement it, in order to model the growth strategies of Ansoff. The model is based on two parameters. The first parameter is whether the organization will be developed with new or existing products and the second parameter a will be developed in new or existing markets [16, 17]. This model has been parameterized for the operation of tourism by [1]. More specifically, the four strategic options are the following:

- The penetration strategy for increasing the organization's share of an existing market with its existing products. For example, a Greek island focused on summer tourism should strengthen its communication campaign as well as make new partnerships with tour operators to increase bookings.

- The product development strategy, which concerns the expansion into an existing market with new products. For example, a Greek island operating on the European market, decides to develop with offers for Asia, focusing on its existing customers.
- The market development strategy that a Greek island which needs to develop into the spa market can spa market and it has many hotels with spa facilities, it can expand into the health tourism market by operating its spa all year round. This is a strategy that the destination focuses on new markets by offering a service that already exists.
- Finally, the strategy of diversification concerns the strategic expansion into new markets with new products. An example is that a Greek island which has focused in the 3S (sun, sea, sand) model of tourism can expand into new markets, such as of high quality tourism, but without pausing its 3S operations. It can just develop a brand image which will be flexible and it will reflect upon different markets and consumers.

Diversification seems to be the most effective strategy today. According to Kladou et al. [17] the Greek islands are in a process of shift for mass tourism to quality-driven tourism. Indeed, many of the Greek islands are combining mass tourism with selective segments such as the religious tourism [18], though tourists are also more demanding than ever [19] therefore the islands must be well prepared for those tourists.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

The management of the image of a destination is an important asset. The marketing and branding of a tourist destination are two useful tools that aim to promote the place and can be associated with its image [20–24]. They have as their main purpose to show a destination to produce benefits both for the place and for those involved with the tourist phenomenon. In the present work we will approach the branding of tourist destinations that is a relatively new phenomenon. Its purpose is to highlight and diversify a destination from the competition by linking the tourist closely with him. Branding gives the destination value and distinctive identity, and to the tourist the promise of an unforgettable and unique experience. The paper has recognized the value of destination marketing and it has suggested on how to capitalize it. This can happen with the use of Ansoff's model as indicated on this paper. This will help the destinations to decide on which strategy to use. However, for a future use, it is important to examine how this strategy is used in reality. This can be examined from a future research which will focus on case studies and on the views of marketing managers on this issue.

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