

## MARKETING ELEMENTS FOR DESIGNING OF THE INTEGRAL TOURIST PRODUCT-COLIMA

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### ABSTRACT

This research Project titled: The proposal of an innovative tourist destination: The Case of the State of Colima, Mexico, presents, in general terms, a proposal for the designing and constructing of an integral tourist destination model for the state of Colima. It is expected that said model allow for the unification of the existing micro destinations of the state and thus giving the state a more integrated tourist image.

The detailed study of the reflected image of the tourist destination responds to two aspects of special relevance— first, the interest of the academy to scientifically explain the influence of this concept on tourist behavior and second, the need that tourist promoters manifest in terms of positioning and differentiating the tourist destination in the minds of their public in an efficient and effective manner. Both aspects emphasize the importance of studying the client/tourist perception in order to understand the aspects that these recognize as attractive, and in this sense, will allow to establish strategies that may provide a positive positioning of the destination within the market that could, in turn, generate more interest in terms of attracting new visitors by exploiting this new distinctive, and the diverse advantages that are provided by cluster of traditions, regional dances, gastronomic customs, scenery and landscape, as well as the identity of the population.

This article presents in general terms, the precedents, methodology and preliminary advances of the results of the different marketing elements identified up to this moment. Moreover, it shows an analysis of the presence and impact that said elements generate within the State.

### INTRODUCTION

This research Project titled: The proposal of an innovative tourist destination: The Case of the State of Colima, Mexico, presents, in general terms, a proposal for the designing and constructing of an integral tourist destination model for the state of Colima. It is expected that said model allow for the unification of the existing micro destinations of the state and thus giving the state a more integrated tourist image.

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This research project is presented from an eminently scientific-academic perspective studied within the concept of public policy for tourism and its context, determining its impact throughout the State of Colima, Mexico. A second intention of this project is to bring to the attention of the authorities, the idea that the present economic resources-both Governmental and private – that are destined for the sector, can work to not only contribute to the development of the state, but may also be conceived as a multiplier of wealth that would permeating the state and translate into tangible and intangible benefits for the entire population.

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So, on the basis of the arguments outlined in this article, the following variables will also be considered as elements for the designing of the product. These are: culture and identity, landscape and scenery, and tangible and intangible cultural patrimony. The integral tourist product Colima is considered the dependant variable. In order to determine some of the

related factors, the following were also highlighted: gastronomy, local dances, traditions, festivities, crafts, among others.

## BACKGROUND

As a main precedent of this research Project we have the project titled: The Identity of Historic Downtown Colima, that is a part of the Project: Sustainable development of Historic downtown Colima, a joint project between a public education organization in this case the University of Colima, and a private institution, in this case Chamber of Commerce, Services and Tourism ( CANACO-SERVyTUR) as well as a government organization in this case the City of Colima.

Fundamental marketing elements were identified during the execution of the research project “The identity of Historic Downtown Colima”, which would later give way to independent research projects, The first of these marketing elements identified as such was gastronomy, for which the research project “Does globalization lead to a loss of gastronomic customs? Colima- Villa de Alvarez conurbation case analysis” was carried out in 2008.

Another marketing element identified was the people and their identity for which a second research project was carried out-- one that would allow for the understanding of the identity of Colima and its people. The research project was titled: —Cultural Patrimony and competitiveness, symbolism in the identity of Colima and its people-- towards a diversification of its social uses”.

An ethnographical portrait of the peculiarities that could be abstracted and that would define —that which is of Colima or colimensel and what —colimensel do in order to make themselves feel a part of Colima, in reference to its identity, was proposed.

### Proposal of the problem

The tourist product-Colima is disarticulated, divided into micro destinations so called Manzanillo, Comala, Tecomán and other which are natural resources that make up the tourist destination Colima. Yet, its landscape and scenery are not contemplated as a part of the product.

It has been made evident that tourist products need to be designed in order to be attractive (Ryan & Aicken, 2010; Trauer & Ryan, 2005; Leibetseder, Laireiter & Köllcr, 2007; Torres, 2010). Furthermore, it is considered that Colima, as a tourist destination, has not been integrally designed. The current tendency is to consider the tangible aspects, the natural attractions and the man made attractions; thus, a void has been identified within this present design, as well as in the need for Colima to be recognized in terms of its essence, which must include its people, its tangible and intangible cultural patrimony and its nature (Butlers, 2006; Torres, 2010; San Martin & Matos, 2011).

Actors are essential factors of the process (Padín, 2011; Merinero, 2008; Bramwell and Sharman, 1999) on the basis of the definition of governance as a new form of collective decisions through cooperation agreements between public actors, the private sector and civil society (Alcama 2008). Furthermore, specifically in the area of tourism it is a determining that public and private collaboration given their transversal nature (multiple business activities), the use of public resources (natural, cultural, patrimonial) and the confluence of actors in an area (residents and visitors), where new forms of participatory government can consolidate positive processes as a result in turn of participatory management in the tourist destination (Patel et al, 2007; Vervoort, 2010)

At no other previous moment have political, governmental and social bodies come together to design an integrative concept for the state of Colima that would allow for the projection of the state as a tourist destination that may be classified as competitive.

The theory pertaining to the designing of the tourist destinations that states that a political territory may be divided into different destinations is considered effective in only some cases. This research project aims to prove that the circumstance of Colima as a tourist destination, are unique and therefore differ from that argument. On the contrary, the state of Colima is affected by the subdivision of its territorial space into three micro-destinations, due to its small size and extension, (As reference, Colima is the third smallest state in the country). In such circumstances, resources and tourist clients are dispersed and the tangible and intangible benefits are not effective for the population.

Therefore, the main objective of this research project is to identify the marketing elements for the designing and the constituting of the Integral Tourist Product Colima (Tourist Destination).

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research Project corresponds to the so-called exploratory type studies, since characteristics and indicators that help to define the client tourist perception are developed based on the variables for subtracting the necessary information for the investigation, are always based on the client's perception of the scenery and landscape of Colima. The methodology used is considered a mixed methodology due to its combination of techniques for the studying of the object of study.

The methodology of this research project is made up of the documentary research and field research conducted over a three year period. Different methods of research are now being used, each with its distinct techniques and tools, in this case, both qualitative and quantitative methods were selected. In the case of the desk or documentary research, different elements that may contribute to the designing of the tourist product Colima have been identified in the different local publications that highlight some of these manifestations that have been defined as factors related to the variables: dance, crafts, and traditions among others.

Three are the techniques selected for the approach of the object of study: ethnography, the interview and the focus group. These three techniques will be applied to the state of Colima as a whole, taking into consideration the ten municipalities that create it. The ethnography is centered on the non participative observation which is carried out in a systematized manner, writing out reports of observation based on the distribution of the territory through the observation groups that will be visiting the different municipalities y search of symbolisms of Colima and its people. The survey will be carried out through questionnaires made up of open questions for the tourist-clients who visit the state. The gathering of information will be done through sampling by convenience, and through strategic positioning of the centers locations within each municipality, in hopes of intercepting the tourist-client.

Due to the fact that the present study is of qualitative nature, one of the selected techniques is that of the in-depth interview; more that a determiner of a statistically representative sample, this section will be used to define different elements that the scientific-investigative community consider useful for the consolidating of studies of this nature.

The focus groups are meant to interact only with tourist-clients, separated as visitors with different socio-cultural profiles and in relation to their reasons for travel. Steps are being taken to achieve collaborative work with different hotels and tourist destinations of Colima that may help to recruit the tourists that will take part in the focus groups planned for the different strategic locations within the destination, including the main attractions for the tourist client, such as Manzanillo—in two hotels of different categories, and the conurbation of Colima and Villa de Alvarez and the Magic Town of Comala.

The distribution of the groups assigned to the field research is given by the previous study based on the main points of manifestation of the cultural patrimony and the defining of the different sceneries throughout the state, but will eventually concentrate on: Northern Colima, Central Colima and Costal Colima. On [Table 1](#) it is explained the advances in the gathering of information until now.

## CONCLUSION

As a part of the advances of this research Project, first in line is the identification of several marketing elements that have been objects of study, as mentioned previously: the study of the gastronomic customs of Colima and Villa de Alvarez and the study of the identity of Colima and its people, are some of the most important topics that to date have been studied. Ongoing research is being carried out with the intention of integrating the concept: Colima, Tourist Destination. Currently, two other areas are being studied: a) landscape and scenery of Colima and b) the study of regional dance and traditions of Colima.

A fundamental advancement is without a doubt the proposal of the problem of said research project, in which it is manifested that Colima, is a destination, made up of diverse micro destinations that, far from supporting each other, compete against each other for the tourist market. This causes confusion in the tourist and discussions among the population with respect to the state's vocation. In the same sense, a characterization of the destination was carried out with the intention of clearly identifying the necessary relevant information such as geographical, demographical and economic data that would strengthen the analysis of the destination.

In order to analyze the external clients' perception of the landscape of Colima, it was necessary to implement interview and observation, in other words, compare the discourse with the practice as well as the use of a Focus Group, understood as an open discourse among a group of especially selected people.

A first field work with the natural semantic network techniques was carried out. It was found that there was an identity confusion, with the word Colima, used both as Colima as the State and Colima as a City—this from the tourist perspective. Moreover, interviews were carried out with visitors to the state, both in the city of Colima and the Port of Manzanillo.

The development and consolidation of a tourist destination, especially if the intention is to build a quality destination, will always be connected to the highlighted value of its local resources, these being natural, historic, cultural, anthropological and so on, that make up what we call natural patrimony and historic patrimony. The importance is its presence within the territory and its analysis in order to plan the sector's progress. It should be proposed as an opportunity to recuperate, rehabilitate and revitalize, but mainly to give value as integrating elements of a tourist product, able to generate and increment its activity, employment and the whole of the income and the rent of the local sphere.

If tourism is to develop integrally in Colima, it is necessary that the natural resources it has for said purpose, be carefully evaluated, since they are the building blocks and will condition the type of development as well as the activities, and therefore, the type of tourist to which they are geared to. Through this evaluation, it may be decided if the zone has the necessary potential for development and or expansion, (in the case of the consolidated destinations) as well as the most convenient type of tourism for the zone. The evaluation must be understood as an exercise of viability of the development of the tourist activities of the state; it is clear that the state, by nature, can be classified as a tourist state. The nature of the state defines the opportunity of it being integrated as a whole tourist destination.

If it is found that adequate potential for development exists, then said evaluation will constitute the basis for the future task of detailed planning.

## TABLES

Table 1: Advances in the gathering of information

| Technique   | Location   | Variable  | Advance    | Technique   |
|-------------|--|---|------------|-------------|
| Etnography  | Central Colima, Costal Colima and Northern Colima. | Tangible and Intangible Cultural Patrimony                          | Concluded  | Etnography  |
| Survey      | Central Colima and Costal Colima                   | Landscape and Scenery   | In Process | Survey      |
| Focus Group | Central Colima, Costal Colima and Northern Colima  | Landscape and Scenery<br>Tangible and Intangible Cultural Patrimony | In Process | Focus Group |

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