



Article Title

The Role of Emigrants in the Construction of a Destination Brand: A New Research Line

Citation

El Aouni, Fatimazohra; Cascon-Pereira, Rosalia; Hernandez-Lara, Ana Beatriz; Tourism and Hospitality Management, May 2013, v. 19, iss. 1, pp. 35-47

Abstract

Purpose – The main objective of this work consists of proposing a new line of research which consists of exploring the role of emigrants in the construction of their country of origin's brand.

Design and methodology: To justify the need of this new research line we provide arguments by conducting a literature review on destination branding and topics related to migration in tourism.

Approach – A proper destination branding may have a bearing on the image of a particular area, attracting visitors, investments, and a greater economic wealth for the region. The relevance of this topic for tourism management explains the interest of research in determining the elements of the brand of touristic destinations and its influence on the tourists' behaviour.

Originality – Scant attention has been paid by the literature on the influence of stakeholders on brand construction at a regional level, and specifically on the influence of emigrant population, that is those people who are living outside their original territories and whose identity might exert an influence on the construction of their country's brand and attract potential tourists.

Findings – This study proposes a conceptual model to understand the role of emigrant population in the construction of their places of origin's destination brand. This model suggests that social identity processes may affect the way emigrants communicate to locals a brand about their places of origin, contributing therefore to the construction of the brand of their countries.

Summary

The main objective of this study was to justify the need for a new line of research with regards to the role of emigrants on the construction of the destination brand of their country of origin. To do so, we conducted a literature review on destination branding and related topics such as migration and ethnicity in tourism. This literature review

shows that despite the study of emigrants' identities has attracted considerable amount of research, few studies have focused specifically on the role of emigrants in the construction of their place of origin's destination brands. These studies are basically interested in analyzing the influence of emigration, ethnicity or multicultural phenomena on the construction of destination brand of their hosting countries, cities or neighborhoods, but not of their countries of origin.

Having identified this gap, this study proposes a conceptual model to understand the role of emigrant population in the construction of their places of origin's destination brand. In this model, we suggest that social identity processes may affect the way emigrants communicate to locals a brand about their places of origin, contributing therefore to the construction of the brand of their countries. This destination brand could incorporate both, tangible aspects (like information about the environment, the economic situation, etc.), and intangible aspects (such as cultural and social characteristics of their countries).

In addition, the study suggests the degree of the influence of emigrants on the construction of this destination brand will depend on their interactions with local population, because if they live apart, maintaining scarce or weak relationships with local people, their messages about their country will not have any impact. The frequency and strength of these interactions might be influenced by the economic situation of the emigrant population or their previous link with the hosting country (for example, cultural proximity, geographical proximity, degree of mutual knowledge, etc.).

In sum, developing a strong and consistent destination brand is crucial for tourism management and should be a matter of concern for government agencies and DMOs trying to promote the tourism of their countries. This explains the necessity to explore what the contents of the brand build by emigrants are, with the purpose of aligning the messages of different stakeholders about the brand of a particular tourist destination. In this sense, understanding the brand elements communicated by emigrants may be useful in building a strong and consistent destination brand. In addition, governmental institutions should take into account and consider the contribution of emigrant population, who can act as ambassadors of their countries, representing their countries abroad, and might be considered as a valuable asset to promote them.