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A framework for rural tourism destination management and marketing organisations

Samuel Folorunso Adeyinka-Ojo^{a,*}, Catheryn Khoo-Lattimore^a, Vikneswaran Nair^a

^a*School of Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts, Taylor's University, No. 1, Jalan Taylor's, 47500 Subang Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia*

Abstract

This paper attempts to shed more light on destination management and marketing organisations (DMMOs) from the context of rural tourism. Moreover, where national tourism organisations established a liaison office at regional or state levels, their roles seems to have been limited. In this circumstance, they are merely information offices to the visitors rather than local DMMOs responsible for the management and marketing of rural destinations. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to identify the roles of DMMOs, and hence develop a suitable framework for DMMOs in the context of rural tourism. This paper finds that DMMOs has responsibilities for both management and marketing roles. These roles should be performed in collaboration with the rural tourism destination stakeholders in order to achieve mutual benefits which include management of resources, marketing of tourism products, positioning, host community well-being, brand building, and tourist loyalty to the rural destinations.

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1. Introduction

As the tourism industry continues to grow, the marketing and management of tourism destination is increasingly becoming competitive globally (Buhalis, 2000; Balakrishnan, 2008; Tasci, 2011; UNWTO, 2012, 2013). As a result, there is a need to improve our understanding of destination management in terms of how tourism destinations are built and marketed (Blain, Levy & Ritchie, 2005). Tourism destination marketing is often seen as a competitive and complex issue (Wang, 2011). This is particularly so when the tourism industry is becoming more competitive

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +6-014-639-7161 Fax.: +603-5629-5522

E-mail address: samuel.adeyinka@sd.taylors.edu.my

with destination marketing organisations competing to increase their share of the tourist market by developing different destination marketing strategies (Hosany, Ekinici & Uysal, 2007). In order to understand this complexity destination management and marketing requires a comprehensive approach (Wang, 2011). Hence, different tourism destinations such as national, regions, states and cities have established destination management and destination marketing organisations to promote, manage and market these destinations to the target tourist markets (Pike, 2008). As more countries are diversifying into tourism industry, the existing tourism destinations have been forced to develop unique and competitive destination brands due to global competitiveness in tourism sector (Hassan, Hamid & Al Bohairy, 2010). Therefore, tourism destinations now find themselves in a situation where they have to compete directly with other tourism destinations at the international arena, national, regional, state, cities and local levels through the respective destination marketing organisations for the promotion and marketing of the destinations (Presenza, Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). The formation of destination management organisations and destination marketing organisations in the tourism industry is indispensable, due to its roles and destinations it covers such as town, city, region, state, province, and country (Blain et al., 2005; Pike, 2008).

However, a review of the literature indicates that there is a lack of destination management and destination marketing organisations specifically established for rural tourism destinations; as well as local tourism destinations (Blain et al., 2005; Pike, 2008). This will be discussed in the following research gap section. The purpose of this paper is to identify the combined roles of destination management and destination marketing organisations and how they can be conceptualised to develop a framework for destination management and marketing organisations (DMMOs) in the context of rural tourism. It should be noted that both destination management organisations and destination marketing organisations complement each other. There are ample evidences from the literature which indicates these tourism destination organisations have been used interchangeably, separately or combined as one entity in the management and marketing of tourism destinations (Bhat & Gaur, 2012; Wang, 2011). Other extant literature sources are presented in Table 1. Similarly, their functions were also separated as shown or presented in Table 2 and in a framework presented in Figure 1 on the roles of destination marketing organisations respectively adapted from Wang (2008). As a result of this foregoing, this paper will attempt to merge the two terms to develop destination management and marketing organisations (DMMOs). This is important in order to achieve the aims of this paper of identifying separately the management roles and marketing roles within the framework of destination management and marketing organisation in the context of rural tourism.

2. Literature review

A review of literature sources on the development of destination management and marketing organisations indicate that the first destinations to have formal promotion and marketing organisations appear to have been at a local destination level (Pike & Page, 2014). According to Laesser (2000), the first regional tourism organisation was established at St. Moritz, Switzerland in 1864. Similarly, Blackpool Municipal Corporation was formed in England in 1879 and was given government approval to collect tax purposely to fund the promotion and advertising of the town's attractions (Cross & Walton, 2005). Additionally, the first convention and visitors bureau was established in 1896 at Detroit in the USA (Ford & Peeper, 2007). Likewise, the first world's national tourism organisation was formed in 1901 in New Zealand (McClure, 2004), and in 1903 the first state tourism organisation was established in Hawaii, USA (Choy, 2003). Furthermore, since the end of the world war two the number of destination marketing and management organisations have increased significantly (Laws, 1997); and there are over 10,000 destination and marketing organisations globally (Pike, 2008; Pike & Page, 2014). The rationale for an overview of the evolution of the destination management and marketing organisations is to provide ample evidences that DMMOs is not a new academic topic in tourism research. However, despite these claims it appears DMMOs specifically established to manage and market rural tourism destinations have received less academic interest and destination practitioners' attention. Hence, this paper will attempt to reduce this gap in the tourism destination organisations literature.

Therefore, it should be noted that destination management and destination marketing organisations are becoming increasingly important in many tourism destinations globally due to growth and reliance by many developing and developed economies on tourism industry (Fyall, 2011; Wang, 2008). Consequently, there is a need for integrative marketing and management strategies based on good understanding of the tourism market for effective destination competitiveness and attractiveness through the activities of destination marketing organisations (Pike, 2008).

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