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DESTINATION MANAGEMENT AND EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM

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Abstract. *The destination management deals with the strategic, organizational and operational decisions through which the process of definition, promotion and marketing of a territory's tourism products must be managed in order to generate balanced, sustainable and appropriate to the economic needs of the actors involved.*

An effective destination management process must analyze, define and manage the factors of attractiveness and the different entrepreneurial components of the local system and organize the tourist offer capable of intercepting demand in a competitive manner and in accordance with the capacity of the territory, without exceeding the load capacity and creating negative effects on the territory

The destination management is particularly connected with tourism preferences and tourism development

It is important to consider that the development of the tourism sector, in recent years, has been particularly affected by new trends particularly focused on experience.

Therefore, the central idea of escaping the everyday routine remains, but often the trip is not only focused on relaxation and leisure.

Experiential tourism involves tourists during the trip in a series of unforgettable activities with a strong personal impact. Activities that affect all the senses and create connections on a physical, emotional, spiritual, social and intellectual level. Usually during such experiences the tourist interacts with the people, history and traditions of the place.

Keywords: *tourism, tourism management, management, tourism economy, tourism market.*

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Introduction

The consolidation of post-war society, the development of wealth and the economic boom favored, consequently, the research for quality and services in living the tourist experience.

Beyond the geographical discoveries, history teaches us how, at the beginning of tourist travel, travelers came from aristocratic families and moved purely for study and cultural purposes, while the development of industrialization and economic growth, turned tourism into a mass phenomenon.

What today is called tourism, i.e. organized travel, has instead a certain date of origin and a determined inventor. In 1841 Thomas Cook, in fact, taking advantage of the new possibilities offered by the train, organized a journey of 11 miles from Leicester to Loughborough (UK); almost six hundred people attended the event and the success was so enormous, that Cook himself started to organize more and more detailed tourist packages, starting the modern tourism industry.

Results and discussion

The last thirty years of the 20th century was a period of great and rapid changes, there was a progressive opening to modernity and homogeneity in all sectors, including tourism, although the historical moment becoming rather difficult due to the oil and economic crisis, the youth and feminist protests between the late '60s and early '70, the terrorism escalation, currency and industrial crises of various reason, with consequences on the tourism market.

This general evolution of civil society led to a progressive increase in schooling and female work and favored the development of small and medium-sized enterprises and the tertiary sector, making it possible to consider tourism more and more as a habit of life, accessible to the majority of people.

Tourists change mentality, travel more and more frequently all over the world with an insatiable desire for knowledge and new experiences, and in addition to this , the tourist activity continues to be a very important economic factor in all its various sectors: seaside, mountain, thermal, fair, historical, religious.

Tourism, today, represents for many countries one of the major economic resources, thanks to the natural riches and the artistic and cultural heritage, whose potential can be exploited in different ways.

The varied and wide choice of options and the modern approach of enjoying tourism in an increasingly fast and easy way, is causing a decline of traditional services and transportation, favoring that experiential tourism, i.e. the journey that generates new experiences and emotions, considered not simply as a synonym of escape and relaxation.

Thus, tourists have moved recently, from the idea of escaping from routine to the need of a travel experience based on involvement, adventure and authenticity.

Adapting the tourism offer to the trends of the demand is necessary for the operators in the sector; it represents in fact the base of an innovative tourism strategy able to highlight the major changes and needs expressed by tourists.

We can therefore affirm that a customer transformation is underway, with the search for engaging and memorable experiences as main elements.

The founding values of the so-called economy of experience include instances such as entertainment, in the sense of being in a specific context; educational, i.e. learning; active that takes form in doing; the aesthetic that directly concerns being.

The traditional approach of markets is no longer sufficient. Now the tourists travelling with organized trips are fewer and fewer; many of them - especially the younger ones - in addition to organizing their own holiday, they also become the "certifiers" of the same, becoming a guide for others (offline and online) and an active part in the creation of tourism products.

The targets become more extended and transversal to cultures and social classes, while a greater sensitivity/attention to sustainability and experience of the territories grows.

The speed of change, the centrality of "experience" and the spread of technology are changing modern tourism, requiring those who build the tourism offer to provide flexible responses, within a vision of integrated solutions and rapid delivery services.

Taking a look at the tour operators' offers, we can affirm that the idea of experiential travel becomes a form of tourism in which people focus on experiencing a country, a city or a particular place, by actively and meaningfully engaging with its history, people, culture, food and environment.

The idea of tourism is expanding; the offer, therefore, is no longer limited to a simple staying and travelling, following the new experiential parameters, means moving away from the more touristic routes exploring lesser known places to get a more local and more genuine sense of the country or city decided to visit.

Modern travelers want to experience something new during a trip. Lying on a sandy beach seems to become almost a superficial experience that can be lived on all the coasts of the world, while learning to dance, attending a cooking class, riding a horse, jumping with a parachute become unique experiences that will remain in the memories and that are the object of tourists' research as they combine experience, learning and emotions. Modern travelers have a different and fuller perspective of themselves and the world.

In order to have a real impact useful to open the mind and the vision of travelers, a holiday should answer the research of unusual adventures, making sure that, today, authenticity, adventure and novelty represent the aspects of the journey that matter most.

The result is that today's traveler is more informed and in search of authentic and unconventional experiences, evaluating and comparing destinations and activities online and choosing experiences, far from the classic tourist destinations, in places rich in tradition and culture.

Experiential tourism is the adventure that the tourist carries out by living moments of life; destinations become that place that physically brings people together in a moment of shared experience.

These experiences respond to the most varied travel motivations - leisure, exploration, passion, research, personal growth, ... - and, today, in order to stand out, destinations must clearly respond to an increasingly specific and demanding target market demand.

In the increasingly sophisticated and complex international economic scenario, where tourism has a strong relevance on economic growth, the distinctive and unique experiences are undoubtedly the ideal tool to reach and involve the desired target, even in the long term.

A strategic approach to destination management and marketing, combined with travel experience design, could represent the key of changing the approach to the theme, triggering an innovation in the definition of the destination as an experience/product and no longer as a mere territory.

Tourism, which can be defined as all the events and organizations relating to trips and stays for recreational or educational purposes. At the centre of the tourist experience is the tourist, who travels to places other than his usual residence and outside his daily environment, for a period of at least one night but not exceeding one year and whose usual purpose must be different from the exercise of any paid activity within the country visited.

The most powerful and visible expression of the global trend of experiences is given by tourism, as a form of cultural production that emerged on the fringes of economic life, just half a century ago, to quickly become one of the most important industries in the world. Tourism is nothing more than the commercialization of a cultural and personal experience.

Starting from the definition of tourism, we can therefore move on from the generic concept of traveler or the more specific concept of tourist taking into account the following variables: the voluntary nature of the trip and the duration of the trip.

The voluntariness of the trip that leads to identify in the tourists only those traveling voluntarily, according to a free choice.

In order to make an effective marketing, according to a correct destination management, it is possible to differentiate the types of tourists by analyzing the main motivation that leads to the decision to travel.

In the last forty years, the number of people who habitually spend their free time in tourism practices has grown enormously.

Tourism has, thus, progressively transformed itself from an elitist to a form of a mass phenomenon), therefore involving increasingly large and diverse segments of the world population in order to become an asset of citizenship of western industrialized societies.

Parallel to the quantitative increase of the tourism phenomenon, we have witnessed the expansion of the variety and variability of tourist consumption behavior, just as the opportunities and forms of enjoyment of free time have multiplied, that is, that time of life complementary to that dedicated to work, which the individual can dispose of, in a more or less active way.

Tourism is no longer "what you offer me" but "how you make me feel", so we can affirm that now individuals are at the centre. It is no coincidence that today the human factor, made up of people with their customs and habits, attracts more tourists than monuments and natural beauty. Tourists ask to be protagonist and no longer just spectators.

Conclusion

There is a new frontier of tourism where the word "experience" is changing the approach to travel. A model that has given birth to startups all over the world, including Italy, creating a new slice of the market that defines itself as "experiential". In this type of holiday tourists learn something, broaden their horizons, come home not only with photos but with the memory and emotions of an experience and an enriched cultural background. Among cultural tours, gastronomic experiences, naturalistic or sports activities, discovery of one's roots, craft workshops, one travels to learn, immerse oneself in moments of daily life and participate in activities.

The added value of experiential tourism is the strong emotional element that has an impact on memory.

An efficient management of the destination should consider, in fact, a memorable tourist experience through strong emotions, but should always keep in mind that the experience is a very personal perception. A well-designed tourist experience can even transform individuals by contributing to enrich their personality.

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